

## 2005 ASSEMBLY BILL 435

May 19, 2005 – Introduced by Representatives POPE-ROBERTS, POCAN, BOYLE, BLACK, PARISI, LEHMAN, ZEPNICK, TURNER, BERCEAU, FREESE, SHILLING, ALBERS, SHERIDAN, TRAVIS and MOLEPSKE, cosponsored by Senators LASSA, CARPENTER, ERPENBACH and HANSEN. Referred to Committee on Campaigns and Elections.

1     **AN ACT to repeal** 11.30 (2); **to renumber** 11.01 (1); **to amend** 7.40, 8.30 (2), 11.05  
2           (2g), 11.30 (3) (b), 11.61 (1) (c), 13.62 (5g) and 19.42 (3m); **to repeal and**  
3           **recreate** 8.30 (2); and **to create** 11.01 (1g), 11.01 (17), 11.30 (2m) and 11.59 of  
4           the statutes; **relating to:** disclosures required in certain campaign  
5           advertisements.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

#### CURRENT LAW

Current law contains several disclosure requirements with regard to advertisements and similar communications relating to campaigns for state or local office. With certain exceptions, current law requires every printed advertisement, billboard, handbill, sample ballot, television or radio advertisement, or other communication that is paid for through a campaign contribution, disbursement (expenditure), or obligation to make a campaign contribution or disbursement to include a statement disclosing the source of the communication. Generally, current law requires this statement to include the words “Paid for by,” followed by the name of the committee, group, or individual who pays for or reimburses the cost of the communication. If the communication is by a personal campaign committee, this statement may identify that committee or any of its bona fide subcommittees. If the communication is a solicitation on behalf of more than one candidate for a lawful joint fund-raising effort, this statement may indicate that a joint fund-raising effort

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is being conducted on behalf of the named candidates rather than indicate the names of the candidates or personal campaign committees assuming responsibility for the communication. No statement need be included if the communication is made by a person that is not primarily organized for political purposes, unless the communication constitutes an independent disbursement (generally, an expenditure made without cooperation or consultation with a candidate or candidate's personal campaign committee and made for the purpose of expressly advocating the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate). If the communication is made by a person who makes independent disbursements, the communication must also include the words "Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's agent or committee."

The current requirements do not apply to the preparation and transmittal of personal correspondence; the production, wearing, or display of a single personal item which is not reproduced or manufactured for distribution to more than one individual; or communications printed on small items on which the disclosure information cannot be conveniently printed. In addition, the requirements do not apply to certain election-related, nonadvertising material included in an organization's newsletter, if the newsletter is distributed only to members of the organization.

Current law also prohibits a person from publishing or disseminating a communication that does not comply with these disclosure requirements. However, this prohibition does not apply to a communications medium that relies in good faith on the reasonable representations of a person who places an advertisement with the medium as to the applicability of these requirements to the person.

Currently, a person who violates these disclosure requirements or the prohibition on publication or dissemination is subject to a forfeiture (civil penalty) of up to \$500 per violation. In addition, if the violation is intentional, the person may be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than six months, or both, if the violation does not exceed \$100 in amount or value, and may be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than three years and six months, or both, if the violation exceeds \$100 in amount or value. Currently, a private person may, under certain conditions, obtain injunctive relief to restrain violations but there is no private right of action for damages against violators.

**CHANGES TO CURRENT LAW*****Generally***

This bill repeals these disclosure requirements and the prohibition on publication or dissemination and creates a new system of disclosure requirements applicable to elections for state or local office and state or local referenda. With certain exceptions, the disclosure requirements under the bill apply to any person who purchases or incurs an obligation for an advertisement. Generally, an "advertisement" under this bill is a communication in a billboard, card, newspaper, newspaper insert, magazine, mailing of more than 500 pieces of substantially identical printed or electronic material, pamphlet, flier, or periodical or on television or radio, if the communication constitutes a campaign contribution or disbursement. The bill creates general disclosure requirements and additional disclosure

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requirements applicable to television or radio advertisements. In addition, the bill prohibits any person from misrepresenting in any advertisement the sponsorship or authorization of the advertisement.

