

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2001-02

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Campaigns &
Elections
(AC-CE)

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

Published Documents

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

**

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

➤ **01hr_ab0155_AC-CE_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

16 North Carroll • Suite 420 • Madison, WI 53703 • 608/255-4260 • www.wisdc.org

March 1, 2001

TO: Members of the Assembly

FROM: Mike McCabe, Executive Director

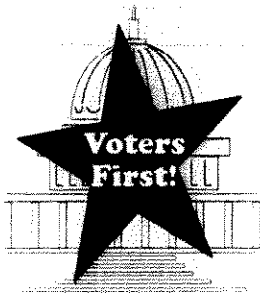
SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 155

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign urges you to support Assembly Bill 155, the Voters First campaign finance reform bill. ***AB 155 and its Senate companion bill, SB 62, is the first and only comprehensive campaign reform proposal to be sponsored by members of both parties in both houses.***

Voters First also has the support of a diverse coalition of 42 public interest organizations, including such groups as AARP, the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Wisconsin Counties Association, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Wisconsin Towns Association, Alliance of Cities, League of Women Voters, Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy and the Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives.

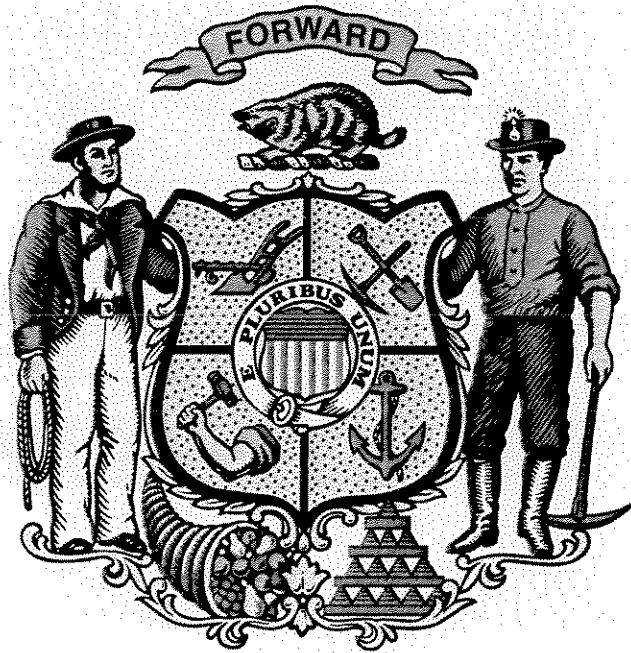
AB 155/SB 62 strikes a bipartisan balance by incorporating provisions from campaign reform bills offered last session by both Republicans and Democrats, including the Assembly-approved AB 701, the Senate-passed SB 190, SB 111 authored by Senator Brian Burke and Representative Steve Freese, SB 113 authored by Senator Mike Ellis, and former Governor Thompson's Kettle Commission proposal.

Sponsors of AB 155/SB 62 include Representatives Terry Musser, David Travis and Peter Bock, and Senators Burke, Sheila Harsdorf, Peggy Rosenzweig and Jon Erpenbach. We urge members of the Assembly to join this bipartisan group of sponsors in supporting this legislation and encourage you to request that your name be added to the list of sponsors.



VOTERS FIRST Coalition

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Common Cause in Wisconsin
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin
AARP
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Wisconsin Counties Association
Wisconsin County Executives and Administrators Association
League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Wisconsin Towns Association
Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy
American Association of University Women – WI
National Farmers' Organization – WI
Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives
Center for Public Representation
Wisconsin Homecare Organization
Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities
Wisconsin Council of the Blind
Survival Coalition of Disability Groups
United Cerebral Palsy of Wisconsin
Autism Society of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Directors and Boards
National Association of Social Workers – WI Chapter
Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group
AFSCME
Wisconsin Federation of Teachers
Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association
Wisconsin's Environmental Decade
1000 Friends of Wisconsin
The River Alliance
Citizens' Utility Board
Wisconsin IMPACT
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
United Church of Christ's Social Concerns Commission
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association
Coalition of Independent Living Centers
Mental Health Association – Office of Public Policy
New Transportation Alliance
Progressive Fox Valley
Door County Environmental Council



The logo for the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) consists of the letters "CWAG" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid black rectangular box.The logo for the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups features the text "Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups" in a white, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines and centered within a solid black rectangular box.

Memo

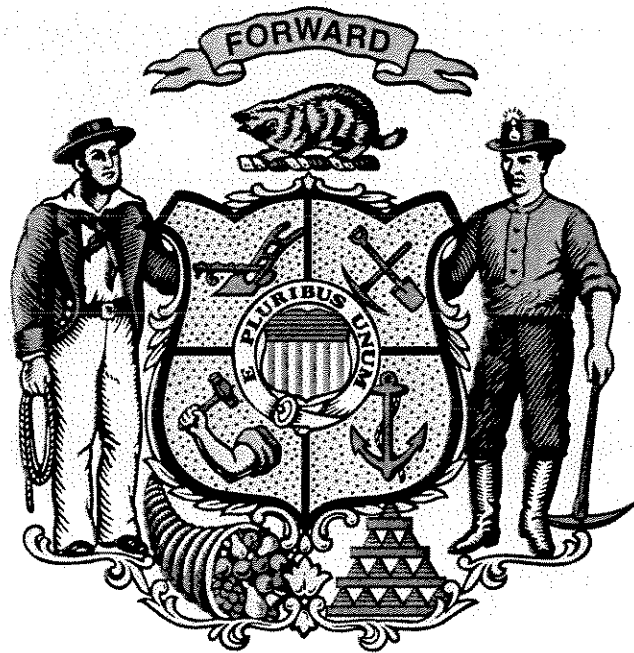
To: Wisconsin Legislators
From: Tom Frazier
Date: March 2, 2001
Re: Campaign Finance Reform (AB 155 and SB 62)

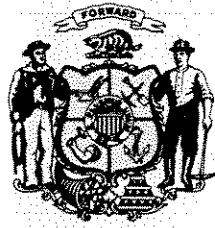
I am writing to urge you to co-sponsor and support AB 155 and SB 62. This past election makes it very clear that campaign finance reform is necessary to assure that people have an equal voice in our democratic system.

