

# Big Money Bulletin

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## A Public Telling on Big Money

Dear Friend,

On January 21, the sixth anniversary of the notorious *Citizens United* decision, we participated in a fun hearing in the State Capitol on how to get big money out of politics. It wasn't an official hearing, mind you. It was a "public telling," which we co-sponsored with our friends at People for the American Way, United to Amend, WisPIRG, and Wisconsin Voices.

Tom Thoresen of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters and Kim Wright of Midwest Environmental Advocates spoke about the imminent threats to our water and our public lands because of the power of private money in politics.

Congressman Mark Pocan spoke about how corrupting the money chase is, both in Madison and in Washington.

State Rep. Chris Taylor spoke about the Koch Brothers and the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the power they wield in our beloved state.

State Rep. Lisa Subeck told how, a year ago, she proposed to let the people of Wisconsin vote in a referendum to overturn *Citizens United* and proclaim once and for all that corporations aren't people and money isn't speech. Her bill is the only one assigned to the Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics, which has yet to meet this session!

To dramatize this inaction, we placed giant pictures of Assembly Committee Co-Chair Rob Hutton, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald behind the podium. It was quite a sight.

And we handed the podium over to the dozens of people who had come from around the state to express their own concerns about the crisis of our democracy in Wisconsin—and what we can do about it, including passing referendums in our local towns.

It was a powerful -- and empowering -- event, and we hope to sponsor more of these for you down the road.



All best,

*Matt*

## Influence Peddler of the Month

For February, we picked none other than Diane Hendricks. You remember her, don't you? She's the one who whispered in Scott Walker's ear in January 2011, asking him, "When are you going turn Wisconsin into a right-to-work state?" To which Walker infamously replied, "First, I'm going to divide and conquer."

It should be no secret why Walker was meeting with her. She's worth \$3.4 billion, and she's not shy about tossing it around.

Hendricks, of Afton, owns ABC Supply, the nation's largest wholesale distributor of siding and roofing materials, which she co-founded with her late husband, Ken, in the early 1980s. Hendricks also owns Hendricks Holding Co., which she uses to manage about two dozen other companies.

Hendricks reportedly paid no state taxes in 2010 because of a change in her company's tax structure.

Between January 1995 and December 2015, Hendricks contributed more than \$644,000 to Wisconsin candidates for statewide office and the legislature – substantially more than any other individual. Hendricks also tied with the late Texas home builder Bob Perry for the largest single contribution made to a Wisconsin state candidate: \$500,000 to Walker during his 2012 recall.

In addition to her direct contributions to state candidates, Hendricks also made contributions totaling \$1.1 million to the Republican Party of Wisconsin in 2014 and 2015.

She peddles her influence not only in Wisconsin but all across the country. Hendricks has contributed more than \$6.5 million to federal GOP candidates, political action committees (PACs), and party committees. You get bet she gets her phone calls returned.

## Who Needs Local Control?

Local control and home rule are staples of Wisconsin's politics—at least they used to be, especially among Republicans. But this new breed of Republicans in Madison want to take local control away, and with it the power of the people to govern themselves so long as they're not violating anyone's constitutional rights.

Last year, Republicans backed bills restricting the zoning authority of local governments, limiting the funding referendums that local school districts can offer, and prohibiting the local regulation of

companies like Uber.

This year they're pushing bills that would take away the ability of communities to have a referendum before the selloff of their local water utilities, and they pushed a bill that would prohibit villages and counties from issuing local ID cards.

And if you can believe this, they dug even deeper into local affairs by promoting a bill that would ban local governments from passing laws or issuing regulations on the kinds of "doggy bags" that restaurants give you, or the kinds of "sleeves" that coffee shops put around your to-go cups.



## We Pushed on John Doe!

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign led the successful drive to convince the district attorneys of Dane, Milwaukee, and Iowa counties to join the John Doe II prosecution for a possible appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Such an appeal is crucial because the Wisconsin Supreme Court, contrary to 40 years of U.S. Supreme Court precedent, ruled last July that the First Amendment requires states to allow coordination between candidates and outside groups.

If this decision stands, it would destroy any meaningful limits on donations to candidates and any meaningful requirements for disclosure.

