

## Inside

### Page 2

Citizens call the questions  
Newspaper lauds 'people pressure'  
Ethics reform bill gains traction

### Page 3

'Paper trail' bill signed into law  
Civic dialogue set for March 25  
Legislative fundraising up again  
Dine for democracy March 28

### Page 4

Quotable characters

Get Big Money



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## Over 300 take part in first-ever 'public telling'

A standing-room-only crowd jammed a State Capitol hearing room January 23 for a "public telling" by the People's Legislature to shine the spotlight on political corruption in state government and challenge the state's political leaders to answer pointed questions about the way the public's business is being conducted and the need for political reforms.

The multipartisan citizen assembly heard impassioned testimony by national reform advocate Doris "Granny D" Haddock, retiring Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann, legislative whistleblower Lyndee Woodliff and utility and University of Wisconsin watchdog Nino Amato. Then a parade of People's Legislature members offered their own ideas and personal observations.



Citizens "question" photos of absent state leaders

The session began with People's Legislature members posing questions to photographs of Governor Jim Doyle, Assembly Speaker John Gard and Senate Majority Leader Dale Schultz, all of whom declined to appear in person or answer the multipartisan citizen assembly's questions in writing. Asking the questions, which touched on political corruption and specific proposed reforms, were lifelong Republican Carol McKy, UW student Kelly Egan and citizen activists Carol Lobes, Judy Adrian and Joe McClain.



Mike McCabe

One participant, a veteran of many government proceedings, called the event the best legislative meeting he had ever attended. WDC director Mike McCabe, who co-moderated the forum, said "it is safe to say that never before has more truth been allowed to be spoken at the Capitol in one morning."

People's Legislature organizers want the public telling to be the first forum of its kind, not the last. Participants were urged to replicate the event in their own communities, challenging legislators and candidates for state senate and assembly to answer the same questions posed to Doyle, Gard and Schultz. (To read the questions, turn to page 2.)

## Citizens call the questions

At the January 23 “public telling” sponsored by the People’s Legislature, the likenesses of Governor Jim Doyle, Assembly Speaker John Gard and Senate Majority Leader Dale Schultz were asked:

**1. Do you believe Wisconsin government is corrupt? If not, why not? If so, what are you going to do about it?**

**2. What do you believe individuals and groups making large campaign contributions expect in return for their donations? Are they “paying to play?”**

**3. According to the recent Wisconsin Policy Research Institute citizen survey, only 6% of state residents believe elected officials are representing them. Do you agree with the vast majority’s belief that Wisconsin citizens are not being represented by elected officials? If not, why not? If so, what will you do to restore public confidence in state leaders?**

**4. Do you support campaign finance reform that includes public financing of state election campaigns and full disclosure of all electioneering activity and all political donations that restores the state’s ban on corporate campaign contributions? If not, why not? If so, what will you do to make it the law of the land?**

**5. Specifically, do you support Assembly Bill 626, the bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation modeled after the systems already in place in Arizona and Maine and recently enacted in Connecticut? If so, what specific steps will you take to make sure it is enacted into law this session? If you do not support AB 626, on what grounds are you opposed?**

**6. Nearly half of state legislative races are uncontested and all but a handful are uncompetitive. Do you support Assembly Joint Resolutions 22 and 41, which would move Wisconsin toward the establishment of more competitive elections through reform of legislative redistricting to end partisan gerrymandering? If you do not support either or both of these reform measures, what is the basis of your opposition? If you do support them, what will you do to make sure they are approved by both houses this session?**

Doyle, Gard and Schultz all declined to participate in the forum, and all three also refused to answer the questions in writing.

“The silence of our state’s top political leaders speaks volumes,” said Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe, one of the event’s organizers. “But these are questions that need answering and we are going to keep asking.”

## Newspaper editorial: ‘Use people pressure to fix government’

In an editorial published on the Sunday after the first-ever public telling, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* hailed the “people pressure” being created by the People’s Legislature. The newspaper went on to say, “*Maybe the People’s Legislature can do what newspaper editorials, advisory referendums, loosely organized activists and a few lawmakers have been unable to accomplish: rehabilitate democracy in Wisconsin.*”

*That’s the mission of the multi-partisan, citizen assembly that has taken root in Madison. Its recent ‘public telling’ in a state Capitol hearing room was billed as an event ‘to shine the spotlight on political corruption in state government and challenge the state’s political leaders to answer pointed questions about the way the public’s business is being conducted and the need for political reform.’*

*Most people in the state the past few years know how badly that’s needed. Lawmakers want their constituents to believe that the wrongdoing they’ve been hearing and reading about is isolated, perpetrated by a few among them who have succumbed to the lure of power. But the parade of political leaders under investigation or in court says that more than a few people in state government have forgotten that their job is to represent the people.*

*Wisconsin lawmakers have refused to clean up state government themselves, but maybe the growing number of participants in the People’s Legislature will finally get their attention.”*

## Ethics reform bill on the move

As this issue of the *Big Money Bulletin* went to the printer, the Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee was poised to act on Senate Bill 1, the ethics reform legislation that merges the state Elections Board and Ethics Board into a single, politically independent Government Accountability Board with expanded investigative capabilities and the authority to prosecute wrongdoing.

