

MARK POCAN

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MEDIA

February 25, 2009

Dear Media Representatives,

As we approach the legislative portion of the state budget, I wanted to let you know my office looks forward to working with you. As you know, Sen. Miller and I have already moved forward with posting more of the Finance committee's proceedings and documents on the web for easy access for members of the public. The next several months will be intense, but we look forward to moving the process expeditiously.

I also wanted to raise another issue with you. One of the many special interests that offer opinions during the budget process is the GOP-leaning Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. Often, they mask their true agenda by providing some marginally good fiscal information with their more slanted corporate driven analysis.

Often the media adds flowery, yet not factually accurate, descriptors to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. Words like "non-partisan" and "independent" are often placed in front of their name.

I have attached a few prior analyses from my office and one recently from another Wisconsin group regarding the WTA. As you can see, they are a corporate special interest that often, in my opinion, skews information to fit a specific agenda.

Their recent budget analysis was reminiscent of the television show "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth-Grader?". It was overly simplistic, misleading (at least according to our briefing from Fiscal Bureau) and slanted for a specific agenda.

Perhaps more interesting coverage should be given to how they remain a non-profit organization with such a political agenda or why they have such a strong connection by board membership to one of the largest special interest lobbies in the state.

My suggestion is merely this. Let's call them what they are: A biased special interest with strong ties to both a large business lobby and the Republican Party.

(more)

However, if you are still inclined to use flowery, yet not entirely accurate, prose to describe them, let me offer a few suggestions I would appreciate you consider using before my name in the media:

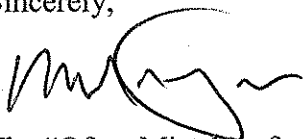
“Exceedingly and uniquely independent”

“Obama-like”

“Strikingly handsome”

I’m sure I could come up with more, but this would be a good start. Anyway, thanks for reading this letter. I look forward to working with you through the budget season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Pocan', written in a cursive style.

The “Often Mistaken for Brad Pitt” State Representative Mark Pocan
78th Assembly District



MARK POCAN & CHRIS SINICKI

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

PO Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 1999

For More Information, Contact:

Rep. Mark Pocan @ 266-8570

Rep. Chris Sinicki @ 266-8588

POCAN AND SINICKI BLAST "NON-PARTISAN" LOBBY GROUP AS A PAWN OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

**98% of Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance Board of Directors contributions
go to Republican candidates**

Madison — State Representatives Mark Pocan (D-Madison) and Chris Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) today blasted the Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance for its claim of being a "non-partisan" organization after research shows \$134,000 out of \$137,000 in contributions from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance Board of Directors went to Republican candidates. Pocan and Sinicki believe that further proof of its partisanship is the organization's policy analysis, including their recent suggestion that school districts may be falsely identifying students as disabled to get special education funding.

"In the five months that I have been in the state Assembly, this organization has clearly offered only a partisan bent to their analysis. We think its time that the people of Wisconsin realize that the Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance is not looking out for them, but rather for the special interests of the Republican Party," said Pocan.

The Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance officially states that it is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that provides consulting on tax issues to public officials, the news media and various groups. The two freshman Democratic legislators doubt the objectivity of the group.

To demonstrate the Republican leanings of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, Pocan and Sinicki researched five years of campaign contributions for the 15 people who sit on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. (Please see attachment). Of the \$137,000 these 15 people donated to campaigns, over \$134,000 went to Republican candidates, or 98% of total contributions.

“Just follow the money. You can tell an organization’s true motives by following the money trail. It’s time that the public gets educated about this organization’s true partisan, Republican leanings,” said Pocan.

The Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance also seem to share a close relationship to the overtly partisan organization, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce. Six members (40%) of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance’s board are past or current board members of WMC, including three past chairs of WMC.

Sinicki added, “How can an organization be non-partisan when its Board of Directors, the people who control the organization’s agenda, are so blatantly Republican.”

In addition, this past week the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance put out a report claiming that school districts may falsely label children as disabled to get special education funding. Their claim supports the notion of many Republicans that additional funds for special education are unnecessary, a position discounted by nearly every education organization in Wisconsin.

