

Pass the probity, please

by Badger Herald Editorial Board

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Without question, special interest groups have played an increasingly large role in local, state and national politics over the past few decades. With more resources than the average citizen and significantly more of our lawmakers' time and attention, lobbyist groups wield a heavy hammer in the realm of public policy and should be held accountable for their actions.

This fact was brought to light last week when the special interest group TV4US — lobbying in support of the cable competition bill that recently became law — passed out binders to legislators and media outlets that listed the names of individuals who were supposedly in support of the bill. Suspiciously, however, some of the individuals listed in the interest group's handout were, in fact, not in support of the bill.

In response, Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, Rep. Joe Parisi, D-Madison, and Rep. Sindy Pope-Roberts, D-Middleton — whose name was among those wrongly listed by the interest group — introduced a bill that would penalize lobbyist groups for misrepresenting the views of constituents or legislators on a given issue.

Truly, anyone speaking on behalf of a large body of people has an obligation to represent the viewpoints of those people in the most truthful and accurate manner possible — especially when those viewpoints have the potential to sway legislators in one direction or another.

We hold our lawmakers to this standard of accurate representation, and we should hold those who so heavily influence our lawmakers to a similar standard of accuracy. For this reason, we wholeheartedly support the proposed legislation — which has already garnered wide bipartisan support — and are encouraged by the prospect of more honest information circulating the desks of Wisconsin lawmakers.

And so, with this piece of feel-good legislation and an adequate dose of tryptophan — we hope you enjoy your break and have a happy Thanksgiving.