Last year, as CWAG developed its 2000/2002 platform, this issue of campaign finance reform came up in every one of our nine geographical districts. Older people in Wisconsin want to see action on this issue--the sooner the better.

CWAG's Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the "Voters First" campaign which is now included in AB 155 and SB 62. We believe that this proposal represents an excellent bipartisan compromise of almost all previous proposals and has the strong support of a broad base of organizations representing thousands of citizens.

Again, please consider co-sponsoring and voting for these bills. If you decide to co-sponsor I would appreciate your letting me know. You can e-mail me at tfrazier@cwag.org. Thank you.





BRIAN BURKE

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

**Testimony of Sen. Brian Burke
Voters First Reform -- SB62/AB155
Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee
March 15, 2001**

I want to express my thanks for this committee's prompt hearing on the Voters First proposal. I truly appreciate this opportunity for the public's voice to be heard on the critical issue of campaign finance reform. Obviously, overcoming inertia on this issue won't be easy. But unless we allow the public to be heard, and unless we really listen, the task will be impossible.

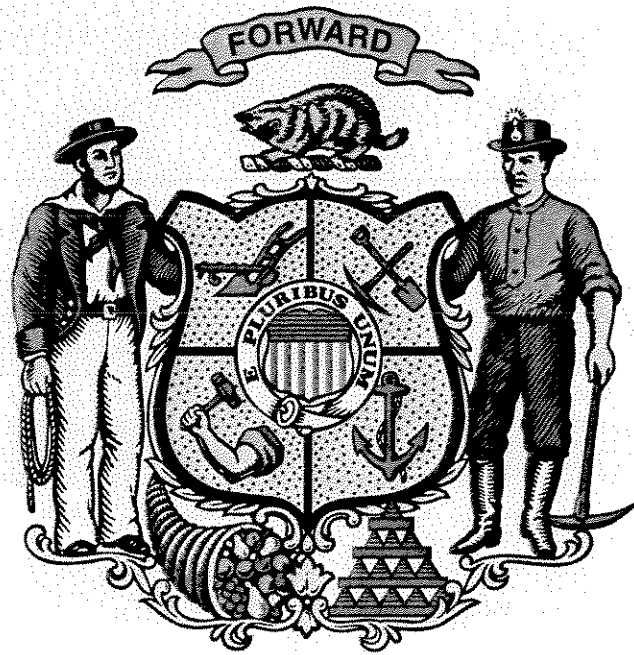
I am proud to be a co-author of this proposal. The legislators who have joined in this effort represent both houses and both parties. A number of us have offered sweeping campaign finance reform proposals in the past. This builds on the best ideas from each plan. For this reason, it has the best chance of success. Now is the time to act.

For reform to become reality, it has to be bipartisan in spirit and substance. Voters First meets this standard. It establishes limits on campaign spending, tightens limits on contributions and requires full and prompt disclosure of all activities intended to influence the outcome of our elections.

Voters First draws not only on a cross section of this body's best thinking on the subject, but some of these elements are already working in states like Minnesota. Provisions like a higher check-off that allows citizens to target their funds to the party of their choice, and a \$50 tax credit for eligible contributions, work in Minnesota because they encourage more citizens to get involved.

Voters First has the support of more than 40 statewide organizations, ranging from the American Association of University Women to the Wisconsin Counties Association. It does exactly what the vast majority of Wisconsin voters demanded in the November referendum.

The challenge before us is nothing less than restoring confidence in our electoral system and encouraging full and free participation. Voters First is an important first step. It is time we take this step together. Thank you.



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Every kid
deserves a
Great School!*

Testimony to the Assembly Committee on Campaigns & Elections in Opposition to Assembly Bill 155, the "Voters First" Bill

Jack O'Meara
March 15, 2001

The Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) believes that campaign finance reform is a critical issue in Wisconsin. The increased campaign spending in the past several elections have led the public to believe that money, as opposed to ideas and issues, is the only political currency. If we can shift the emphasis of campaigns away from a spending arms race and back to issues, campaigns can be more competitive, and the public will become more active in the voting booth.

To restore public confidence in elections, WEAC supports campaign finance reform that will level the campaign playing field. **WEAC also believes that reforms should be comprehensive, equitable, and practical.** And WEAC believes the reforms must respect the constitutional rights of Wisconsin citizens or the courts will throw them out.

In recent years, WEAC has supported a number of campaign finance reform proposals, including the recommendations of Governor Thompson's Blue Ribbon Commission on Campaign Finance Reform, also known as the Kettl Commission. Last session, WEAC supported the Joint Finance Committee version of the Impartial Justice bill, which would have provided full public financing for Supreme Court races, and will support a new version the bill this session.

WEAC opposes Assembly Bill 155 because it has many constitutional problems and is not practical. These problems include:

Defining "Mass Media Communications" As Political Advocacy

The bill attempts to define as "political" all mass media communications within 60 days of an election that include the name or likeness of a candidate. By doing this, it subjects issue ads to the same regulations as independent expenditures and prohibits corporations from engaging in issue ads.

Terry Craney, President
Michael A. Butera, Executive Director

Such an approach has been held unconstitutional under *Buckley v. Valeo*, *Wisconsin Elections Bd. v. WMC*, and *N.C. Right to Life, Inc. v. Bartlett*, 168 F.3d 705 (4th Cir. 1999), *Maine Right to Life Comm. v. FEC*, 98 F.3d 1 (1st Cir. 1996), *Iowa Right to Life v. Williams*, 187 F.3d 963 (8th Cir. 1999). The Wisconsin Supreme Court stated in *WMC*:

"Buckley stands for the proposition that it is unconstitutional to place reporting or disclosure requirements on communications which do not expressly advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate."

