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Reform groups quiz candidates on ethics

In an effort to pin down candidates on reform issues, the Democracy Campaign, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and Common Cause in Wisconsin teamed up in July to send an ethics questionnaire to all candidates for state office. The survey featured six yes-or-no questions covering campaign finance, ethics and other reforms.

All the candidates' responses are available on the Democracy Campaign's web site at www.wisdc.org/lwvquestions.php.

Democratic Governor Jim Doyle returned the survey and answered yes to all six questions, as did Wisconsin Green Party candidate for governor Nelson Eisman. Their Republican challenger, Green Bay-area Congressman Mark Green, did not respond and did not go on the record on the issues.

Three of the four candidates for Attorney General responded – incumbent Democrat Peg Lautenschlager, her Democratic primary challenger, Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and Republican J.B. Van Hollen, a former U.S. Attorney. Republican Paul Bucher, the Waukesha County district attorney, didn't respond to the questionnaire.

Over half of state legislative candidates – including 81 of 104 current legislators – refused to take a public stand on reform issues. Of the 36 candidates for state senate, 16 answered the questionnaire and one other replied but refused to answer. Nineteen did not reply at all. Of the 206 candidates for state assembly, 134 did not reply to the survey. Sixty-seven answered the questions, while five replied that they refuse to answer.

Of legislators running uncontested for their offices, 74% refused to answer the survey, while 76% of the top 25 fundraisers among legislative incumbents did not answer the questions. Also among the least likely to answer the survey were lawmakers whose names came up in testimony during the criminal trial of former Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen. Witnesses at the Jensen trial testified that 20 legislators got taxpayer-funded campaign help from state workers or were involved in campaign activities on state time in the 1998 or 2000 legislative elections. Sixteen of the 20 lawmakers did not answer the ethics questionnaire.

See our Big Money Blog at www.wisdc.org/blog/bigmoneyblog.html to see who among the legislators ducked our ethics survey. WDC and its reform partners continue to accept candidate responses to the survey, so citizens are urged to press candidates who have not yet responded to answer the ethics questions.

State's largest political gathering to assemble again September 9

WDC director to be featured 'Bob Fest' speaker

The fifth annual Fighting Bob Fest will be held on Saturday, September 9 at the Sauk County Fairgrounds in Baraboo.

Billed as an old-fashioned progressive "chautauqua," Fighting Bob Fest is a throwback to the progressive festivals held throughout the country in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Fighting Bob Fest carries on the legacy of Wisconsin political icon Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette by providing a forum for progressive ideas on issues facing Wisconsin and the nation as well as networking opportunities, action planning sessions, music and entertainment.

More than 1,200 people attended the first Fighting Bob Fest in 2002. The next year 2,500 came. Over 4,000 flocked to the third Bob Fest in 2004 and last year nearly 6,000 jammed the fairgrounds. This fast-growing event easily qualifies as Wisconsin's biggest political convention, dwarfing the annual gatherings of the state's major political parties.

Among this year's featured speakers will be 96-year-old reform crusader **Doris "Granny D" Haddock**, investigative journalist **Greg Palast**, Democracy Now! radio host **Amy Goodman**, Iowa Senator **Tom Harkin**, and Texas populist **Jim Hightower**.

Speakers with Wisconsin ties will include the Democracy Campaign's **Mike McCabe**, PR Watch director **John Stauber**, *The Nation* correspondent **John Nichols**, *Capital Times* editor **Dave Zweifel**, Congresswoman **Tammy Baldwin**, former University of Wisconsin Regent and consumer advocate **Nino Amato**, former state legislator **Stan Gruszynski** and former state school superintendent and ex-legislator **Bert Grover**.

This year's Bob Fest is going to be about action, not just good speeches. The People's Legislature will be kicking off a new opportunity for citizen action. Getting in on the ground floor of this grassroots activism initiative is one of many good reasons to attend this year's Fighting Bob Fest.

For directions to the Sauk County Fairgrounds and more information about Fighting Bob Fest, go online to <http://fightingbobfest.org>.

Scandals haven't slowed legislative campaign fundraising

State legislators can only be described as unfazed and unchastened by the convictions of five former legislative leaders and a top aide on felony and misdemeanor corruption charges in the last nine months, as they zealously raised money in the first half of 2006 to fill campaign coffers in preparation for this fall's elections.

Legislators are raising campaign money at a considerably faster pace than they did in the last two elections that featured a race for governor, a Democracy Campaign analysis of recently filed campaign finance reports shows.

Most of the money is flowing to those already in power. Assembly incumbents have \$9 for every dollar their challengers have managed to raise. Senate incumbents hold a \$4-to-\$1 cash advantage over the candidates who are seeking to replace them.

