

# McCabe Campaign: AB 353 hurts local farmers, co-ops and Wisconsin communities; serves corporate interests

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LA CROSSE, WI, SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2017 – Co-ops help build strong communities and allow everyday people to support local farms. Assembly Bill 353 introduced Monday is disastrous for neighborhood co-ops across the state and the farmers they serve. Wisconsin's 150 year old co-operative principles include participation with the community, autonomy, and a "1 member, 1 vote" policy. This bill is a dramatic departure from those democratic, community-based principles. It grants the corporatization of co-ops and allows big money to creep into these locally oriented organizations.

We are disappointed to see that AB 353 has bipartisan support in the Senate. The bipartisan support of this bill, along with the bipartisan support of the Foxconn agreement, are just two examples of how the current political establishment is not serving Wisconsin. They are examples of how money continues to have an outsized influence on our elected officials.

By allowing co-ops to give over 8% of profits to investors, AB 353 only benefits

corporate interests and not the community members co-ops are meant to serve.

By allowing non-members and outside investors to make up 20% of a co-op's board of directors, our elected officials only give more power to the wealthy and privileged few.

By allowing co-op votes to be based on how much money you spend and not on a "1 member, 1 vote" policy, this bill doesn't just go against co-op principles, it goes against the basic principles of democracy.

Wisconsin's proud history of establishing strong co-ops needs to be protected. We need to encourage the expansion of local initiatives that build strong local economies from the ground up, not the top down.

We strongly encourage our supporters and any members of co-ops to testify against AB 353 this Wednesday at the state capitol during the 11am public hearing.