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Get Big Money



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WDC hangs out Capitol's 'dirty laundry'

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign erected a "dirty laundry" display on the steps of the State Capitol depicting the corruption in Wisconsin politics and protesting inaction on campaign finance reform legislation.

The exhibit was displayed for two days in late September, including the first day of the Legislature's fall session.

Passersby gave the display rave reviews, while reaction from elected officials and Capitol staffers ranged from laughter to icy glares. The exhibit received newspaper, television and radio coverage, and even caught the eye of a photographer from *USA Today*.



WDC presses for action on reform legislation with new ads

In late September the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign ran a two-week series of newspaper and radio ads to remind the public that state lawmakers continue to stonewall campaign reform legislation three years after an overwhelming vote of support for reform in a 2000 referendum.

A 30-second radio spot aired over 1,900 times on 75 stations throughout the state over the course of the two-week campaign. Two newspaper ads ran in 12 daily newspapers across the state – the first (see ad below) on Sunday, September 21 and a second similar ad on Sunday, September 28.

The newspaper ads appeared in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, *Appleton Post-Crescent*, *Oshkosh Northwestern*, *Sheboygan Press*, *Fond du Lac Reporter*, *Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter*, *Wausau Daily Herald*, *Marshfield News-Herald*, *Stevens Point Journal* and *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*.

The radio ads can be heard on WDC's web site at: www.wisdc.org/media_campaign.html



Put a cork in it!

In the 2000 referendum, 90% of Wisconsin voters said they want campaign finance reform. Three years later . . . we're still holding our breath.

Our state lawmakers have forgotten who they work for. Call the toll-free legislative hotline 1-800-362-WISC and tell your legislators you're still waiting for campaign reform.

This reminder that our vote has been ignored brought to you by the nonpartisan Wisconsin Democracy Campaign - www.wisdc.org

'Bet hedging' among big donors commonplace, WDC study finds

Wealthy special interest donors are increasingly making big campaign contributions to both Republican and Democratic candidates for key offices in order to buy influence, a new Wisconsin Democracy Campaign study entitled "*Buy-Partisan*" *Politics in Wisconsin* shows.

The analysis found a dramatic increase in bet-hedging contributors in the 2002 governor's race. WDC found that 325 contributors gave more than \$545,000 to both Democrat Jim Doyle and

The study's findings blow a hole in the claim made by wealthy donors that they give merely to support those whose views best reflect theirs and not to buy influence.

Republican Scott McCallum. That compares to only two donors who gave a total of \$1,300 to both parties' candidates in 1998, and 36 who gave just over \$42,000 to both sides in the 1994 governor's race.

WDC found a number of individual donors who made contributions to both gubernatorial candidates on or nearly on the same day.

The study also found that \$3 of every \$4 that leadership-controlled legislative campaign committees received from special interest political action committees (PACs) came from PACs that gave to both Democratic and Republican committees. Nearly half of the 259 PACs operating in Wisconsin give to both sides.

The findings blow a hole in the claim often made by special interest donors that they contribute to participate in the democratic process and support the candidate and party whose views best reflect theirs and not to influence policymakers to obtain favors.

"Wealthy donors are not giving to campaigns to be good citizens. They are giving to buy access and influence," WDC director Mike McCabe said. "They don't care who wins as long as they have money on the winner."

Legislative Update

'Pay to play' ban signed into law

In August, Governor Jim Doyle signed into law Assembly Bill 1, a WDC-supported measure making it a felony for public officials to trade votes and other official actions for campaign donations. AB 1 is one piece of WDC's comprehensive "Voters First" proposal. Before final passage, a WDC-initiated amendment was adopted to apply the "pay to play" ban to all public officials and candidates for state and local office, not just state legislators.

Another bill based on a piece of the Voters First plan, Assembly Bill 119, passed the Assembly and received a public hearing in the Senate Education, Ethics and Elections Committee in September. The bill aims to improve disclosure of out-of-state donations and curtail laundering of campaign money through out-of-state committees by subjecting nonresident donors to the same reporting requirements as in-state contributors.

Budget protects donors' perks; 'graft tax' grows to \$5.2 billion

The latest installment of the Democracy Campaign's series of *Graft Tax* studies in August showed the total value of special interest tax breaks, pork barrel spending projects, sweetheart deals on state contracts

and other political favors has grown to over \$5.2 billion – increasing the annual cost to each Wisconsin taxpayer to \$1,358.

The first *Graft Tax* report released in January identified \$4.6 billion worth of special interest favors costing the average taxpayer \$1,199 a year.

In the end, only \$1 million of the more than \$5 billion worth of special interest favors were cut from the budget, despite a \$3 billion state budget deficit.

Nearly \$204 million worth of new perks were added.

Find out more on the Web at www.wisdc.org

Membership Survey Results

Members say 'hit 'em hard'

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign members want an aggressive approach to campaign finance research and reform advocacy, according to results of WDC's first annual membership survey in June.

Only 1% of members said the Democracy Campaign's approach is too hard hitting, while 38% said it is not hard hitting enough and 61% said it is about right.

Similarly, 43% of members responding to the survey said they prefer a reform message with a confrontational tone, only 4% said they prefer a conciliatory tone and 53% said they think the tone of the message should be somewhere in between.

In ranking the importance of the four major areas of WDC's work, members said research is most important, followed by outreach and public education. Coalition building and grassroots organizing ranked third in the survey, and direct legislative advocacy was deemed least important.

On the subject of lobbying tactics, 27% of survey respondents said WDC should focus on mobilizing external pressure on lawmakers, 2% said lobbying inside the Capitol is most important, and 71% prefer a mixture of both.

When asked to rank the importance of various reform ideas, members ranked reforms in the following order:

1. Public financing of campaigns
2. Media reform and free air time
3. Campaign finance disclosure
4. Issue ad regulation
5. Stricter ethics code and lobby laws
6. Regulatory reform (revamping watchdog agencies)
7. Campaign contribution limits
8. Voting and election reforms

Members also volunteered several other reform ideas, including: caps on campaign spending, easier ballot access for third parties, proportional representation and shorter campaign seasons.

Forty-four percent of members prefer full public financing of election campaigns, 12% prefer partial public financing and 44% support whichever is most likely to pass.



Public has deep concerns about media ownership, survey finds

A majority of respondents to a national survey said media ownership by fewer corporations decreases the number of viewpoints and quality of information available to the public. (The survey is online at www.fac.org/sofa_reports/index.aspx)

Almost eight in 10 surveyed believe the corporations that own news organizations exert substantial control over news gathering and reporting decisions. Only 4% said they believe there is no tampering with news coverage by the corporate owners of media organizations.

Fifty-four percent of those surveyed by the Nashville-based First Amendment Center and *American Journalism Review* magazine said they favor maintaining federal limits on how many radio, television and newspaper outlets may be owned by a single company. Congress is in the process of repealing new Federal Communications Commission rules relaxing media ownership restrictions.

Beverly Speer joins WDC staff

The latest addition to the Democracy Campaign staff is new advocacy director Beverly Speer, who started work at WDC in mid-August. Beverly comes to us from the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, where she held a variety of posts for more than six years. In her time at the League, she served as office manager, project coordinator, legislative research associate and eventually executive director.

Beverly is no stranger to WDC, having served on the board of directors of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign Education Project. She also has been active in the state and local chapters of the Sierra Club. She has a master's degree from the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Beverly replaces policy analyst Sandra Smith, who left WDC's staff at the end of May. Welcome aboard, Beverly!



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