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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Campaign Integrity Package Announced

Madison, WI--Assembly and Senate legislators and clean-government advocates unveiled a “Campaign Integrity” package that promotes open and transparent government. Senator Chris Larson issued the following statement regarding the proposals, which have been circulated for co-sponsorship:

“Wisconsin was once a state admired for tough campaign finance laws that protected both our public voice and the integrity of our political process. In 2014, independent expenditure groups in legislative races in Wisconsin spent \$2 million. However, in 2015, Republicans rewrote campaign finance laws that eliminated many contribution restrictions and loosened requirements on reporting contributions. These changes inevitably bred corruption as we saw in 2018 when candidates received \$15 million in donations, and again in 2020 when this amount doubled to a whopping \$32.1 million. To break these numbers down further, from 2010 to 2014 only 16.77% of campaign contributions came from PACS, but from 2016 to 2020 we saw this amount rise to 57.81%.

“When corporate PACS are contributing the majority of funds to our campaigns, the people of Wisconsin are no longer in charge of our government. This past year, we’ve seen the most flagrant attack yet on our democracy as Republicans have succumbed to the corrupt pressures of Donald Trump and corporate interests. Given these attacks on our democracy and the rapid moves to legalize corruption by legislative Republicans, we’re putting forward seven clean campaign bills that would put Wisconsin back on the right side of history. These seven bills reflect some of the most egregious problems with our campaign finance laws such as PAC contributions limits, dark money groups, and the segregated fund shell game.

“It is our right as citizens to have a voice in a healthy democracy. Despite the 83% of Wisconsinites who want medical marijuana, the 70% who want expanded Medicaid coverage, and the large majorities who want more spending on public education and a higher minimum wage, dark money and gerrymandering have prohibited us from delivering these resources to our neighbors. You shouldn’t have to be a millionaire to have an influence on our political system. We must pass these bills to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have their voices heard, rather than drowned out in the tidal wave of corporate cash. We owe it to the health of our democracy to regulate campaign cash.

“Continuing to allow powerful special interest groups to have a stranglehold on Wisconsin elections, is a betrayal of our democracy and our shared interests. This Campaign Integrity package will restore our neighbors’ faith in our democracy and promote fairness in our campaign finance rules. As the 2022 midterm election looms over our shoulders, passing this package is more important than ever.”

The deadline for signing on as a co-sponsor to this package is August 17th. A summary of each of the seven bills is attached.

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WISCONSIN Campaign Integrity

Restore - Accountability,
Integrity, & Transparency

2021-22 Campaign Integrity Package

“Campaign Contribution Limits Act”: (LRB 4220) This proposal restores sensible campaign contribution limits. It would do the following:

- Limit contributions to PACs, legislative campaign committees, and political parties to no more than \$10,000, with the exception of a candidate contributing his or her personal funds to his or her own candidate committee.
- Prohibit political parties and legislative campaign committees from establishing a segregated fund to use for general purposes, eliminating the segregated fund shell game that has allowed these groups to avoid donation limits.
- Decrease the individual and candidate committee contribution limit from \$20,000 to \$10,000 for statewide candidates.
- Reduce the donation limits on political action committee contributions to candidates by half.

“Closing the PAC Loophole Act”: (LRB 4221) *This proposal closes a loophole in the legal definition of a PAC that groups use to bypass donation limits.* Currently, a political action committee is defined as a person, other than an individual, that either has express advocacy as its major purpose or spends more than 50 percent of its total spending in a 12-month period on expenditures that are made to support or defeat a referendum or contributions made to a candidate committee, legislative campaign committee, or political party. This proposal defines a political action committee, for campaign finance purposes, as a committee that includes a person, other than an individual, that spends more than \$1,000 in a 12-month period on expenditures for express advocacy or any other aforementioned purposes.

“Coordination Control Act”: (LRB 4222) *This proposal places the same financial limits on coordinated expenditures between candidates and groups as are currently in place for direct contributions.* Allowing unchecked coordinated campaign expenditures circumvents campaign donation limits, invites corruption, as well as fosters immense special interest influence.

“No Corporate Campaign Bribes Act”: (LRB 4223) *This proposal amends Wisconsin State Statutes to prohibit a corporation, cooperative association, labor organization, or federally recognized American Indian Tribe from making contributions to segregated funds established and administered by a political party or legislative campaign committee.* This closes the segregated fund shell game loophole used to funnel additional money to committees.

“Contribution Sunshine Act”: (LRB 4224) *This proposal requires any committee that receives campaign finance contributions of more than \$100 cumulatively from an individual to report that individual’s place of employment and occupation, if any.* Current Wisconsin law does not require the disclosure of any donor’s place of employment; furthermore, current law only requires the reporting of the donor’s occupation at the \$200 and up level.

“Communications Transparency Act”: (LRB 4225) *This proposal requires reporting of mass communications and communication coordination within 48 hours of the mass communications, provided the disbursement for the mass communications exceeds \$500 and the mass communications are made within 60 days of a primary or election.* This proposal also provides a definition for mass communication related to campaigns and requires so-called “dark money” groups to disclose the names of their donors who have given \$100 or more in the preceding 12 months.

“Citizens United Fix”: (LRB 4226) *This resolution places a question on the November 2022 ballot to ask the people if Congress should propose an amendment to overturn Citizens United v. F.E.C.*