Linking Public Funding to Disbursements, Rather Than Communications, Causes Problems

Under the bill, candidates receive public funding bumps based on disbursements made by non-participating candidates and independent committees. In the real world of campaigns, money is sometimes spent in anticipation of making a communication, but the communication is ultimately never made. In this circumstance, a candidate would receive a public funding bump based on a communication that never occurred. This is a major problem. The bill should link public funding to actual communications.

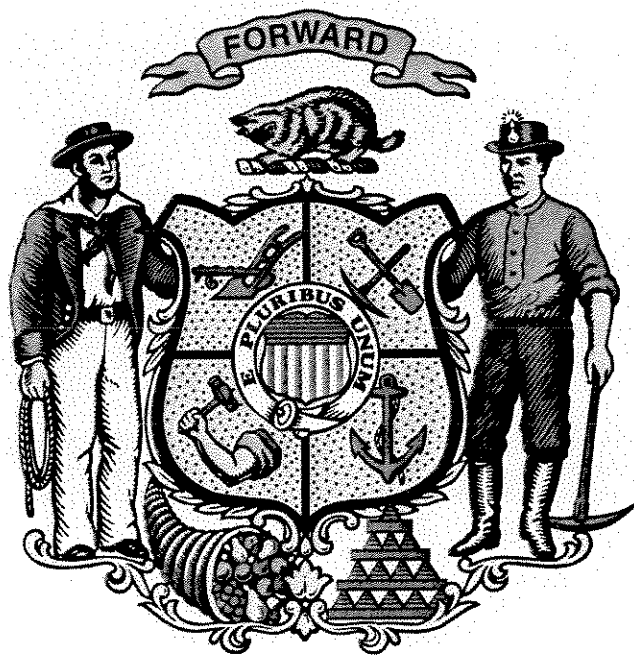
Elimination Of Conduits Is Unnecessary

The bill eliminates conduits and deems such contributions as made by a PAC. WEAC supports the current disclosure requirements of conduits. Contributions are appropriately considered made by the individual contributors and conduit contributions are fully reported.

Disclosure By Only Non-participating Candidates May Be Unconstitutional

The bill imposes certain reporting requirements on only candidates who do not agree to take public financing. Such requirements that apply *only* to non-participating candidates could be viewed by the courts as impermissibly coercive, especially as part of any overall analysis that a court could make.

WEAC encourages the committee to oppose AB 155 and instead look for ways to enact comprehensive campaign finance reform that is comprehensive, equitable, and practical. Thank you.





202 State Street
Suite 300
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-2215

608/267-2380
800/991-5502
Fax: 608/267-0645

E-mail: league@lwm-info.org
www.lwm-info.org

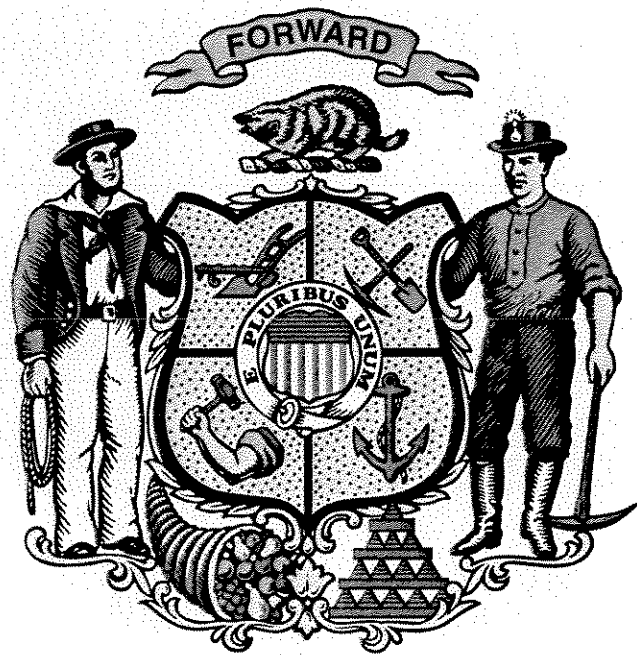
To: Members of the Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee
From: Joe Greco, President, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: March 15, 2001
Re: **Assembly Bill 155**

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities joins the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign and 40 other statewide organizations in supporting Assembly Bill 155, the Voter's First campaign reform proposal. The League supports campaign finance reform in general and AB 155 in particular because in recent years our issues have not received the same level of attention from state policy makers as those of organizations that contribute to election campaigns. The high cost of running a campaign for state elective office has caused candidates and political parties to depend on groups that can help finance campaigns. The League and other organizations that do not have PACs or conduits making contributions to political campaigns find themselves on the sidelines of the legislative process.

AB 155 remedies this unfortunate state of affairs. It provides effective, comprehensive campaign reform. It strikes a bipartisan balance on this important issue by taking the best ideas from past Democrat and Republican bills, including former Governor Thompson's blue ribbon commission on campaign finance reform.

We believe that AB 155, which has legislative sponsors from both parties in both houses, is the best vehicle for getting legislators on both sides of the aisle to enact effective, comprehensive campaign finance reform. For these reasons we urge you to support AB 155.

Thanks for your consideration.





