

# Big Money Bulletin

## Inside

### Page 2

Influence Peddler  
Who Bought Our Supreme  
Court?  
11 More Towns Say No to  
*Citizens United*

### Page 3

Behind That Zombie Homes Bill  
Field Day for Landlords  
Who Wants Local Control?

### Page 4

Annual Meeting  
No April Fool's Joke



**April 2016**

**Edition No. 99**

**On the Web:**

**[www.wisdc.org](http://www.wisdc.org)**



## Come to Our Party!

Dear Friend,

Mark your calendar: Our annual meeting at the Lussier Family Heritage Center in rural Madison is set for Thursday, May 12, from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

We've got a great lineup for you. Our keynote speaker is the media scholar and social critic Robert McChesney, co-author with John Nichols most recently of *People Get Ready: The Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy*.

We also are honored to have Representative JoCasta Zamarripa, a Democrat, on the docket, along with Senator Rob Cowles, a Republican.

One of our great partners, Andrea Kaminski, the head of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, will say a few words. And Wisconsin poet Angie Trudell Vasquez, who works for the ACLU of Wisconsin, will share some of her art with us.

It's going to be a fun, fast-paced event, and you'll receive wisdom and inspiration from our speakers.

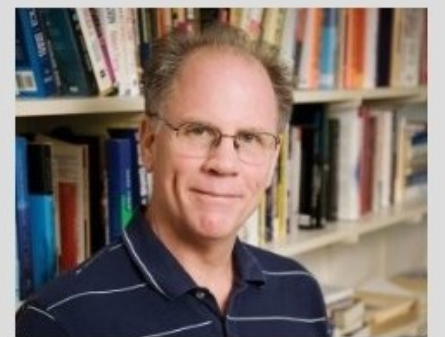
I know I'm looking forward to it.

And I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

Please let us know if you will be attending by contacting Beverly at [speer@wisdc.org](mailto:speer@wisdc.org), or by calling us at (608) 255-4260.

Best wishes,

*Matt*



## Influence Peddler of the Month

In March, our highly coveted award for the "Influence Peddler of the Month" went to **Kurt Bauer**. Formerly head of the Wisconsin Bankers Association, he is president and chief executive officer of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), the state's largest business organization, and one of the most powerful special interest influences on state policymaking and elections.

Under Bauer's watch, the group has secretly raised and spent an estimated \$13.7 million to support Republican and conservative candidates in elections for Supreme Court, governor, attorney general and the legislature.

In April, we gave the award to **Richard Uihlein and his wife, Elizabeth**, of Lake Forest, Ill. Since the 2009-10 election cycle, the Uihleins have contributed more than \$26 million to try to elect Republican and conservative federal candidates. More than two-thirds of the couple's federal contributions, nearly \$18 million, were made in just the first 13 months of the current 2015-16 election cycle. They gave a total of \$7.2 million to two committees that supported Gov. Scott Walker's short-lived 2016 presidential bid. They've also given \$3.5 million to Club for Growth Action.

Their top Wisconsin recipients between January 2010 and December 2015 were Walker's campaign for governor, \$284,500; the Republican Party of Wisconsin, \$220,000; and the Prosser Victory Recount Fund, \$50,000.

## Who Bought Our Supreme Court?

Do you want 2 million reasons why Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Bradley beat Judge JoAnne Kloppenburg on April 5?

Here they are: Outside groups for Bradley spent about \$2,714,000 while those for Kloppenburg spent about \$712,000. That's a ratio of 3.8 to 1.

Topping the list of outside spenders was the

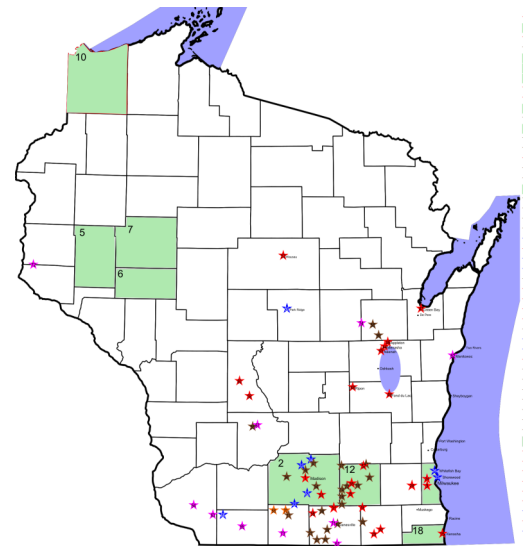
Wisconsin Alliance for Reform, a conservative Madison-based group formed late last year that doled out an estimated \$2.6 million on four television ads and a radio ad to support Bradley.

Behind the Alliance was the Greater Wisconsin Committee, which spent an estimated \$710,000 on issue ads and independent expenditures to support Kloppenburg. Greater Wisconsin was formed in 2004 to mostly support Democratic candidates for statewide office and the legislature.

Noticeable by their seeming absence were the Wisconsin Club for Growth and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, which in previous contested races for the top court spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and sometimes more than a million dollars to help elect conservative candidates. It may be that this time around they funneled their money to the Wisconsin Alliance for Reform.

## 11 More Towns Say No to Citizens United

On April 5, referendums passed by overwhelming margins in 11 towns in Wisconsin to amend the U.S. Constitution to say that corporations are not persons and money is not speech.