The general disclosure requirements under the bill prohibit a person from purchasing or incurring an obligation for an advertisement unless: a) the advertisement includes the statement “Paid for by .... [name of each purchaser]” and, if the advertisement appears in the print media or on television, the purchaser’s full address and the purchaser’s telephone number and electronic mail address, if any; b) if the advertisement supports or opposes the nomination or election of one or more clearly identified candidates, the person states whether or not the advertisement is authorized by a candidate, except that this requirement does not apply if the person purchasing the advertisement is the candidate whom the advertisement supports or that candidate’s personal campaign committee; and c) if the advertisement appears in the print media or on the Internet and identifies a candidate whom the person is opposing, the person discloses in the advertisement the name of any candidate whom the advertisement is intended to benefit, except that this requirement applies only if the person coordinates or consults with regard to the advertisement, or with regard to the disbursement for the advertisement, with the candidate who is intended to benefit therefrom.

The bill provides that in an advertisement that appears in print media or on the Internet, the height of all of the disclosure statements must constitute at least 5 percent of the height of the total space of the advertisement, except that the type may not be less than 12 points in size. If a single advertisement consists of multiple pages, folds, or faces, the disclosure statements apply only to one page, fold, or face of the advertisement. In a television advertisement, a written disclosure statement must be made with letters equal to or greater than 4 percent of the vertical picture height and the statement must appear for at least four seconds. In a radio advertisement, the disclosure statements must last at least a total of three seconds.

***Additional disclosure requirements applicable to television and radio***

The bill also requires a person who purchases or incurs an obligation to purchase a television or radio advertisement that supports or opposes the nomination or election of one or more clearly identified candidates to make certain additional disclosures. If the advertisement is obtained by a candidate or a candidate’s personal campaign committee, the advertisement must include a statement spoken by the candidate containing at least the following: “I am (or “This is”) .... [name of candidate], candidate for .... [name of office], and I (or “my campaign committee”) sponsored this advertisement.” If the advertisement is obtained by a political party or legislative campaign committee, the advertisement must include a statement spoken by the chairperson, executive director, or treasurer of the political party or legislative campaign committee containing at least the following: “The .... [name of political party or legislative campaign committee] sponsored this advertisement.” If the advertisement is obtained by a committee other than a political party or legislative campaign committee, the advertisement must include a statement spoken by the chief executive officer or treasurer of the committee containing at least the following: “The .... [name of committee], a political action

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committee, sponsored this advertisement.” If the advertisement is obtained by an individual, the advertisement must include a statement spoken by the individual containing at least the following: “I am .... [individual’s name], and I sponsored this advertisement.” If the advertisement is obtained by any other person, the advertisement must include a statement spoken by the chief executive or principal decision maker of the person containing at least the following: “....[Name of person] sponsored this advertisement.”

Under the bill a full-screen television picture containing the individual making the required statement must be featured throughout the duration of any statement of a candidate, personal campaign committee, political party, individual, or committee other than a political party or legislative campaign committee. The picture may not contain any text other than any visual disclosure statement required by law. In addition, the image of the individual must occupy at least 50 percent of the vertical picture height and nothing may block the view of the individual’s face. If the advertisement is more than five minutes long, the statement must be made at the beginning and at the end of the advertisement.

The bill retains the current exceptions for subcommittees of personal campaign committees, joint fund raising efforts, news letters, and persons not primarily organized for political purposes.

