

# Bill Kraus: It's all about the money. Lots of money.

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It is increasingly likely that the total price tag from all players in the 2018 governor's race will be more than \$100 million.

How could that happen?

Who is responsible?

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The list of culprits is as long as that in Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express."

It started with the Supreme Court in its 19th century proclamation that organizations were people and entitled to the free speech privileges of the 10th Amendment.

Every Supreme Court decision on this subject since 1886 has affirmed or expanded on this ruling.

Since then Richard Nixon's paranoia spawned the Watergate reforms that created PACs and brought in another group of big spenders with free speech rights.

Herb Kohl proved to Wisconsin politicians that money is more important than people in elections in his 1988 campaign.

Barack Obama blew past the attempt to fund presidential campaigns with public money. Wisconsin passed and quickly abolished an attempt to do the same for state Supreme Court races.

The county and district party chairs who once ran most political campaigns were pushed aside by the campaign management business; media experts and pollsters became standard equipment and made TV station owners rich.

The radicals took over the political parties, and the boomers gave up on politics and political organizations.

By 2017 Tony Evers, the school teacher, told everyone he was going to spend \$25 million to get elected governor. Dana Wachs said his budget is \$20 million. Can Matt Flynn be far behind? And only their bankers know how much Kurt Kober and Andy Gronik are willing to spend to be the next—it's nobody's money but mine—Herb Kohl copycat.

And we know from his previous campaigns that the sky is the limit for the incumbent Scott Walker who set spending records in his recall and re-election campaigns.

It adds up pretty quickly to \$100 million or more.

And, thanks to serial weakening of laws that tracked the money and revealed its sources nobody will ever know how much is really spent and by whom.

All we know for sure is that it isn't you or me.

Merry Christmas.

*— Kraus, a former leader of Common Cause in Wisconsin, is a longtime Wisconsin politico who advised Govs. Dreyfus and Knowles.*