Thomas L. Frazier, *Executive Director*

Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

Testimony Before the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

March 15, 2001

by

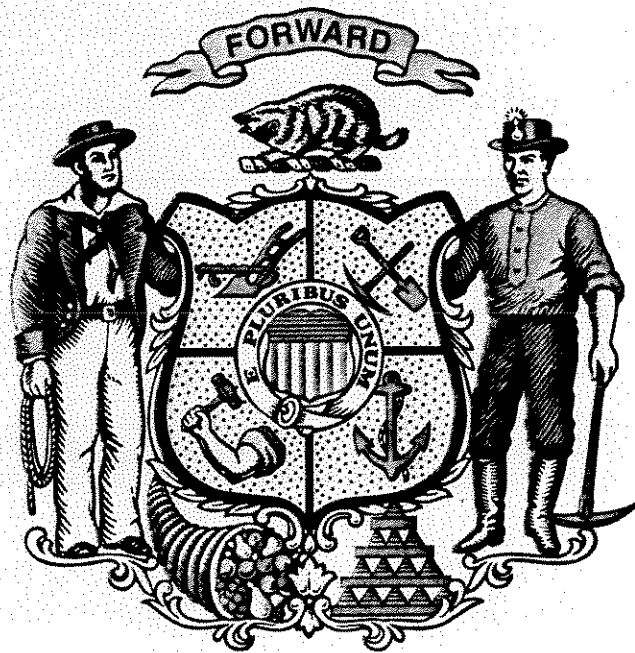
Thomas L. Frazier

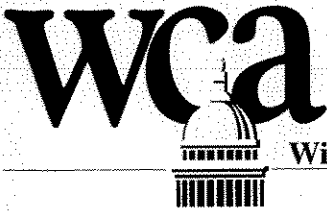
On behalf of the 600 member groups of CWAG I urge you to vote for AB 155. This past election makes it very clear that campaign finance reform is necessary to assure that people have an equal voice in our democratic system.

Last year, as CWAG developed its 2000/2002 platform, this issue of campaign finance reform came up in every one of our nine geographical districts. Older people in Wisconsin want to see action on this issue--the sooner the better.

CWAG's Board of Directors unanimously endorsed the "Voters First" campaign which is now included in AB 155. We believe that this proposal represents an excellent bipartisan compromise of almost all previous proposals and has the strong support of a broad base of organizations representing thousands of citizens.

Again, I request that you take quick, positive bipartisan action on AB 155 so that it can be scheduled for a vote by the full Assembly at the earliest possible date. Thank you.





MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

FROM: Jennifer Sunstrom, Legislative Associate JS

DATE: March 15, 2001

SUBJECT: AB 155 – Campaign Finance Reform

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) appreciates the opportunity to present comments on AB 155 which seeks to make comprehensive changes to Wisconsin's campaign finance laws.

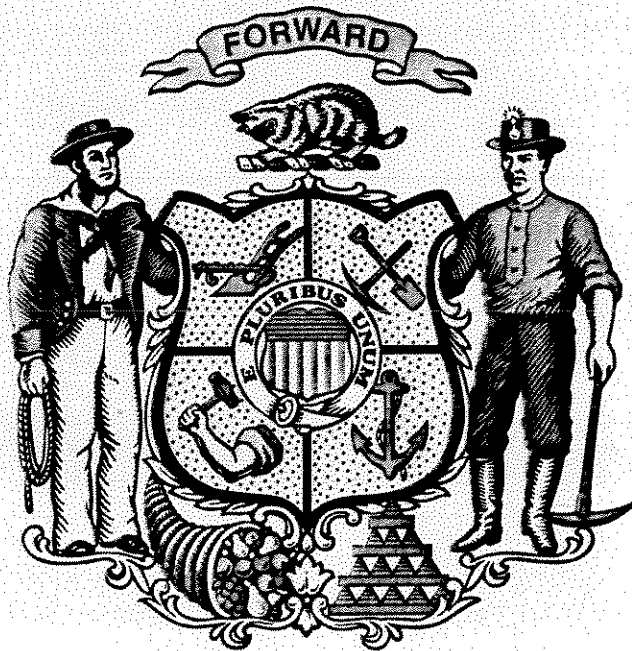
The costs of running campaigns for state elections has increased significantly over the last few years. We believe that the increased burden on candidates to raise campaign contributions places special interest groups in a position of undue power relative not only to local governments but also to candidates for state office as well. For this reason, the Wisconsin Counties Association's Board of Directors decided to sponsor an advisory referendum that asked the people if Wisconsin's campaign finance laws should be reformed. On November 7, 2000, over 90% of the people in 56 of Wisconsin's counties voted that they wanted the legislature to enact campaign finance reform that would create a more fair system of campaign operations.

The language agreed upon by our Board of Directors addressed three main issues: spending limits, stricter contribution limits, and prompt reporting requirements. The question was specifically broad so that a clear message would be sent to the legislature and the administration that the people of Wisconsin want reform without limiting that reform to one plan over another.

WCA believes that AB 155 meets this intent. By incorporating elements from proposals offered by both Republicans and Democrats, AB 155 provides an effective middle ground from which legislators can work.

Although WCA supports AB 155 and its companion bill SB 62, we are not opposed to changes that are necessary to reach a compromise that will garner bipartisan support. We encourage both sides of the aisle to work together to strike the proper balance and will continue to give our support and assistance throughout the legislative process.

Thank you for considering our comments.



Griffiths, Terri

From: Richard, Rob
Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2001 12:12 PM
To: Griffiths, Terri
Subject: FW: AB 155/ SB 62

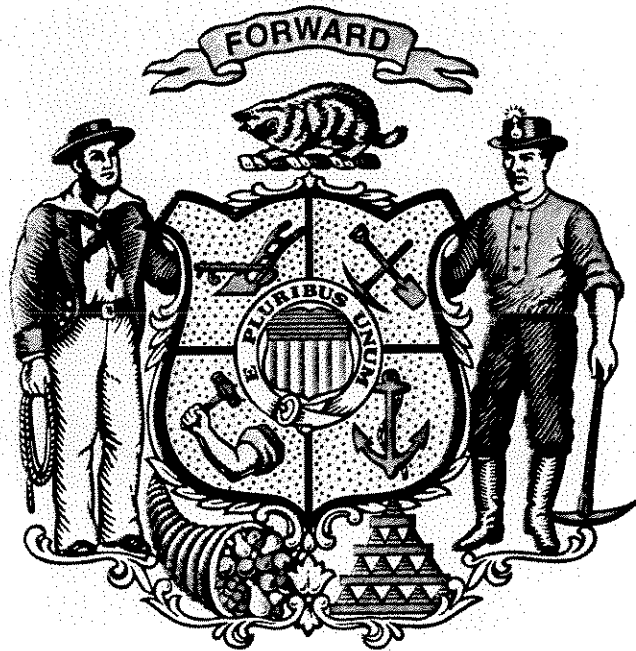
-----Original Message-----

From: **Dennis Boyer** [<mailto:dennisb@chorus.net>]
Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2001 9:05 AM
To: Rep.Freese@legis.state.wi.us
Subject: AB 155/ SB 62

Rep. Freese and Committee Members:

AFSCME would like to register its support of these bills. We believe that they represent a healthy amalgamation of prior bipartisan reform efforts. We urge you to work through remaining differences. We sincerely hope that "doing nothing" is not considered an option.