***Remedies and penalties***

The bill provides a candidate, or his or her personal campaign committee, with a private right of action against any person who purchases or incurs an obligation for a television or radio advertisement that violates these disclosure requirements, if the advertisement relates to an election for the office that the candidate seeks. The bill establishes filing requirements that a candidate or personal campaign committee must follow in order to bring such an action and requires the action to be brought no later than the ninetieth day after the election. The bill permits a successful plaintiff to receive damages equal to the total dollar amount of the television and radio advertising time that was aired in violation of these disclosure requirements, except that the damages must be increased to three times that amount in certain circumstances. Under the bill, a candidate and his or her personal campaign committee are jointly and individually liable for the payment of damages and any attorney fees awarded in such an action. However, if a candidate is held personally liable for the payment of damages or attorney fees or both, the candidate may not use or be reimbursed with funds from his or her personal campaign committee in paying the damages or attorney fees.

This bill also applies the civil and criminal penalties that apply to violations of the current disclosure requirements to violations of the disclosure requirements established under the bill, except that under the bill the criminal penalties do not apply to violations of the additional disclosure requirements for television and radio advertisements.

Because this bill creates a new crime or revises a penalty for an existing crime, the Joint Review Committee on Criminal Penalties may be requested to prepare a

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report concerning the proposed penalty and the costs or savings that are likely to result if the bill is enacted.

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***The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:***

1           **SECTION 1.** 7.40 of the statutes is amended to read:

2           **7.40 Sample ballots.** Any individual, committee or candidate, at their own  
3 expense, subject to limitations upon contributions and disbursements under ch. 11,  
4 may print a supply of sample ballots, provided they bear on their face the information  
5 required by s. 11.30 (2) and they contain all of the names shown on the official ballot.

6           **SECTION 2.** 8.30 (2) of the statutes is amended to read:

7           **8.30 (2)** If no registration statement has been filed by or on behalf of a candidate  
8 for state or local office in accordance with s. 11.05 (2g) or (2r) by the applicable  
9 deadline for filing nomination papers by such candidate, or the deadline for filing a  
10 declaration of candidacy for an office for which nomination papers are not filed, the  
11 name of the candidate may not appear on the ballot. This subsection may not be  
12 construed to exempt a candidate from applicable penalties if he or she files a  
13 registration statement later than the time prescribed in ss. 11.01 (4) (1r) and 11.05  
14 (2g).

15           **SECTION 3.** 8.30 (2) of the statutes, as affected by 2001 Wisconsin Act 109, is  
16 repealed and recreated to read:

17           **8.30 (2)** If no registration statement has been filed by or on behalf of a candidate  
18 for state or local office in accordance with s. 11.05 (2g) by the applicable deadline for  
19 filing nomination papers by the candidate, or the deadline for filing a declaration of  
20 candidacy for an office for which nomination papers are not filed, the name of the  
21 candidate may not appear on the ballot. This subsection may not be construed to

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1 exempt a candidate from applicable penalties if he or she files a registration  
2 statement later than the time prescribed in ss. 11.01 (1r) and 11.05 (2g).

3 **SECTION 4.** 11.01 (1) of the statutes is renumbered 11.01 (1r).

4 **SECTION 5.** 11.01 (1g) of the statutes is created to read:

5 11.01 (1g) “Advertisement” means a communication that appears in the print  
6 media, on the Internet, or on television or radio that constitutes a contribution or  
7 disbursement.

8 **SECTION 6.** 11.01 (17) of the statutes is created to read:

9 11.01 (17) “Print media” means billboards, cards, newspapers, newspaper  
10 inserts, magazines, sample ballots, mailings of more than 500 pieces of substantially  
11 identical printed or electronic material, pamphlets, fliers, or periodicals.

12 **SECTION 7.** 11.05 (2g) of the statutes is amended to read:

13 11.05 (2g) CANDIDATES AND PERSONAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEES. Every candidate,  
14 as defined in s. 11.01 (4) (1r), shall file a registration statement with the appropriate  
15 filing officer giving the information required by sub. (3). If a candidate appoints  
16 another person as campaign treasurer the candidate’s registration statement shall  
17 be cosigned by the candidate and the candidate’s appointed treasurer. A candidate  
18 who receives no contributions and makes no disbursements shall file such statement  
19 as provided in s. 11.10 (1) but need not appoint a campaign treasurer or designate  
20 a campaign depository account until the first contribution is received or  
21 disbursement made.

