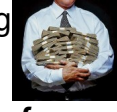


Legislative Republicans Accepted \$540K from Road Building Interests

Written by Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

Friday, 19 June 2015 09:18 - Last Updated Friday, 19 June 2015 11:18

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Gov. Scott Walker's 2015-17 state budget wants to borrow \$1.3 billion for major highway projects. But Republican legislators who will decide what projects to fund, and their fundraising committees, have accepted \$542,000 between Jan 2011 and Dec 2014 from road builders and two unions who will benefit. That's about 83 percent of the nearly \$650,000 they gave during the period.

MADISON - Legislative Republicans who are trying to determine how many hundreds of millions of dollars to borrow and spend on major highway projects in the next two years have accepted more than \$540,000 since January 2011 from road building interests that benefit from state contracts.

Republican Gov. Scott Walker's proposed 2015-17 state budget wants to borrow about \$1.3 billion for major highway projects. But, Republicans who control both houses of the legislature by comfortable margins are trying to identify highway projects that can be delayed, probably for two or more years, in order to reduce the governor's borrowing plan. GOP senators reportedly would like to see Walker's proposed highway borrowing cut by \$350 million to \$800 million.

State borrowing for major highway projects has steadily increased because the state's transportation fund, which uses gasoline taxes and vehicle registration fees paid by drivers to pay for road projects, cannot keep up with project demand. The legislature and the governor have been unwilling to increase gas taxes or vehicle registration fees or cut highway projects in order to solve the problem because those solutions are politically unpopular.

Road builders and two unions – the Wisconsin Laborers District Council and Operating Engineers Local 139 – with a large number of members who work in the road construction industry contributed about \$542,000 to majority Republican legislators and their fundraising committees between January 2011 and December 2014. That \$542,000 amounts to 83 percent of the nearly \$650,000 they gave to all current legislators and legislative fundraising committees during the period.

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The top recipients of road-builder contributions were mostly legislative leaders and their caucus fundraising committees, targets of recall elections in 2011 and 2012, and candidates for hotly contested open seats.



The top five recipients of contributions from road building interests were Republican Sen. **Albert a Darling**

, of River Hills, co-chair of the legislature's Joint Finance Committee, \$38,275; the Committee to Elect a Republican Senate, \$31,600; the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee, \$30,250; GOP Senate Majority Leader

Scott Fitzgerald

, of Juneau, \$26,550; and Republican Sen.

Tom Tiffany

, of Hazelhurst, \$25,800.

The top individual contributors from the road-building industry to current legislators were: Jere Fabick, of Nashotah, owner of Fabco Equipment, \$85,000; Tim Michels, of Hartland, a Michels Corp. executive, and his wife, Barbara, \$22,900; Scott Peterson, of Madison, president of Edward Kraemer & Sons Construction, and his wife, Keri, \$18,350; James and Andrea Hoffman, of Black River Falls, owners of Hoffman Construction, \$17,900; and William Kennedy, of Janesville, president of Rock Road Companies, \$17,850.