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## Your Duty to Our Democracy: VOTE on Nov 5th

As we approach the November 5th election, the importance of staying informed and engaged in our democracy has never been more critical. Wisconsin continues to be a pivotal state in shaping the future of our nation, and your participation in this election ensures that your voice is heard on the issues that matter most to you, your community, and our state.

### Key Issues at Stake:

This election will impact decisions on a range of local and state matters, from school boards and local officials to binding referendum that aim to disenfranchise eligible voters. It's important to understand how these choices affect our daily lives. Whether it's education, public safety, healthcare, or local infrastructure, your vote will shape Wisconsin's future. But we must take advantage of the new state legislative voting maps that we fought so hard to get here in Wisconsin. We all must vote like our lives depend on it.

### Protecting Voting Rights:

Efforts are currently underway to alter how our elections are administered and who has access to the ballot box. Ensuring that every eligible voter can participate freely, without barriers, remains a top priority. We're closely monitoring these developments and advocating for reforms that uphold the integrity of our elections while protecting the rights of all voters. We must protect our election administrators from bullies who aim to undermine our democracy and hold them accountable. And we will.

### Stay Informed & Prepared:

We must encourage every voter to stay informed about the candidates and issues on the ballot this November. Take the time to research your options and make a plan to vote.

Your voice matters, and together, we can protect and strengthen democracy in Wisconsin. Thank you for staying engaged with us during this journey. Let's ensure strong voter turnout and make November 5th a day of celebration for democracy. And please Vote NO on the constitutional amendment!

In Solidarity!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alisa'.



# New Maps = Record Fundraising for State Lawmakers

Candidates and fundraising committees are aggressively raising money for the upcoming November election with \$15.84 million collected in the first six months of 2024. This figure more than doubles the \$7.47 million raised in the [first half of 2022](#). By September 23, the end of the latest campaign finance reporting period, total fundraising by candidates and [legislative campaign committees](#) (LCCs) had reached about \$44.5 million, already passing the \$41.14 million raised in all of 2020, the most expensive year for legislative elections so far.

Candidate fundraising accounted for \$7.43 million or 46.9% of the total raised in the first six months of the year. This is a 72% increase over the record \$4.32 million raised by legislative candidates in the first half of 2020. As of the most recent reporting period, candidate fundraising accounted for \$21.05 million, or 47.37% of the total raised by candidates and LCCs.

Fundraising by the four LCCs continues to grow apace with nearly \$8.41 million raised by the end of June, more than doubling the record \$3.18 million accumulated in the first six months of 2022. This is the first time since [2014](#) that Democratic LCCs outraised the Republican ones although the GOP LCCs managed to take a narrow lead by the end of the last reporting period having raised over \$12.35 million to the Democrats' \$11.04 million for the year. By the close of September LCC fundraising had exceeded \$23.39 million.

**Legislative Campaign Committee Fundraising Totals in the First 6 Months of 2024**

LCC	Raised 1 <sup>st</sup> 6 Months	June 30 Cash Balance	Raised through Sept. 23, 2024
Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee	\$3,153,866	\$2,168,853	\$6,431,525
State Senate Democratic Committee	\$2,831,365	\$2,232,642	\$8,735,483
Republican Assembly Campaign Committee	\$1,437,173	\$5,443,499	\$4,606,611
Committee to Elect a Republican Senate	\$985,9450	\$2,286,512	\$3,620,048
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$8,408,353</b>	<b>\$12,131,506</b>	<b>\$23,393,668</b>

