

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2005-06

(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

NOTICES ...

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

> **

> Executive Sessions ... ES

> **

> Committee Reports ... CR

> **

> Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

> **

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE
CLERK FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

> Appointments ... Appt

> **

Name:

> Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

**

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

> 05hr_ab0626_AC-CE_pt01

> Miscellaneous ... Misc

> **

Representative Stephen J. Freese
Chair - Campaigns and Elections Committee
Room 115 West
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison 53708

DATE: May 18th, 2006

TO: Chairman Stephen Freese and the Campaigns and Elections Committee

SUBJECT: Hearing on AB 626

I was not sure if or just how I should respond to this Committee's act to throw bill 626 on the hearing heap as an after-session after-thought.

Obviously, Mr. Chairman you were not thinking of me and my request to your office to give AB 626 a fair and timely hearing.

I am sorry, and you may hear it in my demeanor and voice, but my travel from Milwaukee today is an act of desperation. Can you appreciate how your apparent subversion of the Clean Election and Ethics Reform bills AB 626 and SB 1 spawn a cynicism and dash to bits the hopes that I and so many caring citizens had for some change, some light, - just some act to give us faith that democracy can rise in this building?

When the cloud of corruption is most dark and heavy in these halls you had the opportunity in your hand to lift it and so lift the hopes of the People who seek a government that is voter-owned not donor-owned.

I will continue to work with the Wisconsin Peoples Legislature and resist the message you are selling to us - to just stay home, why bother, it doesn't matter.

We will be back next session to reintroduce and get a fair vote on AB 626 a SB 1. What else can I do? It is the RIGHT thing to do.

Will you, Mr. Chairman, if AB 626 is reintroduced next session in its current form, recommend passage of AB 626 out of your Committee for a vote by the Assembly? If not, please respond to me with your specific objections to AB 626?

Sincerely,



Rob Steinhof
3460 N. Pierce St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
414-967-7871

AB 626 Public Hearing
May 18, 2006

I would like to thank Rep. Mark Pocan for introducing the Public Financing Bill 626 and for forcing the public vote on the Ethics Reform Bill SB1. We appreciate very much knowing the names of those who blocked the vote on this very important legislation.

I believe most people initially get into politics because they want to serve the public, make a difference and do the right thing. That statement probably sounds very naive today. That's because we long for the days when Wisconsin was known for its clean politics, and when we heaped our scorn on the state to our southern border. We could still feel proud through the governorships of Tony Earl and Lee Dreyfuss, but following those days the climate began to change with the infusion of big money into the political arena, and its harmful impact has been building every year since.

We've recently seen big money's corrupting influence through "pay to play" and the caucus scandals with five legislators and some of their staffs convicted of serious crimes. They all fell into the trap of ignoring the people's business because their top priorities were getting a leg up on the other party, securing their jobs, increasing their power, and raising more campaign cash. And, if that weren't enough, we've seen a major increase in bitter partisanship and divisive legislation introduced to inflame the culture wars for political gain.

Sure, I give my \$25 or \$50 when I can afford it, to a candidate I support, but how can I compete with special interest PACs, corporations and wealthy individuals who can give in the hundreds of thousands. They obviously wouldn't be doing this unless they expected a huge return on their investment in favorable legislation. What the average voter gets is higher prices for goods and services, higher taxes, poor healthcare and underfunded education. Priorities for the common good are left on the bottom of the heap!

AB 626 is modeled after the system of public financing that Maine and Arizona have enjoyed for years. We really don't have to reinvent the wheel here. Political candidates and incumbents alike appreciate not having to devote most of their time to raising cash, and the voters like it because it levels the playing field, allows for a greater diversity of candidates to run, and those candidates are not beholden to the special interests. They truly have voter-owned elections and this system meets the legality test.

The ever-escalating amount of money politicians think they must raise to stay competitive, either through the front door or the back door, is a serious threat to our democracy. Milwaukee D.A., E. Michael Mc Cann calls this the "giant washing machine". More and more power is put in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Our state now patterns itself after Washington's K Street, with more and more lobbyists, and where the most campaign money is delved out to those who are in lock-step with the party line—commonly known as the Tom Delay effect.

Voters across the state are fed up. We are tired of lawmakers arrogance and disrespect for us. A recent St. Norbert College poll revealed that only 6% of state voters felt that their representatives

truly represent them. Those politicians who wish to perpetuate the big washing machine do so at their own peril as more and more grassroots groups and the media are now paying attention to who votes for reform and who votes for the status quo.

In reality, the state caucus scandal is small potatoes compared to our system of "legalized bribery" as so aptly put by Senators Russ Feingold and John Mc Cain. The people of Wisconsin are crying for reform. We need to find another Fighting Bob La Follette. Let's get AB 626 passed in the next legislative session!

Jerry Fredrickson
8016 S. 60th St.
Franklin, WI 53132-9259
414-421-0466
bikehead@execpc.com



John Muir Chapter

Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter
222 South Hamilton Street, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3201
Telephone: (608) 256-0565 Fax: (608) 256-4562
E-mail: john.muir.chapter@sierraclub.org Website: wisconsin.sierraclub.org

SUPPORT AB 626, relating to public financing of elections for state offices,
Clean Elections Fund

Before the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

May 18, 2006

Caryl Terrell, Legislative Coordinator
Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter

Thank you for holding this hearing and providing this opportunity to comment today. For at least ten years, campaign finance reform has been a priority legislative issue of the Wisconsin Sierra Club.

We deplore the collapse of Wisconsin's campaign finance system which was once a model for the nation. Our 15,000 members statewide realize the unfortunate influence money can have on public policy. For all the things we care about, like the air we breathe and the health of our children, we face the ridiculously difficult process of working with public officials whose campaigns have been financed by the special interests who work against us. Our priority is bi-partisan reform to restore integrity to our elections and bring citizens back into the democratic process.

We expect public officials to be dedicated to the long-term best interests of the state and the nation. We seek a shift in political power toward voters and volunteers and away from wealthy self-funded candidates and large contributors seeking political favors.

We believe in the power of voters informed by public interest lobbying. We want candidates who seek out the opinions of constituents and use their real world experiences to identify real problems and solutions relevant to voters.

Money has become too important in the conduct of elections. We need to reduce the costs of elections and reduce the amount of time candidates feel they must spend soliciting contributions. We can improve the quality of candidates for public office by reducing the role of money in elections so they can better serve their constituents and the public interest.

AB 626, the Clean Elections Fund for state offices, addresses these issues. AB 626 is modeled on successful campaign finance reform systems in place in Arizona and Maine and recently adopted in Connecticut. It provides a voluntary system of full public funding for candidates establishing bona-fide support within their district. AB 626 includes spending limits, self-contribution limits and disincentives for excessive spending. Challengers may receive matching funds to ensure fairness against traditionally funded candidates. Provisions deal with independent expenditures in opposition to candidates or in support of their opponent.

We have only to look to the states where this system is in place to recognize the value of a comprehensive campaign finance reform like AB 626. Only comprehensive reform can deal with the current "no rules" out-control spending on elections that we have now.

-more-

Remember to Support the Sierra Club through your Workplace Giving Campaign!
The John Muir Chapter is proud to be a member of



We all recognize that this legislative session is officially dead. Recently, the Sierra Club joined with 21 other advocacy groups to urge Governor Doyle to call a special legislative session to act on bipartisan ethics reform legislation, Senate Bill 1. We urge this committee to support AB 626 so that it could also be part of such a special legislative session.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Sierra Club's position with you.