

Phone Calls on Wisconsin's business lobby effort to pass a constitutional amendment aimed at stripping Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson of her position turn up Massive Voter Confusion.

WISCONSIN - The campaign by Wisconsin's business lobby to pass a constitutional amendment aimed at stripping Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson of her position is a distortion of the democratic process.

The well-funded campaign by Wisconsin Manufactures and Commerce, under the brand of Vote Yes for Democracy, claims in Orwellian fashion that the amendment is about democracy. In fact, there was no public demand for it, and most voters have no idea why it is on the ballot and what its implications are. As the Center on Media and Democracy has reported, the amendment is a thinly veiled effort to cement right-wing domination of the Wisconsin's highest court.

Because of our grave concern that voters are being misled and manipulated by powerful special interests, Citizen Action of Wisconsin launched a phone campaign which has talked so far to 48,909 voters about the amendment. In our phone campaign we have found that voters lack the basic facts needed to make an informed decision about the amendment, so much so that many keep callers on the line trying to get more information. This is highly unusual, because the public does not generally crave unsolicited phone calls. Our program also found that even after receiving information, over one-third of voters are still undecided.

One serious problem with Wisconsin's constitutional amendment process revealed in this campaign is that the ballot does not give voters basic information, such as what is current law and what is the rationale for each side of the question. This differs sharply with states that have the initiative (or direct legislation) process.

“It is shameful right-wing interests are manipulating the democratic process to gain further control the Wisconsin Supreme Court,” said Robert Kraig, Executive Director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin. “It is sham democracy when voters don’t know what they are voting on, and are given highly misleading information by wealthy special interests who have no intention of educating the public.”