Dennis Boyer
AFSCME 11





April 10, 2001

Representative Stephen Freese
PO Box 8952
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Representative Freese,

On behalf of our 739,000 Wisconsin members, I urge you to pass AB 155 out of the Campaigns and Elections Committee without amendment. AARP Wisconsin believes that AB 155 is a fair and reasonable compromise based on the Assembly and Senate campaign reform bills proposed last year.

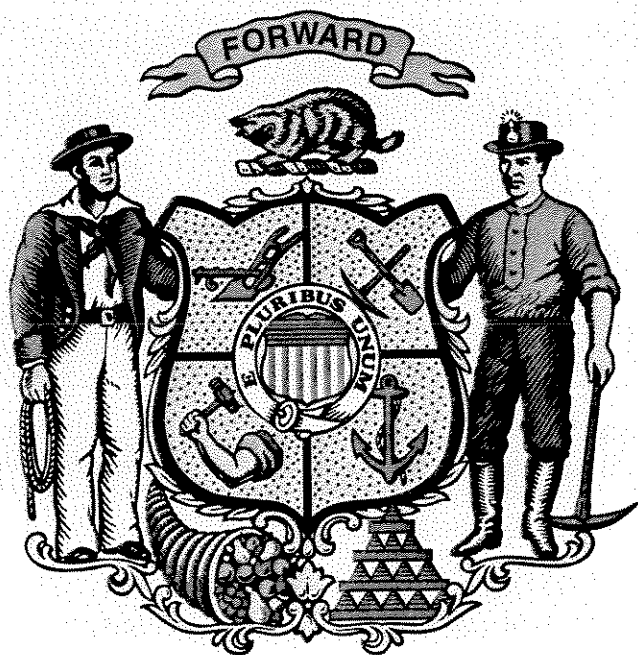
Passage of AB 155 would be a big step toward improving public confidence in the legislative and political processes. Citizens need to have confidence that their voices and interests are not put second to interest groups wielding large campaign contributions.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rod Bohn".

Rod Bohn
Chairman
AARP Wisconsin Government Affairs Committee



Griffiths, Terri

To: czaram@itis.com
Subject: RE: AB155

Thank you for your comments. I'll pass them along to Rep. Freese.

Terri Griffiths
Committee Clerk

-----Original Message-----

From: czaram@itis.com [<mailto:czaram@itis.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, April 18, 2001 4:34 PM
To: Rep.Freese@legis.state.wi.us
Subject: AB155

Dear Rep. Freese,

I am writing to urge your committee to approve AB 155 without changes that would undermine bipartisan support or water down the effectiveness of campaign reform.

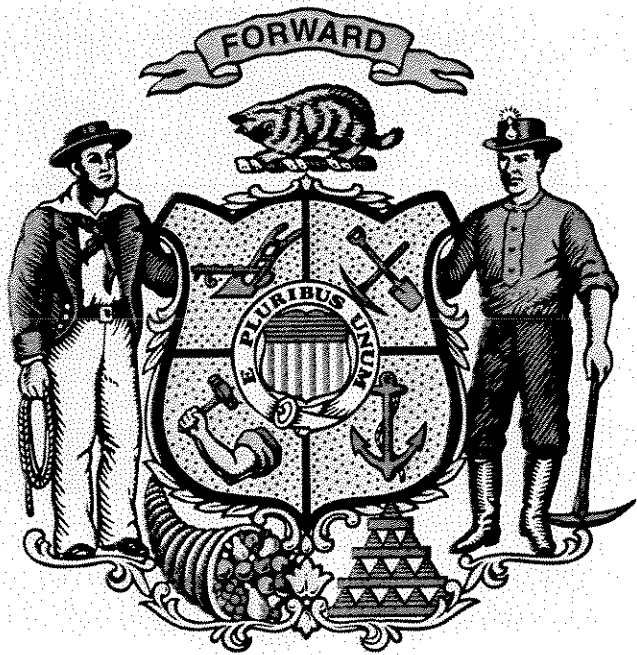
Like a lot of voters, I am very weary of the way elections are financed. I strongly support public financing of campaigns! I especially urge your committee to keep the restrictions on large donors and PACs. The need for identification of "issue ad" sponsors is a no-brainer. A group that has the money and commitment to run an ad should have the courage to identify themselves and their funding sources.

Please help insure AB 155 makes it to the floor without crippling its potential effectiveness.

Sincerely,
Annette Czarnecki

Annette Czarnecki
Wisconsin Technical College System

*May 9th
Economic Dev. mtg
Apr
Darlington
965 4406*



Griffiths, Terri

From: Richard, Rob
Sent: Wednesday, September 05, 2001 8:36 AM
To: Griffiths, Terri
Subject: FW: Pass Voters First without any amendments

-----Original Message-----

From: savagecraze@excite.com [mailto:savagecraze@excite.com] <mailto:[mailto:savagecraze@excite.com]>
Sent: Tuesday, September 04, 2001 8:40 PM
To: Rep.Freese
Subject: Pass Voters First without any amendments

