

Bill Lorge outlines needed Reforms

Campaign, Election and Media Reforms needed now!

Bear Creek, WI - Just in time for the November 2nd Elections, 14th State Senate Candidate Bill Lorge has outlined the most comprehensive and workable Campaign, Election and Media Reforms for Wisconsin in over a century.

“We really need drastic reforms in our American Democratic system, especially in Wisconsin which needs to get back and be a leader on this issue. We no longer have one person - one vote. How can we export Democracy all over the World when we don’t even do it right here at home? I put together the needed changes that must be passed into law, and after this election the first thing I will do as the new State Senator from the 14th District will be to pass these reforms into Wisconsin Law,” says Lorge

Bill Lorge challenges all candidates for office to support these needed reforms. Lorge outlines some of his reforms in three categories, saying that all three need to become law for the reforms to work. *“The goal of these Reform measures is to bring back one person - one vote, to make our election system work, to have our campaigns become more fair and truthful, and to finally hold the media accountable for their gross malfeasances in our election process,”* Lorge concluded.

Needed Wisconsin Reforms

– by Bill Lorge

Campaign Reform:

\$100 Limit:

The main change needed and the most monumental in it’s positive effect, even though it is so easy, is to change the law to lower the maximum allowable donation to \$100 per year per person per candidate per campaign in Wisconsin. This alone will be the most effective and successful change to guarantee one person - one vote. This is the main point, and is non-negotiable. How many average citizens do you know who will write out a check for \$10,000.00 to a Politician? Not even 99% of the people in Wisconsin would consider it, but that is the current limit for our most important elected offices in Wisconsin. The people who donate this amount of money are usually people who do business with our Government and are people who get their investments back a thousand times over, and always at the expense of us taxpayers. This simple \$100 limit will bring back the one vote per person goal of our U.S. Constitution, as it is clear that the millionaires who finance the big money that win their campaigns are buying our votes right out from under us all. Most of this big

money is used to brainwash us voters with TV ads, and it's so effective, the big money donors are able to change voters' minds to vote their way within seconds. An effective TV ad will make us vote for or against a candidate in a way that we voters would not normally do so had we not been exposed and thus contaminated with those advertising campaigns. Wisconsin was once known as the "Clean Government State", but not anymore, not by a long shot. The big special interest money and the clear obedience from our elected officials to these big donors have caused Wisconsin to now be known as the Chicago of the north. This single \$100 limit campaign reform change will bring us back to that clean government image.

Get rid of \$1 check off:

Our income tax returns should not be questionnaires that force us to decide the important problems our elected official fail to get done themselves. That is why we elected them. We need to put the ball back in their courts and end this foolish failed attempt to appear democratic by getting rid of the \$1 check-off that is on the ballot. It doesn't work anyway, and it never will. Increasing it to \$2 won't put the needed money into public financing either, it will actually lower the amount collected in the end, because increasing the amount to \$2 from \$1 will just kill the program altogether. I have never checked that box and I never will, just like 99% of the rest of the taxpayers who don't check it.

Instead, we need to fully finance the public grant program for candidates:

The public-grant system must be geared towards rewarding candidates who follow simple guidelines that will make them accountable only to the voters and taxpayers, not to big donors. The system needs to be fully funded and provide enough incentive that even the Speaker of the Assembly will apply for it. A matching-grant system must be set up where a candidate who gets a \$20 donation from a voter in the District where they are running, will get \$20 or more from the State in return, if they follow certain ethical guidelines and fair rules in their campaign. Even if this reform costs a billion dollars, it is cheap compared to the alternative, where our elected officials are bought and paid for by corrupt special interests who get many billions more of our tax revenues. The special interests are first in line in getting our tax dollars, and the people are last in line. This reform will guarantee that the special interests are totally taken out of the tax revenue line and that the people are the only ones who will be standing in line for our tax revenues. This is worth more than billions of dollars, but won't even cost a fraction of that. No matter what the cost is to fully finance this system, it will be the best investment our government makes. We need to fully fund the public grant system with general-purpose revenue.