22 **SECTION 8.** 11.30 (2) of the statutes is repealed.

23 **SECTION 9.** 11.30 (2m) of the statutes is created to read:

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1           11.30 **(2m)** (a) Except as provided in par. (i), no person may purchase or incur  
2 an obligation for an advertisement unless the person meets the following  
3 requirements:

4           1. The advertisement includes the statement “Paid for by .... [name of each  
5 purchaser, as indicated on the purchaser’s registration statement under s. 11.05].”  
6 In addition, if the advertisement appears in the print media, on the Internet, or on  
7 television, the advertisement shall include the purchaser’s full address and the  
8 purchaser’s telephone number and electronic mail address, if any.

9           2. If the advertisement supports or opposes the nomination or election of one  
10 or more clearly identified candidates, the person states whether or not the  
11 advertisement is authorized by a candidate. The statement in the advertisement  
12 shall include the words: “Authorized by .... [name of candidate], candidate for ....  
13 [name or office]” or “Not authorized by any candidate, candidate’s agent, or  
14 committee,” as applicable. This subdivision does not apply if the person purchasing  
15 the advertisement is the candidate whom the advertisement supports or that  
16 candidate’s personal campaign committee.

17           3. If the advertisement appears in the print media or on the Internet and  
18 identifies a candidate whom the person is opposing, the person discloses in the  
19 advertisement the name of any candidate whom the advertisement is intended to  
20 benefit. This subdivision applies only if the person coordinates or consults with  
21 regard to the advertisement, or with regard to the disbursement for the  
22 advertisement, with the candidate who is intended to benefit therefrom.

23           (b) 1. In an advertisement that appears in the print media or on the Internet,  
24 the height of all disclosure statements required under par. (a) shall constitute at least  
25 5 percent of the height of the total space of the advertisement, except that the type

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1 may not be less than 12 points in size. If a single advertisement consists of multiple  
2 pages, folds, or faces, the disclosure statements required under par. (a) apply only to  
3 one page, fold, or face of the advertisement.

4 2. In a television advertisement, a written disclosure statement used to comply  
5 with par. (a) shall be made with letters equal to or greater than 4 percent of the  
6 vertical picture height and the statement shall appear for at least 4 seconds.

7 3. In a radio advertisement, all disclosure statements, combined, that are  
8 required under par. (a) shall last at least 3 seconds.

9 (c) No person may misrepresent in any advertisement the sponsorship or  
10 authorization of the advertisement.

11 (d) In addition to the disclosure statements required under par. (a) and except  
12 as provided in par. (i), a person purchasing or incurring an obligation for an  
13 advertisement on television or radio that supports or opposes the nomination or  
14 election of one or more clearly identified candidates shall satisfy the following  
15 requirements:

16 1. If the advertisement is purchased by a candidate or a candidate's personal  
17 campaign committee, the advertisement shall include a statement spoken by the  
18 candidate containing at least the following: "I am (or "This is") .... [name of  
19 candidate], candidate for .... [name of office], and I (or "my campaign committee")  
20 sponsored this advertisement."

21 2. If the advertisement is purchased by a political party or legislative campaign  
22 committee, the advertisement shall include a statement spoken by the chairperson,  
23 executive director, or treasurer of the political party containing at least the following:  
24 "The .... [name of political party or legislative campaign committee] sponsored this



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1 advertisement.” The name of a political party disclosed under this subdivision shall  
2 be the same as the name used by the political party on the ballot at the election.

