

Decriminalizing Bribery And Money Laundering

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MADISON - On what planet does anyone think there is not enough money in politics, not enough special interest influence, and too much public awareness of the buying and selling of our government?

Well, on Earth there is Rudolph Randa and the Five Supremes. It's been the better part of a half century since a rock and roll band could get away with a name so lame, so they must be judges.

In 2010 the five-member majority on the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporations and other interest groups can spend as much as they want to influence American elections. And then earlier this year the court doubled down on its infamous Citizens United decision and struck down a key federal limit on campaign contributions made by individuals.

In a country of well over 300 million people, [just over 1,200 individuals](#) reached the \$123,000 limit on overall donations to federal campaigns in the 2012 elections. The ruling majority on the high court found intolerable the way the law cramped the style of 0.000003% of the nation's population and invalidated that law.

A month later Wisconsin's \$10,000 annual limit on overall donations from individuals for state and local elections experienced the same fate. [Fewer than 300 individuals](#) had managed to bump up against the state limit in 2010 and 2012 elections combined, including 173 living outside Wisconsin. Just like that, five one-thousandths of 1% of the state's population had their ability to legally bribe state lawmakers increased exponentially, and they are [taking full advantage](#)

Now this week Randa orders Wisconsin election officials to [stop enforcing](#) a law limiting how much candidates can collect from political committees run by special interest groups, parties and legislative campaigns.

Randa is the judge who also ordered a halt to the latest John Doe investigation into political corruption in Wisconsin. He ruled that there is nothing illegal about candidates and interest groups coordinating their election activities.

"Coordination" sounds abstract and mundane and benign. What Randa actually blessed is money laundering. What is under investigation is apparent conspiracy to get around legal limits on political donations as well as disclosure requirements by steering money intended to aid a candidate for state office to a tax-exempt "social welfare" group that does not have to publicly report the origins of its money.

If the skewed judgment of Randa and the Five Supremes stands up over the long haul, Americans will be left with a right to free speech that is proportionate to the size of their bank accounts, two parties joined at the billfold, and a tiny fraction of 1% of the population fully empowered to lord over the rest of us.

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