While the result in this case is unclear at this moment, we wanted to thank you for your concern on this issue, and we wanted to thank the hundreds and hundreds of other citizens who responded to our plea by calling or e-mailing the courageous district attorneys: Ismael Ozanne of Dane County, Larry Nelson of Iowa County, and John Chisholm of Milwaukee County.

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## Special Interest Follies



### Who Is Behind Privatizing Water?

Legislation to make it easier to sell off municipal water utilities to private companies has been moving quickly down the pike. The measures, Assembly Bill 554 and Senate Bill 432, authored by Rep. Tyler August, of Lake Geneva, and Sen. Frank Lasee, of De Pere, would make it much harder for local citizens to be able to hold a referendum on the question. Current law requires such a referendum before any sale can go through. But this legislation would require petition gatherers to get at least 10 percent of the local votes cast in the last governor's race to sign on within 60 days of the city council approving such a sale.

Among the groups supporting the legislation are the construction industry and AquaAmerica, a private water and wastewater treatment company in Pennsylvania that operates in eight states. AquaAmerica spent \$36,500 on lobbying in 2015 when the bills were being developed.

The construction industry has lavished money on the authors of the bills. From January 2010 through June 2015, Frank Lasee received \$17,957 in donations from employees of the construction industry, while Tyler August received \$3,685.

The legislation is similar to a "model" bill proposed by the American Legislative Exchange Council, ALEC, benignly called the Water/Wastewater Utility Public-Private Partnership Act.

August and Lasee, by the way, are among several GOP lawmakers with current or past ties to ALEC.

## Civil Service Deform

The legislature's rewrite of the state's 110-year-old civil service law did not come out of the blue. The bill, which does away with objective tests for hiring employees and makes it easier to fire public sector workers, was backed by the state's largest business group, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), and Americans for Prosperity, a conservative ideological group created and funded by billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch.

WMC boasts a membership of 3,500 businesses that represent more than a dozen special interests groups, which contributed \$11.2 million to current Republican legislators and another \$31.8 million to Scott Walker between January 2011 and June 2015.

Together, the two groups spent an estimated \$22.4 million between January 2010 and December 2015 to help elect legislators to their liking.

### Some Dems Like Nuclear Power

In December, the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities voted 13-0 to repeal Wisconsin's 33-year-old moratorium on nuclear power plant construction. Five Democrats voted with the Republican backers of the bill, AB384.

Groups supporting the bill include utilities, labor unions, the business community, and the rightwing ideological group, Americans for Prosperity. Contributions to Democratic lawmakers from members of the utility industry and the electrical, carpentry, plumbing, and other trades whose unions support the bill totaled about \$510,000 between January 2011 and June 2015, including about \$31,000 to the five Democrats on the Assembly committee who voted for the bill.

Here are those Democrats, and the money they've received from the pro-nuclear folks:

Rep. Robb Kahl, of Monona, about \$11,900, including nearly \$6,200 from trades unions and about \$5,700 from utilities;

Rep. Josh Zepnick, of Milwaukee, \$7,400, including \$4,100 from trades unions and \$3,300 from utilities;

Rep. Eric Genrich, of Green Bay, \$5,550, including \$4,750 from trades unions and \$800 from utilities;

Rep. Melissa Sargent, of Madison, \$3,200, including \$2,450 from trades unions and \$750 from utilities;

Rep. Amanda Stuck, of Appleton, \$3,000, all from trades unions.

Of these five, Representatives Sargent and Stuck reversed their support and voted no when the bill came before the Assembly for a vote.



## Please Donate Today!

If you like the work we've been doing, if you want to see us continue to expose the problem of money in politics, and if you want us to keep up the fight for a democracy where everyone's voice is heard and every vote matters, then please send us a **tax-deductible** gift today.

You can donate online at [www.wisdc.org](http://www.wisdc.org), or send it in the old-fashioned way to 203 S. Paterson St., Suite 100, Madison, WI 53703. Either way, we really appreciate it!

## Mark Your Calendar

On **Thursday, May 12**, we're having our **annual meeting** in Madison, and you're invited! It will once again be at the Lussier Family Heritage Center from 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Our featured speaker will be University of Illinois Professor Robert McChesney, co-author with John Nichols of *Dollarocracy* and, most recently, *People Get Ready: The Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy*.

More details to follow.



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