Matching grant money:

Only donations from inside the District where the Candidates seek office are going to be counted towards the Matching Grant money provided by the State.

Incumbents not allowed to raise money until June 1st:

Incumbents always have a huge advantage over their challengers in raising money. Always. This is because incumbents use their influence to get that money, and most get the majority of their campaign donations before the election even gets started, before they even have an opponent, and before their opponent even registers to run. Wisconsin needs to prohibit any fundraising by incumbents until the election season starts on June 1st. Discussion has been going on for years to limit fundraising during the budget process, which proves that this reform is needed, but limiting it just during the budget process is foolish, as incumbents will make up for this once the budget is passed. To level the playing

field and to make our election process more fair, we need to hold incumbents accountable in a major way, they need to wait until June 1st to start their fundraising.

Funding the Public-Grants:

The Legislature must commit to full funding so that all candidates who apply and receive the grant money will get every penny. Many sources are also available to help fund this program. Any money left over in a Candidates account after the election year is over could be put into the public-grant program. Also, candidates who do not participate in the public-grant program should be charged a certain % fee on the money they spend that will go to help fund the public-grant program. Also, Candidates who self fund their own campaigns over the \$100 individual limit would also pay a % fee to help fund the public-grant program. Freedom of speech will be preserved in these reforms, where a Herb Kohl would still be able to buy a seat in the U. S. Senate, it would just cost him a bit more, and in doing so, he would help fund the system that will allow us to have a majority of our elected officials only accountable to the public.

State Contractors are prohibited from donating:

This is the most appalling abuse going on in Government today. The Law needs to be changed to prohibit anyone who bids on Government Contracts from donating to any Candidates who would be associated in any way with their business contracting. A classic example of this is the road builders, who are known for being the largest donators to the Governor and Legislative Leaders, and who receive millions of dollars in contracts when they do business with our State. This must end. It may be unconstitutional to also prevent their family members from donating, as we all know that this will be a way to get around the law, so a penalty needs to be added to prevent money filtering to family members or employees.

Prohibit PAC money:

Political Action Committee money should be prohibited period. Enough said.

Election Reform:

Ballots mailed out with Tax forms:

Voters should get several months, instead of 15 seconds, to decide whom to vote for. Again, we export Democracy now days, so we have to get it right here. No more slacking off and condoning a system where voters enter polling booths, stare at 90% of the names on their ballot that they have no clue who they are, and then in a few seconds take guesses and vote for people based on poor judgments rather than serious deep thought. Mailing out ballots along with the income tax forms will do many things, lower taxes is one by holding our elected officials more accountable, but this will also allow voters plenty of time to review, study, learn, inquire, and vote for the best candidates that they believe in. People can turn in their ballot on Election Day at the polling places, or they can mail them in early, such as they do with absentee ballots. This reform will give every taxpayer and registered voter in Wisconsin their ballot earlier.

Computer Voting:

Online Computer voting would be the easiest and most cost efficient way to allow people to vote. Our Election process is slow and cautious in this area, which is fine, but the technology is already here to allow each citizen to vote safely and securely online. This reform will get it going by the 2006 elections. We can sign people up to vote using the same database as our Department of Revenue who collects our tax returns. Voters will use a username and password to vote, just like they do with everything else online.

Term Limits:

I used to oppose Term Limits, because there are a lot of good reasons to keep seasoned people in office, but I realize later, that if they are real good, they can always come back after a rest period. Being a private citizen again will make them better elected officials anyway. I now fully support and advocate term limits. Any term limits are better than none. To get the debate going, I propose the following: The Governor and all State Constitutional Officers limited to 2 four year terms; Legislators: State Senators limited to 2 consecutive four year terms; State Representatives limited to 3 consecutive two year terms; Congress Members limited to 3 consecutive two year terms; US Senators limited to 2 consecutive six year terms. Wisconsin would also provide incentives for local units of government to limit their terms as well.