3 3. If the advertisement is purchased by a committee other than a political party  
4 or legislative campaign committee, the advertisement shall include a statement  
5 spoken by the chief executive officer or treasurer of the committee containing at least  
6 the following: “The .... [name of committee], a political action committee, sponsored  
7 this advertisement.” The name of the committee disclosed under this subdivision  
8 shall be the same as the name indicated on the committee’s registration statement  
9 under s. 11.05.

10 4. Except as provided under subd. 1., if the advertisement is purchased by an  
11 individual, the advertisement shall include a statement spoken by the individual  
12 containing at least the following: “I am .... [individual’s name], and I sponsored this  
13 advertisement.”

14 5. If the advertisement is purchased by a person other than a candidate, a  
15 candidate’s personal campaign committee, a political party, a committee other than  
16 a political party or legislative campaign committee, or an individual, the  
17 advertisement shall include a statement spoken by the chief executive or principal  
18 decision maker of the purchaser containing at least the following: “....[Name of  
19 person] sponsored this advertisement.”

20 6. If the advertisement is televised, a full–screen picture containing an image  
21 of the individual making the statement required under subds. 1. to 5., in  
22 photographic form or through the actual appearance of the individual on camera,  
23 shall be featured throughout the duration of the statement. The picture may not  
24 contain any text other than any visual disclosure statement required by law. The

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1 image of the individual shall occupy at least 50 percent of the vertical picture height  
2 and nothing may block the view of the individual's face.

3 7. If the advertisement is televised and is more than 5 minutes long, any  
4 statement required under subds. 1. to 5. shall be made at the beginning and at the  
5 end of the advertisement.

6 (e) If an advertisement that is subject to par. (d) is jointly purchased or if an  
7 obligation for such an advertisement is jointly incurred, the statement required  
8 under par. (d) shall name all of the purchasers but need be made by only one  
9 individual. If a candidate or a candidate's personal campaign committee is one of the  
10 purchasers or persons who incurs the obligation, that candidate shall be the  
11 individual making the statement. If multiple candidates are the purchasers or  
12 persons who incur the obligation, if a candidate and a personal campaign committee  
13 of another candidate are the purchasers or persons who incur the obligation, or if the  
14 personal campaign committees of multiple candidates are the purchasers or persons  
15 who incur the obligation, at least one of the candidates shall be the individual  
16 making the statement.

17 (f) Advertisements under this section by a personal campaign committee may  
18 identify the committee or any bona fide subcommittee thereof.

19 (g) Notwithstanding pars. (a) to (e), any advertisement making a solicitation  
20 on behalf of more than one candidate for a joint fund raising effort or program  
21 pursuant to an escrow agreement under s. 11.16 (5) may omit the names of the  
22 candidates or personal campaign committees assuming responsibility for the  
23 advertisement if the advertisement discloses that a joint fund raising effort or  
24 program is being conducted on behalf of named candidates.

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1 (h) No person may publish or disseminate, or cause to be published or  
2 disseminated any advertisement in violation of this subsection. A communications  
3 medium which in good faith relies on the reasonable representations of any person  
4 who places an advertisement with that medium as to the applicability of this  
5 subsection to that person does not violate this paragraph as a result of publication  
6 or dissemination of that advertisement based on those representations.

7 (i) Paragraphs (a), (c), and (d) do not apply to any of the following:

8 1. An individual who makes disbursements for advertisements in the print  
9 media with regard to a particular election that total less than \$1,000 and that do not  
10 constitute a contribution to any candidate or other individual.

11 2. A person who is exempt from reporting the purchase of or obligation incurred  
12 for an advertisement under s. 11.06 (2).

13 3. An organization that disseminates nonadvertising material in a regularly  
14 published newsletter that expresses its political views with respect to elections that  
15 are of concern to its membership, if distribution of the newsletter is restricted to that  
16 membership.

