Written by Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Matt Rothschild Monday, 05 December 2022 15:08

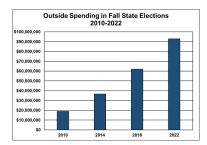
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Report finds spending by special interest groups in this fall's legislative races in Wisconsin and for the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer shattered the old record by 50 percent.

MADISON - Spending by special interest groups in this fall's legislative races in Wisconsin and for the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and treasurer shattered the old record by 50 percent, a preliminary review by the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign found.

The \$93.01 million spent in 2022 by outside groups crushed the previous record \$61.86 million set in 2018 for mid-term fall races that also featured both legislative and statewide contests in Wisconsin. And the 2022 spending figure was 154 percent higher than the \$36.63 million spent by outside groups in 2014 and nearly five times higher than the \$18.9 million spent on Wisconsin legislative and statewide races in 2010. (See <u>chart</u> below.)



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None of these spending figures includes outside group spending in federal races for the U.S. House or U.S. Senate.

The lion's share of the outside money in 2022 – \$78.9 million – was spent on the governor's race.

Six dozen special interest groups threw their money around to praise or smear candidates.

Thirty-five groups spent \$48.25 million to benefit Republicans, 36 groups spent \$44.06 million to benefit Democrats, and one group spent \$686,660 to bolster the independent candidate for governor.

These electioneering groups fall into two categories – express advocacy groups and phony issue ad groups. Express advocacy groups, which make <u>independent expenditures</u>, must report their spending to the state. That's because their broadcast and online advertising, mailings and other electioneering activities use the magic words "vote for" or "vote against" or their equivalents.

Phony <u>issue ad</u> groups, which can also raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on elections, do not have to report their spending because of federal court decisions and lax campaign finance laws. These groups smear or praise candidates but without explicitly telling viewers who to vote for or against.

The top-spending groups, which doled out all or most of their money in the governor's race, were:

Democratic Governors Association spent an estimated \$20.1 million using a phony issue ad group called the <u>Alliance for Common Sense</u> which blanketed the airwaves with television ads attacking GOP candidate for governor Tim Michels on education, abortion, guns, and media reports about sexual harassment complaints filed by

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female employees of his construction company;

<u>Republican Governors Association</u> spent an estimated \$15.3 million using three entities – <u>Rig</u> <u>ht Direction Wisconsin PAC</u>

ACC Wisconsin 2022 PAC

, and

State Solutions

 mostly on television ads throughout the state that attacked Evers on crime and tax issues from July until Election Day;

A Better Wisconsin Together spent an estimated \$6.8 million using an express advocacy group and an

# issue ad group

with nearly the same name, making it particularly difficult to track spending by the issue ad group because it can keep its spending secret. All told, A Better Wisconsin Together spent money on television and digital advertising in 23 legislative races to support Democratic candidates, as well as the contests for governor to back Evers and attorney general to support incumbent Democratic Attorney General Josh Kaul;

<u>Americans for Prosperity</u> spent \$6.53 million on a host of electioneering activities, including canvassing, mailings, door hangers, and digital and radio ads to support Michels, GOP attorney general candidate Adam Jarchow, and Republican candidates in 19 legislative races;

<u>Wisconsin Manufacturers & amp; Commerce</u> (WMC) spent an estimated \$4.52 million using an <u>issue ad group</u>

and an

# express advocacy group

. Most of WMC's issue ad spending was for television advertising that backed Republicans and smeared Democrats in the race for governor and two legislative contests. The group's ads in the governor's race attacked Evers on education, crime, and tax issues, and also blamed the incumbent for inflation. Early in the year, WMC spent about \$25,000 on a digital ad to support GOP candidate for governor Rebecca Kleefisch, who lost to Michels in the August primary.

To see how much was spent by all of the outside groups involved in Wisconsin's 2022 fall legislative and statewide races, please see the <u>table</u> below. For more information about the

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groups and their electioneering activities, please visit our <u>Hijacking Campaign 2022</u> feature and click on their names.

A final report on the total cost of this year's legislative and statewide elections will be issued early next year after the groups and candidates file amendments and year-end fundraising and spending reports.

Table Spending by Electioneering Groups in the 2022 Fall Elections

Alliance for Common Sense (Demo\$20)d 500000 ors Association)*     Right Direction Wisconsin PAC (Rep\$1286,630 ernors Association)     A Better Wisconsin Together**   \$6,794,866     Americans for Prosperity   \$6,531,490     Wisconsin Manufacturers   & Commer\$4,524,998     Fighting for Wisconsin   \$4,378,114     ACC Wisconsin 2022 PAC (Republic\$4,625,856)   Association)     Wisconsin Conservation   Voters IE C\$90,818,8279     Club for Growth Action   \$3,352,571     Freedom Wisconsin PAC   \$2,564,000     State Solutions (Republican Governof\$2,986,0000)   on*     DAGA People's Lawyer   Project (Dem\$5,391,290     Planned Parenthood Advocates of W\$5,015,7720   itical Fund     Survise in America Political Fund   \$1,866,844     The Wisconsin Initiative*   \$1,700,000     Planned Parenthood Advocates of W\$5,016,7720   itical Fund     Restoration PAC   \$933,500     Wisconsin Alliance for Reform*   \$600,000     Jobs First Coalition Political Fund   \$29,201     Voces de la Frontera Action   \$463,892     National Rifle Association   N(RA) Politic\$4,23,6559     Power to the Polls Wisconsin   \$389,443 <tr< th=""><th>Group</th><th>Amount</th><th>1</th></tr<>	Group	Amount	1	
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WFP National PAC (Work Families Par\$334,57	5
Women Speak Out PAC \$322,87	
Winter Opean Out 1 Ap \$322,07 Wisconsin Realtors Political Fund \$320,00	
Family Friendly Action PAC \$290,41	
Republican State Leadership Committe 284,19	
Project Democracy \$278,65	
The Lincoln Project \$254,45	
American Principles Project PAC \$227,42	
Wisconsin Family Action \$225,87	
Election Integrity PAC \$208,34	
Speak Free or Die \$155,00	
Black Leaders Organizing for Commun <b>\$ib\$</b> 1(BB	
BlackPAC \$136,04	
Make Liberty Win \$135,49	
New Prosperity Foundation \$111,96	
Working America \$109,19	0
Empower Wisconsin* \$100,00	0
American Majority Action \$94,73	6
Human Rights Campaign Equality Votes\$98,62	6
American Federation of State, County, as	5 cipal Employees (AFSCME) Working Families Fund
New Prosperity Foundation IE Committe \$85,50	
Volunteers for Agriculture (Wisconsin Fa\$64,50.5	eau Federation)
National Nurses United for Patient Prote\$69,42	7
WorkMoney Inc. \$68,93	9
Free and Fair Elections USA \$67,74	
Blue Sky Waukesha \$61,21	
Community Change Voters \$61,14	
NextGen Climate Action Committee \$60,22	
Leaders Igniting Transformation Action Action	
Patriots for Wisconsin \$49,98	
SEIU Committee on Political Education \$49,60	6
Citizens Action of Wisconsin \$45,69	
Progress North \$44,33	
AFT-Wisconsin (American Federation of \$116961	
Rise, Inc. \$15,37	
Organizing Empowerment PAC \$14,00	
Rising Leaders PAC \$10,00	
Democratic Party of Wisconsin \$5,56	
Gun Rights America \$4,70	
Wisconsin Right to Life PAC \$1,36	
TOTAL \$93,006,14	7