

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign: Rebecca Bradley sides with donor in Kohler-Andrae case

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Conservative Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Bradley cast the deciding vote and actually wrote the decision that favored a golf course developer, even though that developer had contributed \$2,500 to her campaign.

Late last week, the high court's conservative majority [ruled](#) that a group had no standing to challenge the transfer of state park land for a proposed golf course.

The Kohler Co. and its chairman, Herbert V. Kohler Jr., want to build an 18-hole, 247-acre "world class" golf course using nearly five acres of forest and wetland in the [Kohler-Andrae State Park](#) in Sheboygan County for the golf course project. The plans call for filling about 1.5 acres of very rare wetlands and removing up to 120 acres of forest.

The group, Friends of Black River State Forest, sued the Department of Natural Resources in 2018 to prevent the state from transferring the park land and providing about a two-acre easement in exchange for 9.5 acres of land owned by the Kohler Co.

The group claimed the land swap violated state rules governing the sale or disposal of state park property and that the transaction would hurt public access and wildlife habitat.

The court's 4-3 decision that benefited the Kohler project was written by Justice Rebecca Bradley, who received a \$2,500 campaign contribution from Herbert Kohler Jr. in March 2016. [Bradley won a 10-year seat](#) on the state Supreme Court in 2016

after being appointed to the court to fill a vacancy in 2015 by former GOP Gov. Scott Walker.

In addition to his \$2,500 contribution to Bradley, Kohler also contributed \$60,000 to Walker during his campaigns for governor from 2010 through 2018. Walker's administration granted a permit in 2018 that allowed the golf course project to move forward.

Kohler Co. has built two other high-end 18-hole golf courses in Wisconsin – Blackwolf Run and Whistling Straits. Whistling Straits was the site of the 2021 Ryder Cup as well the PGA Championship in 2004, 2010, and 2015.