17 **SECTION 10.** 11.30 (3) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

18 11.30 (3) (b) Any person named in par. (a) is guilty of a violation of this chapter  
19 unless, before using the communications medium for political purposes other than  
20 as provided for in sub. ~~(2)~~ (2m), there is filed with the board a verified declaration  
21 specifically stating the communications medium in which the person has financial  
22 interest or over which the person has control and the exact nature and extent of the  
23 interest or control.

24 **SECTION 11.** 11.59 of the statutes is created to read:

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1           **11.59 Liability for unlawful advertisements. (1)** A candidate who  
2 complies with all applicable requirements under s. 11.30 (2m) throughout the  
3 candidate's campaign, or the personal campaign committee of such a candidate, may  
4 bring an action for damages against any person who violates s. 11.30 (2m) with  
5 regard to a television or radio advertisement relating to an election for the office that  
6 the candidate seeks. As a condition of bringing an action under this section, a  
7 candidate for state office, or the personal campaign committee of such a candidate,  
8 shall complete and file with the board a notice of complaint, on a form prescribed by  
9 the board, regarding a violation of s. 11.30 (2m). The notice shall be filed after the  
10 airing of the advertisement, but no later than the Friday after the date of the election.  
11 Any other candidate, or the personal campaign committee of such other candidate,  
12 as a condition of bringing an action under this section, shall file the notice of  
13 complaint during the same time period with the county clerk or, if applicable, the  
14 county board of election commissioners, of any county with territory in the  
15 jurisdiction or district that the candidate seeks to represent and shall publish a short  
16 form notice of complaint, in the form prescribed by the board, in a newspaper having  
17 general circulation in the jurisdiction or district that the candidate seeks to  
18 represent. A candidate or personal campaign committee shall bring an action in  
19 circuit court for the county where the notice of complaint is filed no later than the  
20 90th day following the date of the election.

21           **(2)** The court shall award a successful plaintiff in an action under this section  
22 damages equal to the total dollar amount of the television and radio advertising time  
23 that was aired in violation of s. 11.30 (2m). The court shall award treble damages  
24 if the plaintiff notified or reasonably attempted to notify the defendant, by 1st class  
25 mail with return receipt requested, that a particular advertisement or that

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1 particular advertisements failed to comply with s. 11.30 (2m) and if, after the notice  
2 or attempted notice, the advertisement continued to be aired. The court shall  
3 calculate the treble damages beginning on the date on which the notice was accepted  
4 or rejected by the defendant. Within 5 days after the return receipt for any notice  
5 mailed under this subsection is provided to the plaintiff, the plaintiff shall send a  
6 copy of the notice to the board or to the county clerk or county board of election  
7 commissioners of the county where the plaintiff's notice of complaint was filed.

8 **(3)** A candidate and his or her personal campaign committee are jointly and  
9 severally liable for the payment of damages and any attorney fees awarded in an  
10 action under this section. If a candidate is held personally liable for the payment of  
11 damages or attorney fees or both, the candidate may not use or be reimbursed with  
12 funds from his or her campaign depository account in paying the damages or attorney  
13 fees.

14 **SECTION 12.** 11.61 (1) (c) of the statutes is amended to read:

15 11.61 **(1)** (c) Whoever intentionally violates any provision of this chapter other  
16 than those ~~provided~~ specified in par. (a) and s. 11.30 (2m) (d) and whoever  
17 intentionally violates any provision under par. (b) where the intentional violation  
18 concerns a specific figure which does not exceed \$100 in amount or value may be fined  
19 not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than 6 months or both.

20 **SECTION 13.** 13.62 (5g) of the statutes is amended to read:

21 13.62 **(5g)** "Candidate" has the meaning given under s. 11.01 (1) (1r).

22 **SECTION 14.** 19.42 (3m) of the statutes is amended to read:

23 19.42 **(3m)** "Candidate," except as otherwise provided, has the meaning given  
24 in s. 11.01 (1) (1r).

25 **SECTION 15. Nonstatutory provisions.**

