



Wisconsin State Assembly

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 2007

For Further Information Contact:

Representative Frederick Kessler 608.266.5813

Representative Gary Sherman 608.266.7690

Sherman/Kessler Campaign Finance Proposal More Critical than Ever

States can have a voice in reform

MADISON - Since Representatives Frederick Kessler (D-Milwaukee) and Gary Sherman (D-Port Wing) circulated a joint resolution in June proposing an amendment to the United States Constitution authorizing Congress and the states to regulate campaign finance, the landscape has changed dramatically.

Shortly thereafter, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in which it narrowed the scope of what kinds of “issue ads” could be regulated under the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act (commonly known as the McCain-Feingold Act). Although the ruling did not strike down the campaign finance law itself, it opened a loophole which will likely lead to a flood of negative ads in upcoming elections, financed by corporations and unions through organizations not required to disclose their funding sources.

“This unfortunate decision exposes now, more than ever, the need for genuine campaign finance reform,” Sherman said. “And the only genuine reform can come from an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which will put to rest any questions about what campaign finance regulation means.”

Following a procedure in the Constitution that allows for a constitutional amendment to commence at the state level, the joint resolution (AJR 60) calls upon Congress to propose an amendment to the federal constitution to authorize Congress and the states to regulate by law the financing of political campaigns. The resolution also calls upon other states to similarly make such request to Congress, in order to reach the necessary two-thirds majority of ratifying states.

“This method of amending the constitution has never yet been employed in American history,” Kessler noted, “But I see it as a perfect vehicle for effecting the reforms this country needs, if we intend to expel corruption in political campaigns and remain a true democracy.”

The proposal has garnered the support of 28 fellow representatives and three senators, all of them Democrats.

“I am disappointed not to have gained support from my Republican colleagues,” Sherman noted. “This should not be a partisan issue. Supporters of both sides of the political aisle engage in this type of activity. By allowing it to continue unfettered does not bode well for the future of Democracy.”

The joint resolution has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Elections and Constitutional Law, where it will await a public hearing.

###