



Politics

Home » News » Politics

captured 7/20/13

Budget defunds elections

Walker proposal replaces tax dollars with voluntary contributions for public funding for court candidates

By Larry Sandler of the Journal Sentinel

March 27, 2011

Tweet 29

Facebook Like

EMAIL PRINT (65) COMMENTS

Related Coverage

News

- Public employees are wild card on April 5 and beyond
Budget defunds elections

Opinions

- Letters: Your opinions

PolitiFact Rulings

- Kloppenborg: Prosser "has prejudged matters that are likely to come before the court."
Review recent rulings on state budget rhetoric

Public funding for Wisconsin Supreme Court races would dwindle under the proposed state budget.

In his 2011-'13 budget, Gov. Scott Walker is proposing to replace all tax dollars with voluntary contributions to the program that is financing the campaigns of both candidates in the April 5 election for the high court.

The spending plan would similarly scale back an older and less sweeping public funding program used by some legislative candidates.

"That's a total destruction of the public financing system," said Jay Heck, executive director of the Wisconsin arm of Common Cause, a liberal group that advocates publicly funded campaigns. "It's really the death knell of public financing."

Walker spokesman Cullen Werwie did not respond to requests for comment about the budget provision.

For decades, Wisconsin taxpayers have been able to support public financing of legislative and statewide campaigns by checking a box at the top of their income tax returns, without increasing their taxes due or reducing their tax refunds. That designated part of the taxes paid - originally \$1 - for grants to candidates who agreed to abide by certain spending and funding limits.

Last fall, the Government Accountability Board distributed \$315,127 to 30 candidates from the Wisconsin Election Campaign Fund, board spokesman Reid Magney said. Heck said participation in the program had fallen over the years because the grants and spending limits were too low to run a competitive campaign, particularly for statewide office.

Judicial candidates aren't eligible for grants from that fund. But spending in Supreme Court races drew public concern after hard-fought campaigns in 2007 and 2008 that cost about \$6 million each, or four times the previous record.

That led to the Legislature's 2009 passage of the Impartial Justice Act, which set up the separate Democracy Trust Fund and boosted the income tax checkoff to \$3. Under that program, high court candidates who follow strict spending and fundraising restrictions can qualify for grants of \$100,000 in the primary and \$300,000 in the general election, and could get more money based on spending and advertising by privately funded candidates and outside groups.

In the Supreme Court primary, three of the four candidates accepted public funding, including the two who advanced to the general election, Justice David Prosser and Assistant Attorney General JoAnne Kloppenburg. Public grants total \$900,000 to date. Outside groups on both sides have run ads in the race without triggering additional grants.

But conservative forces have filed suit to overturn the law. They say the provision that boosts public funding in response to outside spending amounts to an unconstitutional restriction on their freedom of speech, by using their own tax dollars to contradict their statements.

ALL POLITICS BLOG



From Madison and around the state, to Washington D.C., a daily dose of political news and glimpses behind the scenes.

- Politico says Keith Gilkes, top campaign aide of Gov. Scott Walker, one of 50 politicos to watch (4)
Campaign consultant to Scott Walker, Ron Johnson, Paul Ryan gets promoted (13)
Paul Ryan headlining at Iowa dinner this fall (7)

View All Blog Posts

Advertisement

All Politics Blog



From Madison and beyond, a daily dose of political news and glimpses behind the scenes

- Politico says Keith Gilkes, top campaign aide of Gov. Scott Walker, one of 50 politicos to watch (4)
Campaign consultant to Scott Walker, Ron Johnson, Paul Ryan gets promoted (13)
Paul Ryan headlining at Iowa dinner this fall (7)

More blog posts

Budget Coverage

TOP STORIES

- 500 rally in Milwaukee to protest Trayvon Martin verdict
Aaron Rodgers continues Packers' string of QB durability
Number of possible heat deaths in Milwaukee rises to five
Pioneering journalist Helen Thomas dies at 92

MORE NEWS

- Ruling that state shorted prison guard on pay could cost millions of dollars
Heat is suspected in deaths of three Milwaukee men
Milwaukeeans react to Obama speech on

Advertisement





Special Section: Ongoing coverage of Gov. Scott Walker's controversial budget-repair bill and the battle over the 2011-'13 state budget

Walker's budget would combine the two public financing programs, eliminate all tax dollars for them and end the matching grants for court candidates.

Instead, the income tax checkoff would become a voluntary donation, increasing any taxes owed or decreasing any refund. Magney said the checkoff box would move to the bottom of the tax return, along with similar contributions to nine other causes, ranging from the Green Bay Packers to cancer research. Only donated money would be available to candidates, with two-thirds reserved for Supreme Court races.

Heck predicted "participation would plummet even further" if the Legislature approves that provision. He also said a return to big-spending judicial campaigns would weaken public confidence in the state's highest court.

"It is unfortunate that public financing may be curtailed," Kloppenburg said in an e-mail. "Our campaign has wholeheartedly embraced it. We are making history by making it work. Public financing has helped lead to an enormous amount of participation and enthusiasm from people around the state."