SB 1 already has been passed by the state Senate and appears likely to get Assembly approval in the coming days or weeks. If the bill makes it to Governor Jim Doyle’s desk, he says he will sign it.

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## WDC-backed 'paper trail' bill gets legislative OK, Doyle's signature

At a January 4 bill signing ceremony, Governor Jim Doyle signed into law Assembly Bill 627, which requires any touch screen voting machine used in Wisconsin to produce a verifiable paper record.

The Democracy Campaign actively lobbied for the bill's passage, arguing that a paper trail is necessary to safeguard the integrity of elections and give voters faith that their votes will be counted.



*Governor Jim Doyle signs the "paper trail" bill as Representative Mark Pocan (left), Senator Jeff Plale (right) and Democracy Campaign director Mike McCabe (center) look on.*

## 'Dialogue for Democracy' set for March 25 in La Crosse

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Viterbo University and the League of Women Voters are sponsoring a "Dialogue for Democracy" in La Crosse on **Saturday, March 25** to engage citizens of all ages in discussion about how to reclaim democracy.

The public forum will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the **D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership** at Viterbo University. The institute is located at **900 Viterbo Drive** in La Crosse.

For more information on this civic dialogue, contact WDC advocacy director Beverly Speer at **608-255-4260** (or toll-free 888-455-4260) or by e-mail at

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## Legislative fundraising ramps up despite scandal atmosphere

State legislators raised a budget-year record \$3.4 million in 2005, and had twice as much in their campaign accounts as lawmakers had eight years ago.

These figures gleaned from the latest campaign finance reports show that elected state officials continue to accelerate the campaign arms race even as former colleagues have been convicted of illegal electioneering and as evidence of growing public disgust with state politics mounts. One recent poll showed that only 6% of state residents believe elected officials are representing voters' interests.

## Dine for democracy on March 28

If you live in the Madison area, you can help the Democracy Campaign by eating out on Tuesday, March 28. Participating Madison restaurants will donate 10% or more of their proceeds that day to support Community Shares of Wisconsin and its 57 member agencies, including the Democracy Campaign.

Participating restaurants include: **The Dardenelles**, 1851 Monroe Street; **Harvest**, 21 North Pinckney Street; **Quivey's Grove**, 6261 Nesbitt Road; **Tornado Club**, 116 South Hamilton Street; and **Weary Traveler**, 1201 Williamson Street.

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## You don't say....

***"For the most part, every activity that could be characterized as a campaign activity can be conceivably construed to be an act that furthers the legislative process."***

— Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice David Prosser, in a legal brief filed by the attorney for accused Waukesha Republican Scott Jensen, whose trial on felony charges of misconduct in public office began February 21.

***"David Prosser needs to be a little bit careful here. He might be admitting to a crime. Even if it's not prosecutable, it undermines the legitimacy of the judiciary if you admit to behavior that amounts to a felony."***

— UW-Madison law professor Walter Dickey, noting that agreeing to testify on Jensen's behalf, Prosser admitted he engaged in the same campaign activities when he was Assembly speaker as Jensen is accused of engaging in.

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## Quote, unquote . . . .

*“It is something that’s neither necessary nor sufficient to get a contract. But it is wise.”*

— Unnamed lobbyist on whether companies seeking state business should make campaign donations

*“Obviously, the campaign and the government are kept very separate.”*

— Melanie Fonder, spokeswoman for Governor Doyle’s re-election campaign, when asked about a donation to the governor by an Oracle Corporation executive the day after the company got a no-bid software maintenance contract.

*“There’s no question that Wisconsin has lost its image of clean government.... It doesn’t help the image to have people like Mike McCabe constantly characterizing state government as dirty and corrupt.”*

— State Elections Board director Kevin Kennedy

*“It’s official. Our politicians are feckless money-whores.”*

— *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* columnist Mike Nichols

*“Lobbying will continue to grow. The investment in lobbying is minimal compared to the outcomes.”*

— Stephen J. Wayne, Georgetown University political scientist, quoted in a February 13, 2006 article by *Washington Post* reporter Jeffrey Birnbaum. In the same article, David Carmen, president of The Carmen Group, a mid-sized lobbying firm, said his firm collected \$11 million in lobbying fees from clients in 2004 and got them \$1.2 billion in government assistance – more than \$100 for every dollar invested in lobbying.

*“The payoff is large but fairly typical of modern-day lobbying.”*

— David Carmen, president of The Carmen Group Inc.



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