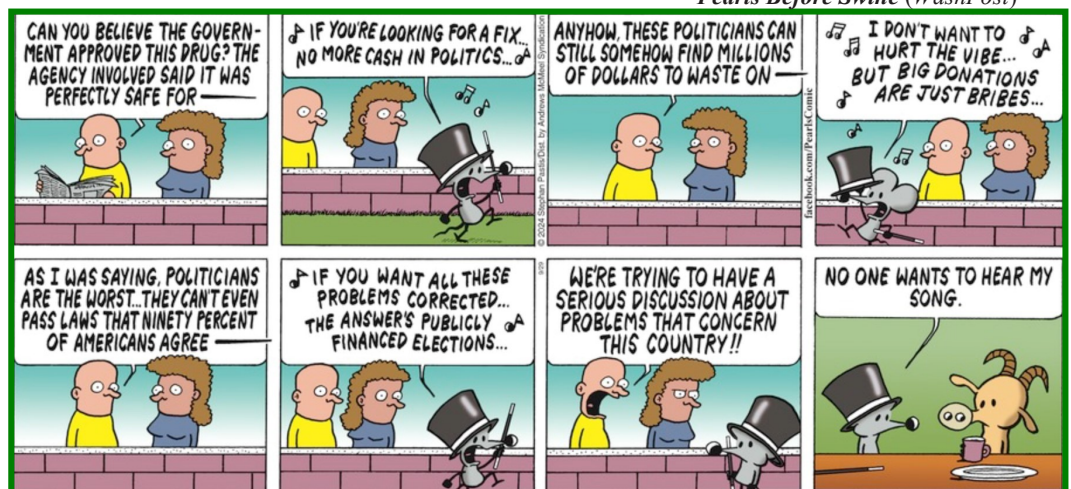
In addition to LCCs, twenty candidates had cash balances exceeding \$100,000 and thirteen candidates raised more than \$100,000 in the first six months of the year. Towards the end of September, two candidate had raised more than a million dollars and another three more \$500,000.

The record numbers are the result of sweeping changes to [campaign finance laws enacted in 2015](#). These changes allow political parties and LCCs to accept up to \$12,000 a year in contributions from corporations and remove limits on the contributions that LCCs can give to candidates or parties. There is no limit on how much an individual can give to an LLC or a political party and there is no limit on how much an LCC can contribute to a candidate's campaign.

Another factor in the record fundraising is the implementation of more competitive legislative voting district maps passed earlier this year. These new maps have led candidates on both sides of the aisle to raise and spend more money than ever. In Wisconsin, the districts with the most spending feature incumbents running for new seats. Going into the primaries 40 incumbents were running in new districts compared to just two in the 2022 election, the last election to use new maps. New legislative voting districts create more competition and weak campaign finance laws enable parties and candidates to spend record sums.

For more campaign finance activity please visit the [Campaign 2024](#) feature on our website.

*Pearls Before Swine (WashPost)*



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## Independent Expenditures in Legislative Elections Exceed \$12.89 Million; Surpasses Record Set in 2020

As of October 20th, outside electioneering groups have already spent over \$12.89 million in Wisconsin's 2024 state legislative elections. With less than three weeks to go until the Nov. 5th elections, this smashes the previous record of \$8.84 million in disclosed independent spending set during 2020 legislative elections.

Thirty-five groups reported making independent expenditures in 79 of the 115 districts up for election. New voting districts are in place due to the passage of new legislative maps passed earlier this year which has contributed to the increase in campaign spending. The highest spending occurs in districts where seats are open or seen as competitive. Many incumbents are running in new districts, not out of choice, but because they were displaced by redistricting.

**Below are the four districts with the highest reported outside spending:**

**30th Senate District**, \$2.3 million. This is an open seat between Democrat Jamie Wall and Republican Jim Rafter. The current incumbent, GOP Sen. Eric Wimberger, is running in the newly drawn 2nd Senate.

**8th Senate District**, \$1.64 million. While technically an open seat, Republican Sen. Duey Stroebel, currently representing the 20th, is an incumbent running in this district against Democrat Jodi Habush Sinykin.

**14th Senate District**, \$1.63 million. Political observers consider this district more Democratic leaning after the passage of new maps; GOP incumbent Sen. Joan Ballweg faces Dem. challenger Sarah Keyeski.

