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***Statement of State Bar President Diane Diel in Support of Senate Bill 40:  
The Impartial Justice Bill***  
February 6, 2009

“The escalating cost of Supreme Court election campaigns in Wisconsin, highlighted by last year’s record-setting \$6 million expenditure level, has alarmed many observers concerned that the infusion of such large amounts into a judicial campaign poses a threat to both judicial neutrality and public trust in the justice system.

“The State Bar of Wisconsin shares these concerns and supports public financing for Supreme Court campaigns, as provided in Senate Bill 40, co-authored by Senator Pat Kreitlow and Representative Gordon Hintz. This legislation is the most direct and visible way to maintain the integrity of Wisconsin’s courts and bolster public confidence in them.

“The State Bar Board of Governors specifically addressed the issue of public financing for Supreme Court campaigns in 2006 and concluded that such a reform would “help maintain the integrity and independence of Wisconsin’s courts, where even the perception of bias destroys public trust and confidence in the justice system.”

“The Bar’s position recognizes the fundamental importance of assuring Wisconsin residents and businesses that justices cannot be influenced by contributions to the election campaigns of judicial candidates. This reflects the unique and critical role that the court plays in our system of government.

“I strongly urge other Wisconsin residents to join us in affirming the principle that Wisconsin’s highest court must remain fair, neutral, impartial and nonpartisan by supporting Senate Bill 40.”

*The State Bar of Wisconsin is the mandatory professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 20,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit [www.wisbar.org](http://www.wisbar.org) or [www.legalexplorer.com](http://www.legalexplorer.com)*

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