“I was appalled after I read what the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance had to say about our children and our schools,” said Sinicki. “Their sole purpose in stating this is to advance the Republican budget and continue this four year funding freeze on special education instead of addressing the real issues surrounding the effects of underfunding school districts for special education. We need to address the real effects this has on children in our public school system, not advance their partisan agenda,” she added.

The two legislators cited numerous other partisan stances the organization has recently taken. They include support for corporate property tax exemptions for computers, implied support for Republican tax cut plans over Democratic ones, biased analysis of spending caps on school districts, suggestions that UW tuition is too reasonably priced, and more.

Both legislators say they hope a truly non-profit, non-partisan organization like the state’s Fiscal Bureau would be created to provide true objective information to the public.

Campaign Contributions from Officers and Board of Directors

Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, 1993 - 1998

Name	Contributions to Republicans	Contributions to Democrats
Robert J. O'Toole, Chair **	\$ 11,265.00	\$ -
Mark A. Cullen, Vice Chair *	\$ 21,900.00	\$ -
Jere D. McGaffey, Secretary - Treasurer	\$ 6,375.00	\$ 500.00
R. Buth, Superior	\$ 50.00	\$ -
A.P. Diotte, Janesville	\$ 5,300.00	\$ -
J.D. Ericson, Milwaukee	\$ 15,175.00	\$ 1,250.00
R.L. Fitzsimonds, Milwaukee **	\$ 17,100.00	\$ 800.00
C.W. Knox, Jefferson	\$ 3,620.00	\$ -
S.W. Orr, Jr., Wausau	\$ 16,945.00	\$ -
P.M. Platten, III, Green Bay	\$ 5,600.00	\$ -
J.D. Pyle, Madison	\$ 8,400.00	\$ -
J.D. Quick, Manitowoc *	\$ 100.00	\$ -
R.F. Teerlink, Milwaukee **	\$ 13,950.00	\$ 200.00
J.B. Torinus, Jr., West Bend *	\$ 3,200.00	\$ -
W.T. Walker, Racine	\$ 5,875.00	\$ -
TOTAL	\$ 134,855.00	\$ 2,750.00
TOTAL PERCENT	98.0%	2.0%

* Current Board Members of WMC

** Past Chairs of WMC

(BLOG TEXT FROM 1/5/06 POSTING)

'Corporate' Taxpayers Alliance....

Back in 1999, I noticed that the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance was not exactly as nonpartisan as they claimed. "Nonpartisan and fiercely independent" they claim on their website; "an unrivaled reputation for accurate, objective research" they profess . [LINK](#) Rarely, however, do they speak out against new corporate tax giveaways or other breaks, but they often rail against government spending in general, even for things like public education. After a little research, I found some rather startling results.

In 1999, seven of their fifteen Board of Directors members were either current or former members of the very partisan Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, for a total of 47 percent of their Board membership. Even more interesting, of their Board Members who made campaign donations from 1993-98 which totaled almost \$135,000, 98 percent of their donation dollars went to Republican candidates, according to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign's database of state campaign donations.

Non-partisan? Heck, that's the Republican leadership circle.

As I read this December 28, 2005 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article about Governor Doyle's property tax freeze, this quote stood out to me:

LIST TWO PARAGRAPH QUOTE WITH LINK

Given the statewide accounts of real property tax relief offered in people's bills last December, it seems the Republicans still have firm control of the "non-partisan" Wisconsin Taxpayer's Alliance.

Here's the proof. Of their current Board of Directors, ten of sixteen are either current or former WMC Board members – a whopping 63 percent! And what were their campaign donations since 1993? Well, of the \$263,000 donated, 90.2 percent went to Republicans and 9.8 percent went to Democrats. **(INSERT LINK TO TABLE)**

That sounds like the Corporate Taxpayers Alliance to me.

