



Big Money Bulletin

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A Great Celebration!

Dear Friend,

If you couldn't make our 20th anniversary celebration and annual meeting on May 13, you missed out on some fun and inspiration.

About 150 members gathered with us at the Lussier Center in rural Madison on this beautiful spring evening, and a barn swallow flew in and joined the party for a few minutes, too.

We were all treated to a tremendous keynote address by former Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton. "Money in politics is the biggest threat to our democracy," the Democrat said. "It is not a partisan issue," she added. And she underlined its importance: "It is inextricably linked to long-term structural inequality -- political and economic -- if left unchecked." Her solution: "We must build a broad-based constituency for reform."



Former State Senator Dale Schultz and former Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton convene at the podium.

And then former State Senator Dale Schultz came on stage, echoing Lawton's concern about money in politics. The Republican also warned about the assaults on our "fragile institutions that have served us so well for so long," including K-12 public schools and the University of Wisconsin system.

After the talks, we cut our birthday cake and enjoyed casual conversation about how we can get our once-proud state back on track.

Which we vow to do here at the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign!

Best wishes,

Enbridge Is Environmentalist of the Year?

Here's a laugh that our research director, Mike Buelow, uncovered: On May 21, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) awarded Enbridge Energy with one of its "Business Friend of the Environment" awards. Making matters worse, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, which enforces environmental laws, helped choose the award recipients.

Enbridge was cited in a report by the Polaris Institute for having more than 800 oil spills between 1999 and 2010, including the largest inland oil spill in the country in 2010 when one of its pipelines burst and polluted 35 miles of the Kalamazoo River with at least 843,000 gallons of crude. Enbridge has spent more than \$1 billion to clean up the spill, and agreed to a \$75 million settlement by the state of Michigan.



In 2009, Enbridge Energy Partners, the Canadian company's U.S. affiliate, agreed to pay a \$1.1 million fine to the state of Wisconsin to settle a lawsuit accusing the company of several environmental violations during the construction of one of its pipelines. At the time, Republican Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen said, "The incidents of violation were numerous and widespread, and resulted in impacts to the streams and wetlands throughout the various watersheds."

If You're a Business, You May Skimp on Taxes

A Republican lawmaker is sponsoring a proposal that would require the state to give small businesses a pass the first time an audit finds that they underpaid their taxes.

The first audit would be a "learning experience" that would draw no interest penalty for financial problems that are found unless fraud or tax evasion are involved, according to Rep. Jesse Kremer of Kewaskum, the plan's author. Any accounting errors revealed by subsequent audits would ultimately incur payment penalties equivalent to the U.S. Federal Reserve prime rate plus 1 percent, rather than the current 12 percent flat rate today (the current Federal Reserve prime rate is around 3.25 percent).

Kremer said many small businesses, which are defined in his proposal as those that gross \$5 million a year or less, need a break because they cannot afford to hire accountants and are forced to "muddle through the regulations by themselves."

Vote "No" on AB176

Republicans in the state legislature recently introduced a bill, backed by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, which would prevent the public from knowing who is donating money to our legislative candidates. Assembly Bill 176 would make two big and poisonous changes to our campaign finance law.

First, it would raise the disclosure threshold from more than \$100 to more than \$500 in any two-year period. This would wipe out disclosures of direct contributions to all Assembly candidates because the current law says no one can give more than \$500 to a candidate for State Assembly anyway.

The current limit for State Senate races is \$1,000, so the bill would wipe out the public's ability to find out about a majority of the donors to State Senate races, as well.

Second, and equally troubling, the bill would delete the requirement to list the name and address of the person's employer. This could obscure the special interests that might be getting sweetheart deals from the very office-holders they are funding.

Please urge your legislators to vote "no" on Assembly Bill 176.

Special Interest Follies



Paper Is King

GOP lawmakers have inserted a plan in the proposed 2015-17 state budget that would increase timber-cutting on thousands of acres of state forests at the request of papermaking and logging interests.

The plan was pushed by Sen. Tom Tiffany of Hazelhurst and Rep. Mary Czaja of Irma.

Top contributors from the papermaking and logging industries to Tiffany between January 2014 and Oct. 20, 2014, were Richard Connor, of Laona, retired president of Nicolet Hardwoods, \$1,900; Richard Krawze, of Laona, a Pine River Lumber executive, \$1,400; San Orr, of Wausau, a retired Wausau Paper executive, \$1,000; and the Forestry and Paper Products PAC, \$1,000.

Top papermaker and logging industry contributions to Czaja between January 2014 and Oct. 20, 2014, came from Connor, \$500; William E. Johnson, of Hayward, owner of Johnson Timber Corp., \$500; and Peter Sturgul, of Tomahawk, a Packaging Corp. of America manager, and his wife, Nancy, \$300.

Insurers Grease the Skids

A group of large insurance companies is backing the controversial changes to the state's long-term care programs that GOP legislative leaders are proposing.

The changes to the state's Family Care and IRIS programs, which serve about 50,000 elderly and disabled individuals who do not live in nursing homes, were made to Republican Gov. Scott Walker's proposed 2015-17 state budget by the legislature's Joint Finance Committee on 12-4 party line votes.

The committee's action drew support from the Alliance of Health Insurers, a Madison-based lobbying group comprised of eight health insurers that claim to control two-thirds of the state's health insurance market. Individual and PAC contributions from those companies to GOP legislators have been lavish from January 2011 and Oct. 20, 2014. Here's the record:

Humana, \$59,785; Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, \$29,150; Managed Health Services, \$29,000; Delta Dental, \$14,000; Wisconsin Education Association Insurance Corp., \$6,850; Molina Healthcare of Wisconsin, \$6,800; Wisconsin Physicians Service, \$1,950; and Unitedhealthcare, \$1,900.

The Payoff on Vouchers

The Joint Finance Committee decided to increase spending on the statewide school voucher program by \$48 million over the next two years, and to expand the cap on the program to 1 percent of the student population in each of the state's school districts in the next year. And that percentage would go up steadily over the next decade, after which there would be no cap whatsoever.

One of the leading advocates for Wisconsin's school voucher program is the Washington, D.C.-based American Federation for Children, which spent an estimated \$4.3 million on legislative elections between 2010 and 2014 to support Republican candidates.

Among the federation's key advisers is the disgraced former GOP legislative leader Scott Jensen, whom we selected as our first "Influence Peddler of the Month" award recipient. (It's not an award you want to win.)



Our Phone Keeps Ringing



We've been busy fielding calls from big-league reporters

who are hot on the trail of money in Wisconsin politics. All within one recent week, we got calls from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, and *CBS News*. Looks like the word is getting out...

Double Your Gift, Quadruple Our Resources!

Here's a unique opportunity to double the impact of your support to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign.

A generous funder of ours who admires our work has offered a matching gift on one condition: You must increase your level of giving. So if you double your tax-deductible gift from last time, this funder will match it!

This way, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign will quadruple its resources, and we'll be able to reach many more people in this state with our vital message.

Time is of the essence because of the escalating and menacing assaults on democracy we're facing right now in Wisconsin.

Together, we can turn this state around yet!

Please use the envelope inside and respond today. Thank you.



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