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John Menard Jr., the staunchly conservative 75-year-old billionaire who owns a chain of hardware stores throughout the Midwest, wrote checks to the pro-Walker political advocacy group Wisconsin Club for Growth (WCFG). Menard's company has been awarded up to \$1.8 million in tax credits from a state economic development corporation that Walker chairs.

MADISON - According to Michael Isikoff in [Yahoo Politics](#), John Menard Jr., the staunchly conservative 75-year-old billionaire who owns a highly profitable chain of hardware stores throughout the Midwest, wrote more than \$1.5 million in checks to the pro-Walker political advocacy group Wisconsin Club for Growth (WCFG).

Wisconsin Club for Growth spent heavily to defend Walker during a bitter 2012 recall election and has pledged to keep its donors secret.

Menard's investments, plus a previously unreported six-figure contribution to the WCFG, seem to have paid off. In the past two years, Menard's company has been awarded up to \$1.8 million in special tax credits from a state economic development corporation that Walker chairs, according to state records.

"This, in a nutshell, is what's wrong with the dark-money world we live in," said Bill Allison, senior fellow at the Sunlight Foundation, a Washington-based based nonprofit group that tracks the influence of money in politics. "Here's somebody who obviously has issues before the state, and he's able to make a backdoor contribution that nobody ever sees."

Laurel Patrick, Walker's press secretary, strongly denied that the governor had provided any

Secret \$1.5 million Donation from Wisconsin Billionaire Menard Uncovered in Scott Walker Probe

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special favors for Menard and said Walker was “not involved” in the decision to award his firm tax credits, which were approved by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

Patrick declined, however, to respond to any questions about the Menard contributions. Citing a “pending legal” investigation into Wisconsin Club for Growth fundraising that will be argued next month before the state Supreme Court.