Dear Representative Freese,

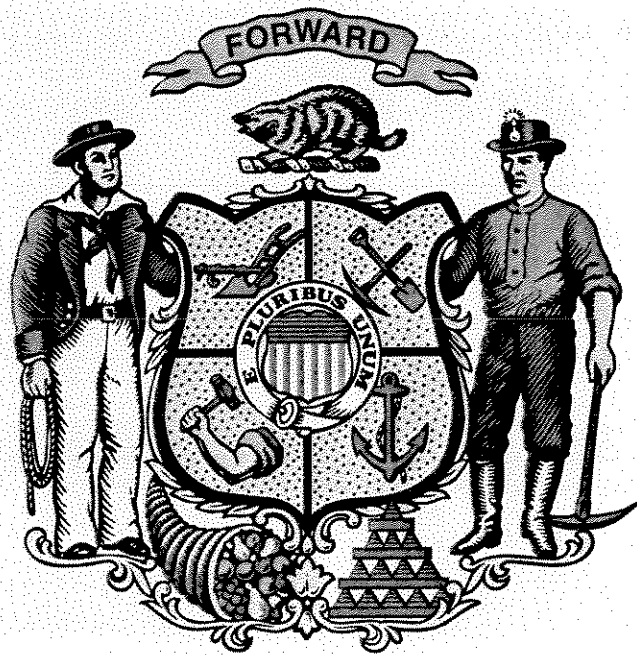
Wisconsin has seen record campaign spending in recent years, with campaigns hijacked by special interest money. At the same time, citizens in 53 Wisconsin counties voted overwhelmingly for comprehensive campaign finance reform. This past November, an advisory referendum on the ballot across the state called for limiting campaign contributions and spending and for prompt, full disclosure of election-related activities. Over 85% of the public supported that referendum.

AB 155, or "Voters First," is a comprehensive, bipartisan bill that would lower contribution limits for candidates, require full disclosure for issue ads, and provide some public funding for candidates who agree to limit spending.

We urge you to pass Voters First without any amendments. Amendments will likely change the bipartisan nature of this bill and lessen the likelihood of comprehensive campaign finance reform becoming a reality in this session of the legislature.

Sincerely,

pam kostka
s70w25045 pine ct
waukesha, WI 53189



AUTISM SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

Representative Stephen Freese, Chairperson, and Representatives Ladwig, Stone, J. Fitzgerald, Travis and Pocan; Members of the Committee on Campaigns and Elections:

As members of the Autism Society of Wisconsin, we ask for your support of Voters First Campaign Finance Reform embodied in AB 155.

Members of the Autism Society of Wisconsin are not experts in election and campaign finance laws. We are parents of children and adults with autism and look to our elected officials for understanding of the needs of children who need special education and adults who may need some level of support for all of their lives.

We know that the needs of citizens have not been given priority in the actions of our elected officials during the last decade. We know that our County property taxes are adversely impacted by the need to fund services that the state government should have included in the state biennial budgets. We know that this period has also seen the obscene growth of the amount of money spent on campaigns and the growing apathy and cynicism of many citizens.

Many of us are among the citizens who voted overwhelmingly in the various county referenda in favor of campaign finance reform last spring.

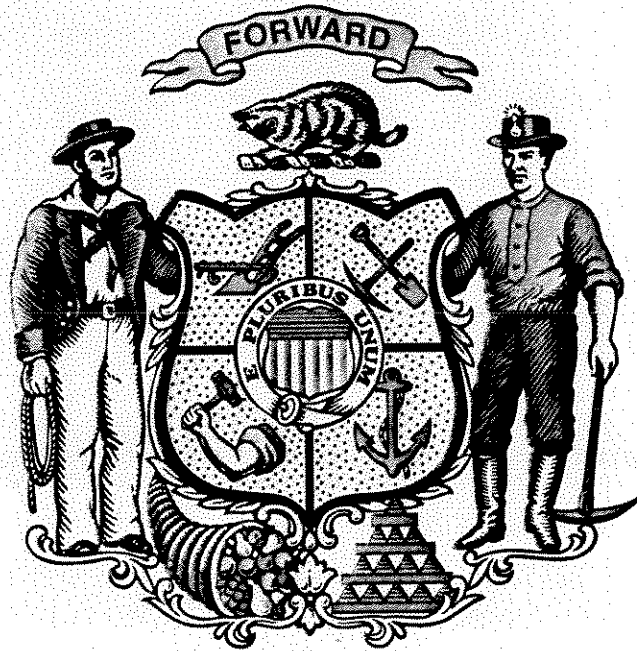
We know that a principled compromise is the only hope for passage of campaign finance reform in our present political climate. We know that AB 155 has taken the best ideas from the failed partisan efforts of the past. We know that provisions from both Republican and Democratic proposals from previous bills have been incorporated in AB 155. We know that compromises have been made to make the bill more workable and more palatable to moderates in both parties.

We ask this committee to mark the beginning of campaign finance reform in Wisconsin by approving AB 155 and supporting its passage in the Wisconsin Assembly.

Thank you.

Frances Bicknell, Governmental Affairs Chair.
Autism Society of Wisconsin

103 W. College Ave. Suite 601, Appleton, WI 54911-5744
1-888-4 AUTISM (Toll free in WI - Local 993-0279)
ASW Website – <http://www.asw4autism.org/>





WISCONSIN ALLIANCE OF CITIES

14 W. MIFFLIN STREET #206 • MADISON, WI 53703-2576
(608) 257-5881 FAX 257-5882 • EMAIL: wiscall@inxpress.net

Appleton
Ashland
Baraboo
Beaver Dam
Beloit
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De Pere
Eau Claire
Fond du Lac
Green Bay
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Kaukauna
Kenosha
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Marshfield
Menasha
Merrill
Milwaukee
Monroe
Neenah
Oshkosh
Racine
Sheboygan
Stevens Point
Superior
Two Rivers
Watertown
Waukesha
Wausau
Wauwatosa
West Allis
West Bend
Whitewater
Wisconsin Rapids

To: Members, Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee

From: Edward J. Huck, executive director

Re: Support AB 155, the Voters First bill

The Wisconsin Alliance of Cities supports the Voters First bill as a crucial first step toward restoring honesty, respect and fairness to the election process in Wisconsin.

