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Statement of Governor Doyle Regarding Campaign Finance Reform

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling this week gives us an opportunity to quickly come to consensus on stopping one of the most pernicious uses of big money in politics today – phony issue ads, which often pour in days before the election, barraging voters with negative and usually misleading attacks against candidates. Groups running these ads abide by no contribution limits, no restrictions against corporate donations, and no reporting requirements.

Everyone knows that the true purpose of these ads is to convince voters to support or oppose a candidate, and it is time that our laws reflect that reality. There is no reason why groups that run these phony issue ads should not have the same reporting and contribution requirements as candidates and other groups that try to influence elections.

I have strongly supported campaign finance reform for many years. In fact, the **U.S. Supreme Court** decision this week strengthens a previous ruling of the Wisconsin Supreme Court in a case when I was Attorney General which recognized that these ads can be legally regulated. The new decision clarifies how the state can properly do that.

A bipartisan majority of Congress and President Bush -- and now the U.S. Supreme Court -- have agreed that regulating these ads is constitutional, and clearly in the public interest. The Court's ruling gives us a clear green light to move forward with similar legislation on the state level to regulate these last minute, phony "issue" ads, requiring groups that run them to abide by the same rules as everyone else.

Wisconsin should follow this lead and quickly enact a law to require that any ad which mentions or depicts a candidate within 30 days of an election is considered an "electioneering communication" – and should be subject to the same contribution limits and disclosure requirements as campaign ads.

I have met with Senators Ellis and Erpenbach on their bill, and am committed to working with them to come to an agreement. While we may not agree on every detail of campaign finance reform, we should all agree on this, get it done, and get it done quickly.