Legislative candidates raised twice as much in the first half of 2006 as they did during a comparable period in the first six months of 1998 and had more than double the money in their campaign accounts. Legislative candidates raised 74 percent more – \$2.54 million – between January and June 2006 than they did during the comparable six-month reporting period in the first half of 2002 when they accepted \$1.46 million. Their total cash on hand – \$4.86 million – as of June 30, 2006 was 35 percent higher than the \$3.6 million they had in their war chests June 30, 2002.

The High Cost of 'Free Speech'

Over the last 18 months, some 750 interest groups employed lobbyists to communicate with state officials and petition state government on their behalf.

Number of hours spent lobbying:

393,000

Cost of all this "free speech":

\$47 million

WDC calls Green on PAC money

The Democracy Campaign asked the state Elections Board in a July 24 memo to take prompt action to enforce the state law limiting the amount of money candidates for state office may accept from special interest political action committees (PACs).

At issue is a Wisconsin law limiting the amount of PAC money candidates for governor may take to \$485,000 in a four-year election cycle. Congressman Mark Green transferred \$1.3 million he raised as a member of Congress – including \$511,405 in PAC donations – from his federal campaign account to the state account he established to finance his bid for governor. He also has raised another \$156,140 from PACs since launching his state campaign, bringing his total PAC contributions to \$667,545. That is \$182,545 over the legal limit in state law.

The Green campaign is operating under the assumption that the \$511,405 in PAC money transferred in from the congressman's federal account does not count toward the state limit and that he therefore still can raise another \$485,000 from PACs over and above what he moved from his federal campaign fund.

The problem with this assumption is that it is not consistent with the plain meaning of the state law limiting PAC donations, nor does it comply with an emergency rule adopted by the Elections Board at its meeting on January 26, 2005.

The rule says funds converted by a federal campaign committee to a Wisconsin state campaign committee may not be used for campaigns for state office if the funds do not comply with Wisconsin campaign finance laws.

The Legislature's Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules objected to the Elections Board rule on February 9, 2005, but the full Legislature never enacted legislation reversing it before adjourning on July 12 of this year, as it is required to do to nullify a rule. After consulting with attorneys with the Legislative Council, the state Revisor of Statutes office as well as the Elections Board's legal counsel, WDC believes the rule remains in effect.

The board has put the issue on the agenda for its next meeting August 30.

Women and politics the subject of Oct. 3 forum in Eau Claire

The Democracy Campaign is organizing a public forum relating to women's issues and money in politics on **Tuesday, October 3** from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Davies Theatre on the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire campus.

Joining WDC in co-sponsoring the conference entitled *Women, Money and Politics: Who's Winning?* are the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, the UW-Eau Claire Progressive Student Association, Wisconsin Women's Network and the national student-based political reform group Democracy Matters.

The forum will feature panel discussions and open dialogue on how election campaign fundraising affects the health of our democracy and progress on issues facing women in Wisconsin. The keynote speaker will be Democracy Matters executive director Joan Mandel, formerly an associate professor of sociology and anthropology at Colgate University, where she also directed the college's Women's Studies Program, and founded and supervised Colgate's Center for Women's Studies.

Dr. Mandel will highlight public policy affecting the health and prosperity of women in Wisconsin and describe why campaign finance reform is the gateway to all other reform.

Leave a Legacy of Healthy Democracy

***Planned Giving to the Democracy Campaign:
A way to keep government clean, accountable
and democratic for generations to come***

Please consider including the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign in your estate and major giving plans. When you include WDC in your will, you leave an ongoing legacy of clean, ethical and accountable government in Wisconsin.

For more information call the Democracy Campaign at 608-255-4260 or toll-free at 1-888-455-4260 and ask for Debby.

CSW to fete 35th anniversary

Community Shares of Wisconsin, of which the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign is a member agency, is holding its 35th Anniversary Celebration – and the kickoff of its fall workplace fundraising campaigns – to be held in Madison at Monona Terrace on **Wednesday, September 27** from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

There will be hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, acoustic guitar by Sergio, recognition of the Backyard Heroes for



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2006, and a keynote address by donor activist Tracy Gary. As a young woman, Tracy gave away a \$1 million inheritance.

In the 35 years since, her work in philanthropy has had a transformative effect on many donors, nonprofits and the individuals they serve. For more information, call 608-256-1066 or go to www.communityshares.com. Suggested donation for the event is \$35.

Donations trump public health

The Democracy Campaign reported earlier this month on a proposed animal waste handling rule that was deep-sixed by state legislators who have received tens of thousands of dollars in campaign donations from large agribusiness interests. Here's what two lawmakers had to say after hours of testimony from rural residents whose polluted wells have sickened them and their children.

"As members of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, our first duty is to consider Wisconsin's agriculture industry," said Republican State Representative Debi Towns of Janesville, one of the agriculture industry's leading recipients of campaign contributions.

"...those folks know better than to use children's health to try to force through a rule, which was just too far-reaching," Republican Representative Mary Williams of Medford said.

More on this is online at www.wisdc.org/pr081006.php.



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