Here's the breakdown:

Belmont (88%)	Lancaster (85%)
Beloit (74%)	Monroe (83%)
Brodhead (85%)	New London (81%)
Clarno (85%)	Platteville (84%)
Darlington (81%)	York (86%)
Janesville (84%)	

This brings the number of Wisconsin communities that have called for such an amendment to 72. In total, 2.5 million people (44% of Wisconsinites) live in these jurisdictions.

The group in Wisconsin that has been leading this charge is United to Amend. For more information: [wiuta.org](http://wiuta.org)

---

# Special Interest Follies

## Behind That Zombie Homes Law

Later this month, Scott Walker is expected to sign a bill into law that makes it more difficult for communities to get rid of abandoned homes.

The measure, Assembly Bill 720, was introduced by Republican Rep. Terry Katsma, of Oostburg, a former banker, and Sen. Frank Lasee, of De Pere.



Currently, new lenders are required to sell foreclosed, abandoned properties, which are often referred to as “zombie homes,” after a five-week period. Under this bill lenders would have a year to decide whether to sell the property.

Zombie homes have proliferated since the 2008 mortgage crisis, and these abandoned properties have become the targets of vandals and drug dealers and have driven down nearby property values.

Overall, the banking and finance industry has contributed about \$830,000 between January 2011 and December 2015 to Republicans in the legislature.

Katsma, himself a banker, received nearly \$8,000 from bankers and financiers over the last two years. Among Katsma’s largest contributors were PACs controlled by BMO Harris Bank, the Community Bankers of Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin Bankers Association, which backed the bill.

The banking and finance industry gave Lasee, who was elected to the Senate in 2010, about \$16,000 between January 2011 and December 2015. Lasee’s top contributors in the banking industry include \$1,000 each from PACs controlled by the Community Bankers of Wisconsin and J.P. Morgan Chase, and \$825 from John Slatky, of Luxemburg, president of the Bank of Luxemburg.

## Who Wants Local Control?

In the last session, several laws were passed that curb local, democratic control by towns, cities, and counties. One of the most intrusive was the one that forbids communities from banning or regulating plastic bags, takeout containers and other packaging, including even coffee cup insulating sleeves.

The bill was similar to model legislation created by a secretive pro-business group called the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). And the push for the measure was led by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), the state’s largest business organization. Other backers of the bill included the Koch Companies, Wisconsin Paper Council, Wisconsin Restaurant Association, American Chemistry Council, Wisconsin Grocers Association, and the Wisconsin Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association.

Overall, special interests represented by WMC and other trade groups that supported the container-ban bill contributed \$12.2 million to current Republican legislators and another \$32.2 million to Walker between January 2011 and December 2015.

## Field Day for Landlords

This spring, Scott Walker signed into law a bill that is a field day for landlords. It makes it easier and faster for landlords to evict tenants and dispose of personal property that is left behind. And in another attack on local control, it forbids communities from passing ordinances that are stricter than state law when it comes to licensing landlords, requiring rental unit inspections, charging inspection fees, and even imposing tougher sprinkler rules.

The legislation was authored by GOP Sen. Frank Lasee, of De Pere, and Rep. Robert Brooks, of Saukville. It was supported by the Wisconsin Realtors Association, the industry’s statewide lobbying and advocacy group, as well as apartment building owners, and opposed chiefly by local governments.

Real estate interests contributed about \$831,300 to current legislators between January 2011 and June 2015, including about \$701,500, or 84 percent of it, to the GOP majority. Lasee, a former real estate broker, received about \$33,400, and Brooks, a real estate company owner, received \$750 from real estate interests.

## No April Fool's Joke

On April 1, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign submitted a statement to the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections, which was holding an informational-only hearing on redistricting. Here is part of that statement:

"We enthusiastically support the effort by Wisconsin legislators to adopt the Iowa model for drawing Wisconsin's political maps. Assembly Bill 328 and Senate Bill 58 authorize the Legislative Reference Bureau to draw Wisconsin's district maps in an impartial, nonpartisan manner, which is vital to help restore people's faith in our democracy.

Iowa has been using this method for 36 years now, to great effect. There's no reason why we can't do it here in Wisconsin.

We need transparency in our government. We need public involvement in the redistricting process. At the moment, we have neither. We need to restore our citizens' faith in their government.

One necessary way to do that is to have nonpartisan map-drawing, and no more gerrymandering.

### Reminder: 2016 Annual Meeting

**When:** Thursday, May 12, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.

**Where:** Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Rd, Madison (beltline W Broadway exit 264, just south of South Towne)

**Keynote:** Robert McChesney, co-author with John Nichols most recently of *People Get Ready: The Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy*.

**Special guests:** Sen. Rob Cowles, Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa, Wisconsin League of Women Voters Executive Director Andrea Kaminski, and poet Angie Trudell Vasquez.

**Host:** Matt Rothschild

**RSVP:** By Monday, May 9, to (608) 255-4260 or [speer@wisdc.org](mailto:speer@wisdc.org).



200 S Paterson St. Suite 100  
Madison, WI 53703

608 255-4260  
[www.wisdc.org](http://www.wisdc.org)



Find us on  
**Facebook**



follow us on  
**twitter**