

McCabe campaign: To lead by example on money and politics

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Contact: Christine Welcher, Campaign Manager
[608-279-2733](tel:608-279-2733)
christine@bluejeansgov.com

Wisconsin governor candidate Mike McCabe announced today that he will not accept any single donation of more than \$200 for his campaign, despite state law allowing candidates for governor in Wisconsin to take \$20,000 checks from individuals and \$86,000 donations from political action committees.

“These huge donations that flow so freely in our elections amount to legal bribes. I cannot in good conscience accept them,” McCabe said. “Our campaign is going to have to be people-powered and crowd-funded.”

Supporters will be allowed to give more than once but not more than \$200 at a time and no more than a total of \$1,000 for the entire campaign.

America’s political system is fueled – and corrupted – by large donations from a tiny sliver of the public. A mere [one-half of 1 percent of the U.S. population make political donations of more than \\$200](#), but those contributions account for more than two-thirds of all the money given to candidates.

“There is risk involved in taking this stand against the influence of big money. But there is an even greater risk if everyone keeps going along with the corrupt way election campaigns are regularly being funded. If big money rules again in the next election for governor, some candidate will win but the people will lose,” McCabe said.

“If money decides the election, the people will continue to be stuck with elected representatives who scratch the backs of those who scratched theirs, and our government will continue to be controlled by the wealthy and well-connected. Breaking free of this trap involves risk. It requires faith and the courage of conviction,” he said. “Political insiders will call this unilateral disarmament. No, it’s

acting on principle. The insiders say you have to spend four or five hours a day begging rich people for money if you want to be taken seriously. That's exactly what has gotten us into the mess we're in."

In 1995 McCabe was a founding member of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, a nonpartisan watchdog group that specializes in tracking the money in state elections and works to make people matter more than money in politics. He led the group for 15 years as its director and during that time [exposed money's influence and called out wrongdoing](#) by state officials, earning a reputation as a leading government whistle blower and one of the nation's best political money trackers. Before the Democracy Campaign came along, the only way to see who was donating to elected officials and candidates for office was to travel to the old state Elections Board office in Madison and personally examine mountains of paper reports. The Democracy Campaign entered all of the information on those reports into an electronic database and published it online, making it vastly easier to follow the money in Wisconsin politics. For its efforts under Mike's leadership, the Democracy Campaign was named the Citizen Openness Advocate of the Year in 2012 by the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council and the state chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.