Our city leaders in 1999 endorsed key provisions of campaign finance proposals then before the Legislature, including:

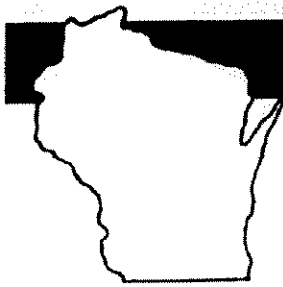
- Public grants large enough to create incentives to accept campaign spending limits.
- Regulation of phony "issue ads."
- Bonuses for candidates whose opponents violate spending limits, or who are targeted by "independent" spending.
- An income tax incentive to make small campaign donations.
- Identical treatment for PACs and conduits.
- Restrictions on out-of-state soft money.
- Prompt reporting of last-minute contributions; and
- A strengthening of traditional political parties as the vehicle for invigorating campaigns.

I am proud to say the Voters First measure does those things, and much more. That is why our members endorsed it, and that is why I ask you to endorse it.

Let me add a word about the First Amendment arguments used against a separate bill to regulate phony issue ads. It was Oliver Wendell Holmes who said the First Amendment does not protect the right to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater. What happened in some of last fall's campaigns amounted to just that.

Journalists have a self-imposed code of ethics that they employ in their exercise of their First Amendment rights. Political candidates must similarly employ a self-imposed code of ethics, or feel the consequences at the polls. There is no such accountability for anonymous third-party forces in campaigns. Please do not allow independent groups to make campaigns in Wisconsin a political mud-wrestling contest that besmirches us all. Thank you.

Sustainable Cities for the 21st Century



WISCONSIN ALLIANCE OF CITIES

14 W. MIFFLIN • P.O. BOX 336 • MADISON, WI 53703-0336 • (608) 257-5881 • FAX 257-5882

Date: Nov. 1, 2000
To: City Leaders
From: Rich Eggleston

In Ashland, staff was asked to do a side-by-side comparison of the Alliance's April 6, 1999, position on campaign finance reform, and the Voters First proposal by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, which that organization is urging local government groups to endorse. Here it is:

<u>Provision</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>Voters First</u>
1. Public grants large enough to create incentives to accept spending limits	✓	✓
2. Regulation of phony "issue ads"	✓	✓
3. Bonus for candidates whose foes violate spending limits, or who are targeted by "independent" spending	✓	✓
4. Income tax refund for small donations	✓	tax credit
5. Ban on contributions 10 or fewer days before the election	✓	no provision
6. Treat PACs and conduits the same	✓	✓
7. Restrict out-of-state contributions	✓	✓
8. Restrict corporate "soft money"	✓	see No. 3
9. 24-hour reporting just before the election.	✓	48 hours for candidates 24 for special interests
10. Party-boosting provisions	✓	✓

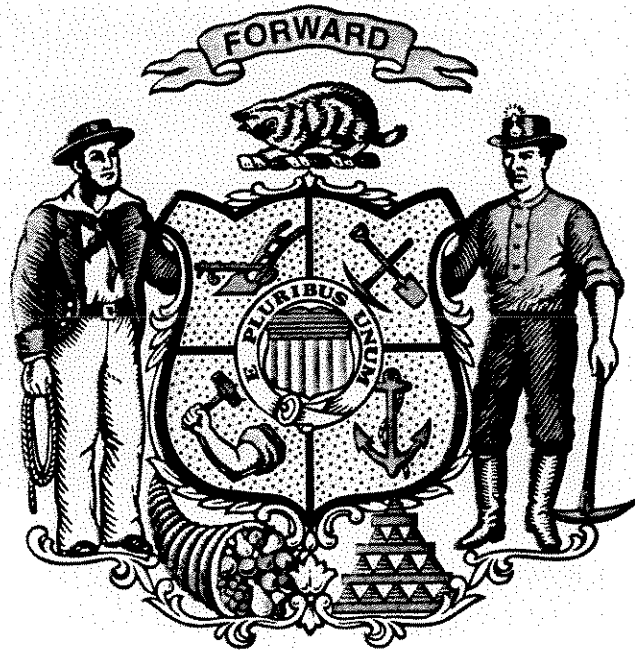
Many other provisions of the Voters First proposal were not addressed by the Alliance vote last year. See the next page for an outline of those.

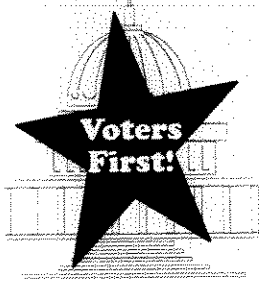
<u>Provision</u>	<u>Alliance</u>	<u>Voters First</u>
11. \$5 income tax checkoff	silent	✓
12. Lower individual contribution limits	silent	✓
13. Spending limits for candidates	silent	✓
14. Prohibits PAC-to-PAC donations, "bundling" and pooling of PAC money	silent	✓
15. Funds ¾ of DPI, Supreme Court races	silent	✓
16. Restricts fundraising at budget time, contributions from lobbyists	silent	✓
17. Allow candidates to contribute double the individual contribution limit to their own campaigns.	silent	✓
18. Truth in donating: prohibits candidate-to-candidate committee transfers so money can't go from a likable candidate to an ogre.	silent	✓
19. Outlaws legislative caucus campaign committees (i.e., Senate and Assembly Dems and GOP committees.)	silent	✓

Additional materials by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign on the Voters First proposal are available on that group's web site at

<http://www.wisdc.org/voters1st.htm>

If you have any questions, please let us know.

