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Elections are supposed to be dialogues between candidates and voters, not

**SPECIAL INTEREST  
MONOLOGUES.**



# In the 2007 and 2008 state Supreme Court elections, special interest groups pushed the candidates to the sidelines, turning them into **LITTLE MORE THAN BYSTANDERS IN THEIR OWN RACE.**

**Close to \$12 million was spent in these two elections, and at least \$8 million of that was spent by just five interest groups.**

In the 2008 high court race, 90% of the television advertising was done by four interest groups—the big business lobby Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce and three political front groups including the Club for Growth, Coalition for America's Families and Greater Wisconsin Committee.

**Almost all of the money** these groups spent went to pay for advertising done in a way that sidesteps election disclosure rules and existing state laws limiting campaign contributions. Ironically, this "issue advocacy" focused on an issue - crime and public safety—that not only has little to do with the work of the Supreme Court but next to nothing to do with the groups' own advocacy agendas.

## The freedom to speak means little without the ability to be heard.

There's a simple reason why special interest groups have been able to effectively take the "r" out of free speech when it comes to who does the talking in elections like those for Wisconsin Supreme Court. Under current Wisconsin law, there are limits on the campaign donations candidates for state office can receive and everything must be publicly disclosed. But thanks to a gaping loophole in the law, interest groups can collect money from anyone, from anywhere, in any amount, and they don't have to disclose a thing.

No wonder these groups control most everything voters read, see and hear about those who hope to sit on the highest court in the state. They are operating under a privileged set of rules.

**That loophole can and should be closed.** New electioneering disclosure rules must require special interest groups to fully disclose how much they spend on campaign advertising and who is paying for those ads. And the new rules must require interest groups to abide by state laws limiting campaign donations.

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