

Wisconsin



With the 2007 race between Annette Ziegler and Linda Clifford, and the 2008 race between Justice Louis Butler and challenger Michael Gableman, Wisconsin turned overnight into one of the costliest, nastiest battleground states in the nation. Though their TV ads largely focused on criminal justice, the biggest spenders were squarely on opposing sides of the tort/product liabilities debate. Technically nonpartisan, both elections were won by candidates backed by the Republican establishment against Democratic Party-supported opponents. Backing the winners were **Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce; Club for Growth**; and the **Coalition for American Families**. The **Greater Wisconsin Committee**, backed by organized labor and progressive groups, spent heavily for the two losing candidates. Spending and vitriol both were lower in 2009, as Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson easily defeated challenger Randy Koschnick, both in fund-raising and at the polls. In response to the turmoil, the state enacted public financing of Supreme Court elections in December 2009.

Total Supreme Court spending in 2007–08 (candidate fundraising and independent TV ads): \$8.5 million, ranking second nationally.

Top Spenders, 2000–09	Candidate Contributions	Independent Expenditures	Total
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce	\$9,600	\$2,012,748	\$2,022,348
Greater Wisconsin Committee	\$0	\$1,736,535	\$1,736,535
Club for Growth	\$0	\$611,261	\$611,261
Coalition for America's Families	\$0	\$398,078	\$398,078
Wisconsin Education Association	\$0	\$48,321	\$48,321

Candidate Fundraising
\$6,691,852

National Ranking
11

Total TV
\$7,332,914

National Ranking
5

APPENDIX 1 NOTES

1. Michael J. Goodman and William C. Rempel, "Justice vs. Justice: In Las Vegas, They're Playing With a Stacked Judicial Deck" *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jun/08/nation/na-vegas8>.
2. Press release, North Carolina Center for Voter Education, June 28, 2005, available at http://www.ncjudges.org/media/news_releases/7_28_05.html.
3. Public Citizen report, available at http://www.citizen.org/congress/special_intr/articles.cfm?ID=15877.
4. Texans for Public Justice report on 2008 campaign spending is at <http://info.tpj.org/reports/txpaco8/chapter2.html>. Texans for Lawsuit Reform report is at <http://www.tlrpac.com/news-08-1121.php>.
5. Additional information and articles are available at <http://www.gavelgrab.org/?p=5169>.