WI Taxpayers Alliance Officers and Board of Directors
 Campaign Contributions listed on WI Democracy Campaign Database

Name	Contributions to Republicans	Contributions to Democrats
Dale R. Schuh, Stevens Point, Chair *	\$ 7,950.00	\$ 7,200.00
Jay B. Williams, Mequon, Vice Chair **	\$ 450.00	\$ 700.00
<i>Jere D. McGaffey, Milwaukee, Secretary-Treasurer</i>	\$ 9,225.00	\$ 3,600.00
<i>Jeffrey L. Adams, Beloit</i>	\$ -	\$ -
<i>Mark D. Bugher, Madison</i>	\$ 2,465.00	\$ -
Mark A. Cullen, Janesville *	\$ 52,425.00	\$ 3,500.00
Roger L. Fitzsimonds, Milwaukee **	\$ 30,660.00	\$ 3,950.00
<i>Carol W. Knox, Jefferson</i>	\$ 15,075.00	\$ -
Dennis J. Kuester, Milwaukee **	\$ 48,825.00	\$ 8,000.00
Sam W. Orr, Jr., Wausau **	\$ 49,415.00	\$ 350.00
Robert J. O'Toole, Milwaukee **	\$ 23,540.00	\$ 900.00
Jay D. Quick, Manitowoc *	\$ 1,102.00	\$ -
Andrew E. Randall, Milwaukee **	\$ -	\$ -
<i>Leonard S. Sosnowski, Madison</i>	\$ -	\$ -
John B. Torinus, Jr., West Bend *	\$ 10,500.00	\$ 200.00
<i>Willard T. Walker, Racine</i>	\$ 11,675.00	\$ 250.00
TOTAL	\$ 263,307.00	\$ 28,650.00
TOTAL PERCENT	90.2%	9.8%

* Current Board Members of WMC

** Former Board Members of WMC



NEWS RELEASE

OneWisconsinNow.org/press

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 12, 2009

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\$288,000 in WI Taxpayer Alliance Board Member Contributions Show Overwhelming Conservative Preference *92 Percent of Donated Money Has Gone to GOP, Conservatives*

Madison – Board members of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance have donated over \$288,000 to Republicans and conservative candidates since 1991, compared to just \$24,500 to Democrats and liberals, raising serious questions about the organization's reputation as an objective source for tax policy and research.

"Board members of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance have donated over \$288,000 to Republicans and conservative candidates—and they're welcome to do that," said One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. "But this lopsided giving shows an unmistakable conservative preference. As we all know, the conservative agenda means fewer taxes for corporations and the wealthy and a more regressive tax burden paid by the middle class."

An analysis by One Wisconsin Now, a progressive advocacy organization created to advance progressive values, ideas and policies, showed that conservatives and Republicans received 92 percent of total money in ideological political contributions made by 13 WTA board members. Two board members, including President Todd Berry, a frequent media and governmental source, made no contributions. A full listing of the more than 700 state and federal political contributions made by WTA board members is available at:
<http://www.OneWisconsinNow.org/WTAcontributions>.

"Solving the economic crisis created by the reckless conservative fiscal policies of the Bush administration will require corporations and the wealthy to begin paying a fair share," said Ross. "The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance uses a steady drumbeat about Wisconsin's tax burden to obscure that the middle class is paying for enormous loopholes for corporations and the multi-millionaires."

With numerous proposed solutions to close the \$5.4 billion state budget deficit being debated, from closing the \$75 million corporate "Las Vegas Loophole" to reinstating the estate tax for millionaires to ending the corporate tax break that allows businesses to write off Automatic Teller Machines and cash registers at fast food restaurants as computer equipment, Berry and the WTA are insisting the budget deficit is billions less – implying much less need to raise revenue.

As a percentage of all state and local taxes paid, corporate taxes in Wisconsin fall substantially below the national average. Raising the percentage paid by corporations to the national average would create \$1.3 billion worth of additional revenue to fund critical priorities needed by the people of Wisconsin.

Board members on the WTA represent a number of corporations including two, AO Smith and JP Cullen and Sons, who according to the Institute for Wisconsin's Future paid no corporate state income taxes over a two-year period.

"Most organizations have an ideological slant and are identified as such," said Ross. "It's fair to say an organization whose board members doled out over \$288,000 to Republicans and conservative candidates ought to be labeled accordingly."

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One Wisconsin Now is a statewide communications network specializing in effective earned media and online organizing to advance progressive leadership and values.