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Pocan Sends Letter to Wisconsin Organizations Warning About Dark Money Contributions

*Strengthens Commitment to Expose Those Who Fund Anti-Equality Group
Wisconsin Alliance for Reform*

Madison – Rep. Mark Pocan sent a letter to nearly sixty organizations in the state urging them to not contribute funds to the shadowy right wing group Wisconsin Alliance for Reform. The group has poured \$2 million into ads for a candidate's campaign to fill the Wisconsin Supreme Court vacancy.

Little is known about the group because of their unwillingness to state their goals and disclose their board of directors or donors. However, what is known appears to be an anti-equality agenda fighting against the LGBT community. Their website was registered by Lorri Pickens, who led the campaign against marriage equality in 2006. Furthermore, she has had deep connections to anti-equality groups for over a decade.

"Too many shadowy groups give themselves a nondescript name, try to operate in the shadows, and avoid any public knowledge about their functions," **Pocan said.** "In this case, we think we've figured out the motives of the so-called 'Wisconsin Alliance for Reform.' Their agenda appears to be one of a hate-filled mission of anti-equality to the LGBT community, disguised under other premises. The public deserves to know what they are really about, and they deserve to know who funds them."

In the letter, Pocan writes, *"Transparency is the only way to root out the dark money that continues to perpetuate anti-equality rhetoric to win votes. It is imperative to expose and hold the organizations and individuals accountable who are willing to fund hate groups through secretive donations. I urge you to not contribute funds to the shadowy Wisconsin Alliance for Reform, and want to let you know I will be actively*

seeking to find out who donates to this anti-equality group. Voters deserve to know who is supporting hate with dark money."

Since the power of money in politics has grown to unprecedented levels after the *Citizens United* decision, partisan shadow organizations have been able to dump large amounts of money into elections without disclosing their donors. It is important for the people of Wisconsin to know who is cutting checks to Wisconsin Alliance for Reform. By lending their financial backing to this group, organizations and individuals are supporting hateful rhetoric and policies towards the LGBT community in Wisconsin.

The full text of the letter is below:

Earlier this year we marked the sixth year anniversary of the Citizens United decision, which has precipitated the spending of almost half-a- billion dollars from secretive sources on our elections. The new campaign finance landscape has given dark money unlimited influence over our elections and allowed groups to operate in the shadows without any transparency or accountability.

In most cases, these partisan shadow organizations dump tons of money into our elections with no stated purpose or outcome, hiding behind their 501(c)(4) status, attempting to shield their donors, and filling our airwaves with hateful rhetoric.

For example, in our state, the Wisconsin Alliance for Reform poured \$2 million into ads for a candidate's campaign to fill the Wisconsin Supreme Court vacancy. Even though they claimed no stated agenda (other than generic reform), in reality we believe have found their true agenda. Their website was registered by Lorri Pickens, who led the campaign against marriage equality in 2006. Furthermore, she has had deep connections to anti-equality groups for over a decade.

Voters usually have little gauge on the core principles of these "nonprofit" groups. By their actions and how they have directed their secretive spending, one could come to the conclusion that this group has a hate-filled disposition towards the LGBT community.

It is important for the people of Wisconsin to know who is cutting checks to Wisconsin Alliance for Reform. By lending their financial backing to this group, organizations and individuals are supporting hateful rhetoric and policies towards the LGBT community in Wisconsin. Any individual or business who gives to this group that preys on and foster hate, should be exposed. I am committed to aggressively seeking out who are donors to this group, in conjunction with members of trade and other associations, to ensure the public has the right to know who shares these values.

Transparency is the only way to root out the dark money that continues to perpetuate anti-equality rhetoric to win votes. It is imperative to expose and hold the organizations and individuals accountable who are willing to fund hate groups through secretive donations. I urge you to not contribute funds to the shadowy Wisconsin Alliance for Reform, and want to let you know I will be actively seeking to find out who donates to this anti-equality group. Voters deserve to know who is supporting hate with dark money.

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