

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)

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> Committee Reports ... CR

> **

> Executive Sessions ... ES

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> Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

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*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

> Appointments ... Appt

> **

> Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

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

> **01hr_ab0421_AC-CE_pt01**

> Miscellaneous ... Misc

> **



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Testimony of Kerry Schumann, WISPIRG Director, in support of AB 421

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Director of the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, or WISPIRG. WISPIRG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, advocacy organization working to protect the environment, protect consumers and promote democracy. We have about 15,000 members statewide.

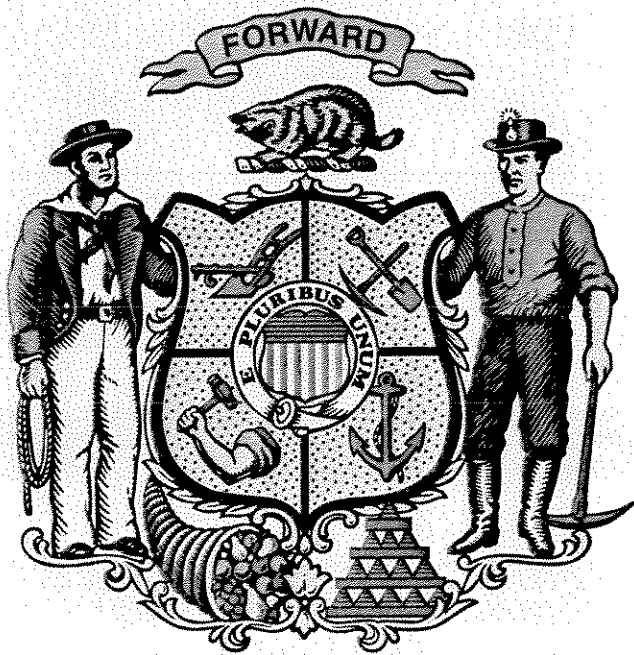
I am here to testify in support of AB 421, a bill that would give local governments the authority to regulate the financing of local electoral campaigns. We are seeing unprecedented amounts of campaign spending and increasingly high contributions for political races at all levels of government, from the Governor's race to City Council elections to County Executive races. This trend removes the political process from the voter and places it in the hands of special interest contributors.

WISPIRG supports local units of government having the authority to limit the amount of contributions to a campaign, whether they be individual contribution limits, political party contribution limits or contributions from other committees. I want to make it clear that local units of government should only be able to set limits that are *lower* than what exists in current state law, not higher. We also support allowing local communities to create public financing systems for elections and to require electronic filing systems.

All of these provisions are solid ways for local communities to address abuses or potential abuses of their electoral systems and ensure that election outcomes are the will of the voting constituents and not the will of special interests who may be financing elections. At a time when elections are being hijacked by special interests, all levels of government should be enacting reforms to their campaign financing systems, and this bill gives counties, cities, towns and others the opportunity to do that.

At the same time, we support AB 421 because local governments have long been the testing ground of all sorts of public policy, but particularly of campaign finance reform policy. Cities and counties can, and do, lead the way in setting low contribution limits and low spending limits. And, in a judicial climate that is increasingly siding with municipalities and states that have set low contribution limits, it is a prime time for cities, counties and others to pass tough campaign finance laws. AB 421 allows local governments to test the boundaries of an issue that has been long debated in governments and courtrooms across the nation.

Campaign financing is perhaps the single most important issue in today's electoral climate. As special interests pour increasing amounts of money into campaigns and voters become more and more disillusioned with our political system, the need for strong campaign finance reform at all levels of government becomes increasingly important. This bill gives cities, towns, counties and others the opportunity to pass solid campaign finance reform and clean up politics in their own backyards.



Mark:

Michael Jacob + a few others
want to testify on our local
campaign finance reform bill ... Frase
switched the order around at the
last second + Terry won't allow
them to speak. Can you ask
Frase to allow them to speak once
we're done with the Walker bill?

Steve