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Anderson Campaign files WEC Complaint, accuses Broadcasters of Collusion

Fitchburg, WI, August 17th, 2018 – Today, I submitted the following complaint with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission:

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association has colluded with the Democratic and Republican parties both directly and indirectly through their gubernatorial debate participation criteria to exclude candidates of other parties appearing on the ballot. Based on the fact that the WBA announced its series of gubernatorial debates less than 24 hours after the polls closed on the August 14 primary election, it is clear they had already decided to include only the Democrat and Republican candidates. They did not even follow their own stated participation criteria of candidate fundraising minimums of \$250,000 and at least 10% in a recent poll. No other parties were included in the polls previous to the primary election, so this criterion was impossible for any candidate other than Democrats or Republicans to meet.

I contend that that this active collusion with Democrats and Republicans to exclude third parties from the debates constitutes an illegal in-kind donation to the campaigns of their parties' gubernatorial committees. The value of primetime exposure on statewide television is significant and of concrete monetary value to the candidates' committees. Consider how much either or both candidates would have had to spend to obtain an hour of primetime advertising.

According to Section 11.1112, "No foreign or domestic corporation, no association organized under ch. 185 or 193, no labor organization, and no federally recognized American Indian Tribe may make a contribution to a committee..." By providing valuable primetime exposure to the Democrat and Republican candidates and by excluding all others, the WBA has made an illegal in-kind donation to both campaigns.

This collusion is further evidenced by a special tax break provided in the 2017 Act 59, the 2017-19 biennial budget. This provision, page 283, item 33, would reduce broadcasters' net taxes by

\$147,437,800. Combined with the millions in advertising revenue that Wisconsin broadcasters receive from the Democrat and Republican parties every election year, the mutually beneficial financial relationship between these parties is clear.

I ask that you find the WBA has made an illegal campaign contribution and take the appropriate remedial action.

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association set criteria that explicitly exclude candidates who do well in polls, but have chosen to not accept big dollar donations. Their constituents, almost every TV and radio station in Wisconsin, profit from the big party's massive fundraising, then the WBA defends this profit stream by excluding those viable candidates who aren't swimming in special interest money.

The WBA's criteria are that a campaign must have raised at least \$250,000 and have polled at least 10%. What is a travesty is that the WBA decided to move ahead with debate invitations, without knowing what my poll numbers might be. In 2016, I entered the polls at 9%. Why would the WBA act now, before the polls are even available? It's obviously because they don't care about the clear conflict of interest and have no regard for debates that truly assist the public in making decisions.

"The people of Wisconsin who really care about free and fair debates and elections should contact their local stations, and let their feelings be known. The WBA will only act if its constituents direct them to," finishes Anderson.

Phil Anderson is the Chair of the Libertarian Party of Wisconsin, and a candidate for Governor. He can be reached at phil@4PhilAnderson.org, or via www.TeamGuv.org