High School Seniors allowed to Vote:

In an effort to start people voting earlier, this reform will allow any Wisconsin High School Senior to vote in school as part of their government or civic courses. Our younger voters have the lowest turnout on Election Day. That is because we fear the unknown, and our young people who have never voted before won't start until they have to. If we get them started in our High Schools, they will continue this good habit and vote in every election for the rest of their lives. We all know the Teachers Union will love this reform, but I'm proposing it because I have been speaking out on this for decades, and I have always received a very positive response from everyone. My goal is to increase voter turnout. So, if a High School Senior is 17, 18 or even 19 years old, they will be voting in all our elections in every High School in Wisconsin, and their vote will count.

Get rid of the State Elections Board:

Historically the Wisconsin State Elections Board was created to assist voters and candidates. Today they do the opposite. The State Elections board is known for removing people from the ballots, stopping people from voting, and fining candidates and voters when they try to exercise their Constitutional rights in our Democratic system. Less people are running for office all the time, thanks to the incompetence and lack of dedication of this lost agency. The politically appointed members of the State Elections Board are the most corrupt and unaccountable pawns in our State Government. We need to totally gut this agency and eliminate it, and to restore this legal need back to the elected Secretary of State to handle Election assistance, and give our County Clerks back the power to run their elections. Wisconsin has the worst Election's Board in the Country and to try to fix this would be a waste of time. We need to totally wipe it out and start over.

Media Reform:

Let's face it. Our media companies control our elections. It gets worse every year. I ran for Governor of Wisconsin in 2002, and a major Wisconsin television station was so afraid of my Candidacy, that the first time they mentioned my name was at 8:02 PM after the polls closed. They refused to cover my race, they refused to report on the news of my campaign, and when they did refer to me in the race, my name was always: "Token Opposition", or "Republican Opponent", but on Election night at 8:02 PM, for the first time, this TV station referred to me as, "Former State Representative Bill Lorge". I have seen numerous abuses from the local weekly newspaper all the way up to the corrupt and very biased Wisconsin Broadcasters Association. Major reform is needed here, and our elected officials need to be tough and take on the media. You can't have election or campaign reforms without reforming the media.

Printed Media:

Freedom of speech will be respected and even strengthened with these reforms I propose. I agree we can't make Playboy stop printing pornography, and we can't edit the Bible. The printed media must remain sacred in this reform to protect freedom of speech. My proposal is simple. If a printed news publication receives any taxpayer funds for legal ads, or any other government related funds, then they must follow this simple and fair reform measure: They must report the news from candidates, they must stop favoring one candidate over another, they must cover all candidates who are in a race, they must provide free space in their July, August, September, and October publications to all candidates who are running in their publication area. This is a good thing, and is drastically needed. If a printed news publication such as a Daily newspaper fails to do this, including editorializing to endorse a candidate, they will lose their right to do business with the taxpayers/voters. *(A side note: - Legal ads should be put out for bids by all printed news publications anyway, not just newspapers. Shoppers Guides should also be able to bid on legal ads; this increased competition would lower the costs and save taxpayers money. A better solution would be to have the State put legal ads on the Internet and avoid putting them in the papers altogether. This would save a ton of taxpayer money and lower our local property taxes; As one Town Board Chair once told me his biggest expense is paying the local weekly paper for legal ads.)*

Broadcast Media:

The airwaves are owned by the public. The broadcast media is not protected in the Constitutional Freedom of Speech area like the printed media is. We own the airwaves, and this reform measure will do what is long overdue; Let the public take back our airwaves. Free airtime must be provided to all candidates on the ballot, period. Part of the problem with the big money that corrupts our campaigns is that it takes millions of dollars to run for Statewide office in Wisconsin mostly because of the broadcast mediums. To take the big corrupting money out of the process is easier if we mandate that our candidates receive fair and equal airtime on all the airwaves broadcast stations that the public owns. Many broadcast stations do a great job of giving candidates free and fair airtime today, but too many also abuse their power and are such a large part of the problems in American Democracy. State law needs to be changed to reform this entire medium to more fairly inform the public of who is running, so the voters can make better choices when they vote for one candidate over another.

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