Prosser was not available for comment Friday, but his campaign manager, Brian Nemoir, said, "We have been supportive of public funding and have accepted it, although we believe the system has some flaws that need correcting." In previous interviews, Prosser has said the fundraising and spending limits are too restrictive.

Neither the budget provision nor the legal challenges to the funding law would affect the current campaign.



7 Biblical Money Truths

Pastor reveals a 'Biblical Money Code' - Turns \$40,000 into \$396,000.
www.newsmax.com



One-A-Day Joint Relief

Find out why these shocking joint ingredients are flying off shelves.
www.beneflex.com

[Buy a link here](#)

65 Comments »

Read and share your thoughts on this story.



You and 84 others recommend this. 84 people



E-mail Newsletter

The latest local news delivered to your inbox Monday-Friday during the 2 p.m. hour – or whenever there's big breaking news.

Enter your e-mail address above and click "Sign Up Now!" to begin receiving your e-mail newsletter

[Login](#) or [Register](#) to manage all your newsletter preferences.

Trayvon Martin verdict

- State pays law firm nearly \$1 million to defend Act 10
- 3 brothers all step up to serve
- In era of quick union bargaining, Waukesha ends a slugfest
- Some John Doe records may be made public in O'Donnell lawsuit
- Jury rejects John Spooner's insanity plea



NATIONAL POLITICS VIDEO



ELECTION 2013



Complete coverage of the 2013 spring elections.

- » **Election 2013:** Roggensack defeats Fallone for second term on state Supreme Court (423)
- » **Election 2013:** Ozaukee Judge Wolgram ousted over signature on Walker recall petition (314)
- » **Election 2013:** Tony Evers easily holds onto state superintendent post (19)

[Go to section](#)

THE WISCONSIN VOTER BLOG



The Journal Sentinel's Craig Gilbert explores political trends in a purple state.

- » Congress and the electorate reaching new heights of partisanship (84)
- » Wisconsin and Minnesota: Mirror images going in opposite directions (607)
- » How Republicans and Democrats see the same economy (498)

[View All Blog Posts](#)

INSIDE STATE POLITICS

Journal Sentinel coverage of the legislature, governor's office and other state politics in Madison and around Wisconsin.

- » State pays law firm nearly \$1 million to defend Act 10  (77)
- » Camp near iron-ore mine site in violation, Iron County attorney says  (238)
- » Some John Doe records may be made public in O'Donnell lawsuit  (13)
- » City firefighters want to join police in residency suit  (24)
- » Lawmaker seeks bill to rein in podiatrist's practices  (17)

More

JOURNAL SENTINEL
PolitiFact[®] Wisconsin

How did they rate on the Truth-O-Meter?

"Upwards of 90 percent" of women seeking an abortion decide not to have an abortion after seeing an ultrasound. — **Rachel Campos-Duffy**



[Details](#)

"Currently, it takes up to 25 years to obtain U.S. citizenship legally" but the Senate bill "would allow immigrants who came to the United States illegally to obtain citizenship in just 13 years." — **Jim Sensenbrenner**



[Details](#)

"When I was growing up as a kid in the city of Milwaukee, if we averaged 4 homicides a year in the entire city that was a record number." — **David A. Clarke Jr.**



[Details](#)

a service of the
JOURNAL SENTINEL

- » [About PolitiFact Wisconsin](#)
- » [See all Truth-O-Meters](#)

MOST POPULAR - NEWS

most read	commented	e-mailed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In era of quick union bargaining, Waukesha ends a slugfest ▪ Milwaukeeans react to Obama speech on Trayvon Martin verdict ▪ Ruling that state shorted prison guard on pay could cost millions of dollars ▪ Hey, at least Milwaukee isn't Detroit ▪ State pays law firm nearly \$1 million to defend Act 10 		
» more most popular content...		

Advertisement



Elsewhere on JSOnline

Photo Gallery



Photos from around the globe 7/19/2013

Milwaukee



FBI chief transferred, under investigation

Photo Gallery



Arthur Ashe Kids' Day

New mobile site



Packers coverage on your smartphone

Metroparent



Check out our redesigned site

Photo Gallery



Parties celebrate 'Project Runway'

advertisement

LOCAL JOBS FROM THE LOCAL LEADER.

JSJobs
jsonline.com/jobs
First for Wisconsin JOBS

LAND YOUR NEXT JOB AT
JSONLINE.COM/JOBS
Click for a new career!

JSOnline | MyCommunityNOW | Living Lake Country | MilwaukeeMoms | Today's TMJ4 | Newsradio 620 | 94.5 Lake FM

UPDATED PRIVACY POLICY/YOUR CALIFORNIA PRIVACY RIGHTS

| Updated Terms of Use | Contact Us | Journal Careers | Subscription Services | Place an Ad | About Our Ads | Advertise with Us | PR Hub

© 2013, Journal Sentinel Inc. All rights reserved.

Powered by Clickability.

Produced and Managed by Journal Interactive.

