

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, October 25, 2002

Assembly Democrats Propose Plan To Clean Up Wisconsin Politics

Assembly Democratic Leader Spencer Black today proposed a nine-point "Force for Reform" agenda to clean up Wisconsin politics and end the abuses that led to the caucus scandal at the State Capitol.

"You can change the players, you can even *charge* the players, but there won't be real reform unless we change the rules of the game to get rid of the corrupting influence big money has on Wisconsin politics and Capitol decision making," Black said.

"The Capitol scandal gives us not just an opportunity, but an obligation to clean up Wisconsin politics. Half-measures and half-hearted gestures aren't going to cut it. The public expects thorough reform, not excuses," Black said.

Black was joined by fellow Assembly Democrats today at a news conference to announce their "Force for Reform" agenda. They called on the Governor to include it in a special legislative session next month, and vowed to keep pushing the reform agenda when the new Legislature elected Nov. 5 convenes in January. The agenda includes:

1. **Clean Money, Not Big Money:** Reduce dependence on special interest fundraising and control the soaring cost of elections by enacting the comprehensive campaign finance reforms included in last session's SB 104. Two immediate steps are needed:
 - a. Repeal the "poison pill" in the current campaign finance reform law. When the Legislature included reforms similar to SB 104 in the budget repair bill, Rep. Jensen, Sen. Chvala and Gov. McCallum inserted language that kills the entire package if any of the individual reforms is struck down in court. The "poison pill" must be repealed so reforms already passed can go into effect.
 - b. Start reform now by moving up the effective date of new limits on fundraising and campaign spending from July 1, 2003 to January 1.
2. **End "Pay to Play" Politics:** Explicitly prohibit the trading of action by legislators or the Governor for campaign contributions. Also prohibit a lobbyist from attempting to influence an official by promising financial support of (or opposition to) a candidate.

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3. **Limit Capitol Fundraising:** Prohibit legislators and the Governor from accepting campaign contributions from the first day of each legislative session until the biennial budget bill is passed and signed into law.
4. **End Cabinet Campaigning:** Prohibit cabinet secretaries, deputies, executive assistants and administrators from soliciting campaign contributions and sponsoring campaign fundraisers for others.
5. **Close Lobby Loopholes:** Prohibit lobbyists and principals from “arranging for” anything of value to be given to an official or candidate (such as contributions during session), to prevent lobbyists from using others to circumvent the law.
6. **Effective, Nonpartisan Enforcement:** End partisan domination of the Elections Board by giving the Supreme Court authority to appoint its members; strengthen the board’s enforcement functions by adding an investigator and an auditor to its staff.
7. **Stop Secret Ad Cash:** Close the loophole that allows special interests to use phony “issue ads” to evade election laws. Apply campaign spending and disclosure laws to any paid advertising that mentions a candidate within 60 days of an election.
8. **Stand By Your Ad:** Discourage negative campaigning by requiring candidates to appear in any of their own ads that mention an opponent by name.
9. **No Lawyers for Legislators:** Stop the use of tax dollars to hire lawyers for legislators charged with criminal activity.

The Assembly Democrats announced their reform agenda in front of the Capitol’s bust of former Governor and U. S. Senator Robert M. La Follette.

“Ten months ago, Assembly Democrats stood here before the hero of progressive reform in Wisconsin, Fighting Bob La Follette. We vowed then to be the force for reform, but we encountered Republican resistance every step of the way,” Black said.

“Today, we renew and expand the Force for Reform Agenda as the people of Wisconsin demand that their Legislature clean up its act and get the big money influence out of state politics and Capitol decision making.

“Fighting Bob would weep for Wisconsin’s progressive tradition if he could see what is happening today. Restoring Wisconsin’s clean government reputation will not be easy or quick, but it will never happen at all unless we start with decisive action to bring integrity back to the Capitol,” Black said.

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