**18th Senate District**, \$1.03 million. Republican Anthony Phillips faces Democrat Kristin Alfheim for a seat left open when Republican incumbent Sen. Dan Feyen was moved to the 20th Senate by redistricting.

**Seven groups dropped more than \$500,000, topping the list of outside electioneering spenders:**

*A Better Wisconsin Together Political Fund*, \$1.96 million.

*The Wisconsin Initiative IE*, \$1.94 million.

*Wisconsin Conservation Voters Independent Expenditure Committee*, \$1.42 million.

*Jobs First Coalition Pol. Fund*, \$1.24 million.

*Restoration PAC*, \$1.24 million.

*Wisconsin Principles PAC*, \$985,137.

*Republican State Leadership Committee Inc.*, \$709,120.

**For more information, visit our [Hijacking Campaign 2024](#) feature on our website.**

## AI and Issue Ads: The Fight to Protect Elections from Phony Information

With state and federal elections fast approaching, political ads are inundating Wisconsinites through TV, radio, social media, and mailings. As residents navigate this deluge of political advertisements and endorsements, artificial intelligence (AI) remains a central topic in discussions about election integrity. Generative AI refers to technology that enables computers to simulate human intelligence, creating deepfakes and AI-generated images, audio, or video that can misrepresent individuals. For instance, a deepfake could falsely portray a candidate endorsing a policy they actually oppose, potentially damaging their reputation and misleading voters.

In mid-September, the Federal Election Commission decided against new rulemaking on the use of generative AI in federal elections, citing a lack of authority. Instead, they clarified that AI-generated content falls under existing regulations regarding fraudulent misrepresentation.

Proponents of minimal regulation argue that platforms effectively label and remove misleading political content, asserting that media outlets can self-regulate without government intervention. However, an analysis by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue revealed that major platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X, and TikTok failed to remove 154 instances of AI-generated political content, exposing millions to misleading information.

Here in Wisconsin, bipartisan legislation was passed in 2023 to address the use of generative AI in political ads. The law mandates disclosure of political ads utilizing generative AI, **including in so-called issue ads**. While this law merely requires a disclaimer in the ad about the use of generative AI, it significantly defines *issue ads* as **“a communication that provides information about political or social issues and is made to influence the outcome of an election.”**

Further, the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, the agency with administrative authority over the new law, faces challenges with anticipating how best to provide guidance given issue ads have not been regulated in the same way as other political ads. The definition of issue ads in the new legislation is in direct conflict with the definition used under current state law. Existing

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*(AI and Issue Ads cont'd)*

state statutes define issue advocacy as not explicitly advocating for or against a candidate, hence groups involved in issue ad activity are not required to report any of their financial activity to the state. They do not have to disclose where the money they are spending comes from, how much they are spending, nor whom or what they are spending it on. Issue advocacy groups are completely free from state regulation as the law now stands. **If so-called issue ads are made to influence the outcome of elections as acknowledged by the AI legislation, and transparency is truly the objective, the legislature should similarly regulate issue ads.**

It becomes harder for election officials to promote accurate election information and improve voter access with the spread of disinformation and misinformation with or without the use of generative-AI. A functional democracy demands we implement further regulations on deepfakes, provide for full transparency in funding of political ads, and to bolster voter confidence in elections. Information must empower voters to make informed electoral decisions.

As we continue to track political ads and spending especially these last few weeks before the election, we invite you to be our eyes and ears around the state. If you see ads from groups other than the candidates themselves or their respective parties (issue ads or independent expenditures), **[visit our online reporting form here.](#)**

## **We Need Your Support!**

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign relies on your support in order to **track and expose big and dark money in our politics and advocate for voter protections and other pro-democracy reforms.**

So please make a tax-deductible gift today.

### **[DONATE ONLINE](#)**

Or just put a check in the envelope we've included inside.

**Thanks so much for supporting our urgent work!**