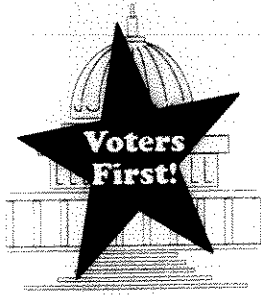




Voters First Campaign Reform Proposal (Assembly Bill 155/Senate Bill 62)

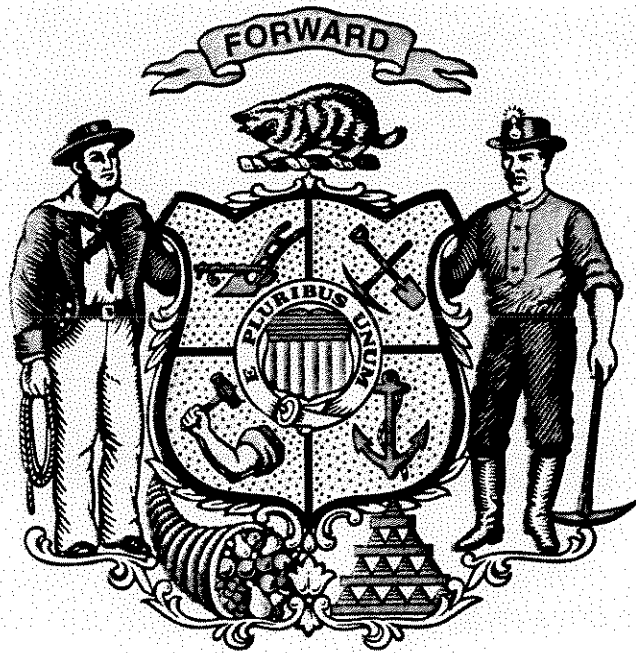
AB 155/SB 62:

- **Does exactly what 90% of Wisconsin voters said they want done** in the November referendum on campaign finance reform – *establishes limits on campaign spending, tightens limits on contributions and requires full and prompt disclosure of all election-related activities.*
- **Is the first and only comprehensive reform proposal to have legislative sponsors from both parties in both houses.**
- **Strikes a bipartisan balance** by staking out a middle ground between the major partisan reform proposals and by incorporating ideas from bills offered last session by both Republicans and Democrats, including former Governor Thompson's Kettl Commission proposal, the Assembly-approved AB 701, the Senate-passed SB 190, Senate Bill 111 authored by Senator Brian Burke and Representative Steve Freese, and Senate Bill 113 authored by Senator Mike Ellis.
- **Has the support of over 40 statewide groups**, including the Wisconsin Counties Association, Wisconsin Towns Association, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Alliance of Cities, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, League of Women Voters, AARP, Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Common Cause in Wisconsin, Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy, Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, United Cerebral Palsy of Wisconsin, Autism Society of Wisconsin, and many more....



VOTERS FIRST Coalition

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Common Cause in Wisconsin
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin
AARP
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Wisconsin Counties Association
Wisconsin County Executives and Administrators Association
League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Wisconsin Towns Association
Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy
American Association of University Women – WI
National Farmers' Organization – WI
Wisconsin Federation of Cooperatives
Center for Public Representation
Wisconsin Homecare Organization
Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities
Wisconsin Council of the Blind
Survival Coalition of Disability Groups
United Cerebral Palsy of Wisconsin
Autism Society of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Directors and Boards
National Association of Social Workers – WI Chapter
Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group
AFSCME
Wisconsin Federation of Teachers
Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association
Wisconsin's Environmental Decade
1000 Friends of Wisconsin
The River Alliance
Citizens' Utility Board
Wisconsin IMPACT
Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin
United Church of Christ's Social Concerns Commission
Wisconsin Community Action Program Association
Coalition of Independent Living Centers
Mental Health Association – Office of Public Policy
Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
New Transportation Alliance
Progressive Fox Valley
Door County Environmental Council





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Statement to the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections Regarding Support for AB155

This bill is a proposal for comprehensive campaign finance reform. Its provisions address and make changes in the 1970's statute which currently regulates campaign financing in Wisconsin.

The hope in the 1970's was that the state funds provided would assure that candidates would have adequate resources to reach the voters, that contributions and special interest influence would be controlled and disclosed as well as spending. The public money is designated via a \$1 income tax checkoff. Until about 10 years ago most candidates used the state funds in exchange for keeping spending under the limits, and there was enough money to provide full grants.

As you know, by the 1990s several things had changed. The fund was gradually depleted as the checkoff numbers dropped. Full grants were no longer available, and candidates began to fear high spending opponents. It came to be perceived as too risky by candidates to apply for the ever smaller grants while at the same time needing to raise larger amounts of additional money and be subject to 1970's spending limits against potentially big spending opponents.

The League believes that the following key provisions in this bill are exactly what is needed for Wisconsin to regain its position as a state with a strong, well regulated campaign finance system:

- 1) increase spending limits by amounts appropriate for viable campaigns with cost of living adjustments - to assure that candidates have adequate funds to effectively reach voters with their messages.
- 2) set the checkoff at \$5 and provide general purpose revenues as needed - no chance should be taken that funds are not available to provide candidates with full grants or that candidates will be discouraged from applying.
- 3) set grants at 45% of spending limits for partisan offices - while a higher level would be desirable this percentage will provide the needed funds in the context of spending limit increases.
- 4) reduce individual contribution limits - this is a way to lessen the possibility of special interest influence and the advantage for candidates who can access large contributors.
- 5) bring so-called *issue ads* into regulation as independent spending and provide supplemental grants for candidates faced with independent spending and opponents spending beyond the limits - this means that big spending by both candidates and independents will be discouraged, but if it happens, fully disclosed.
- 6) eliminate transfers between committees including candidate committees and the special status now given legislative campaign committees - these activities have become ways to conceal special interest influence and to insure incumbent/party control of the process.

- more -

There are so many other good things about this bill. We mention a few by list only:

- the many tightened reporting requirements,
- the reduced limits on candidates' own contributions,
- limiting lobbyists' contributions to districts where they live and eliminating their business tax deductions for lobbying expenses,
- the new 5-day requirements for getting contributor information and making deposits,
- conduit transfers,
- uses of residual funds, and
- 5% for public information about the purpose and effect of the state fund.

In short, the League is very pleased, actually excited, that all of these provisions have been combined in this comprehensive legislation which together will close up the many loopholes which have plagued our current statute. Hopefully, putting it all together in one bill will result in legislation which will insure that the concerns and needs of all parties and interests will be met and that wide agreement can be reached.

Thank you for considering this bill.

LWVWI Legislative Committee contact: Sue Lloyd, 608/256-7250