

One Wisconsin Now: Latest conference hosted by Tommy Thompson center continues promoting the right-wing agenda on the public dime

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MADISON, Wis. — The Tommy Thompson Center is hosting a two-day conference in Madison with an agenda featuring right-wing activists and organizations receiving significant financial support from notorious right-wing funders the Bradley Foundation and the Koch brothers. The center is housed on the UW-Madison campus and is supported by \$3 million in public tax dollars in the current budget cycle. One Wisconsin Now Deputy Director Mike Browne said this is the latest instance of the center promoting a right-wing agenda, on the public dime.

“The Tommy Thompson Center is designed to apply a veneer of academic respectability to the right-wing agenda they’re promoting, and this conference is a prime example of how they do it,” commented Browne. “That it’s happening thanks to millions of dollars of public tax dollars that could have otherwise been supporting students and the schools is appalling.”

[According to the event agenda](#), Grover Norquist of the group Americans for Tax Reform provided a luncheon address for conference attendees. Norquist famously

declared, "I'm not in favor of abolishing the government. I just want to shrink it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub." He promotes an absolutist no tax increase pledge through his group, the signing of which has become a staple of right-wing campaigns for public office. His efforts are supported by a host of right-wing financiers, including \$850,000 from the right-wing Bradley Foundation.

Almost every group sending representatives to participate in the conference panels has received support from right-wing politicians and foundations. For example, U.S. Representative Paul Ryan is a noted promoter of HOPE for Prisoners and its leader Jon Pearson.

The right-wing Bradley Foundation has also, according to a review of federal tax filings, doled out \$140,000 to Prison Fellowship, \$1.43 million to the American Conservative Union Foundation, \$315,000 to the Woodson Center, \$2.391 million to the Institute for Justice, \$315,000 to the Texas Public Policy Foundation and \$2.836 million to the Heritage Foundation.

In addition, the notorious Koch brothers are major supporters of Right on Crime, a project of the Koch-Bradley funded Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Participating in a panel discussion is Missouri Attorney Todd Graves. Graves worked for Club for Growth head Eric O'Keefe in the "John Doe 2" criminal investigation of impropriety involving Gov. Walker's gubernatorial campaign and allegedly independent organizations spending to help elect him, including the Club for Growth Wisconsin run by O'Keefe.

Browne concluded, "Republicans Robin Vos, Scott Fitzgerald and Scott Walker conspired to divert \$3 million from the 2017 state budget to this outfit because they believed it would help promote their right-wing ideology. And everything to date suggest it's 'mission accomplished' for them."