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####  Wisconsin state Senate races draw big fundraising dollars

The top races garnering the most money and attention are the statewide races for governor, attorney general and U.S. Senate.

But politicos are also closely watching the state Senate, where Democrats have hopes of retaking a chamber they haven’t run since 2010.

Republicans hold an 18-15 edge after Democrats won special elections in western Wisconsin (Patty Schachtner of Somerset) and Door County (Caleb Frostman of Sturgeon Bay).

Special interest groups are pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into a handful of key races that likely will determine who controls the state Senate for the next two years. A lot of that money is going into the rematch in the 1st Senate District between Frostman and Rep. Andre Jacque.

The WMC Jobs Fund, linked to the state chamber Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, recently put $172,410 alone into TV opposing Frostman. It was the group’s first independent expenditure reported in the 1st Senate District race, though it has now spent at least $459,606 since Oct. 1 on legislative campaigns.

On the other side, the Wisconsin Conservation Voters Independent Expenditure Committee has spent $300,178 backing Frostman and $108,802 supporting Democrat Kriss Marion in her challenge of Sen. Howard Marklein, R-Spring Green. Meanwhile, the conservative American Federation for Children Action Fund recently spent $228,883 on TV opposing Marion; it was the bulk of the $294,978 the group reported spending Oct. 23-25.

These reports don’t cover issue ads, which don’t have to be detailed to the state.

The candidates themselves are running ads and contacting voters.

Candidates in the seven most closely watched state Senate races pulled in nearly $2.5 million during the pre-election period, fueled by $1.6 million in transfers from other committees, according to a WisPolitics.com check of their finance reports.

Democrat Julie Henszey, in the open 5th Senate District near Milwaukee (the seat being vacated by Republican Leah Vukmir, the GOP candidate for U.S. Senate), and both candidates in western Wisconsin's open 31st (being vacated by Democrat Kathleen Vinehout) were the only ones who raised more than half of their money from individuals.

Here are the top line numbers in those races, as of WisPolitics.com reporting on Oct 31:

#### 1st

Sen. Caleb Frostman, D-Sturgeon Bay, $232,914 raised, $273,017 spent, $41,669 in bank. He raised $143,736 from committees.

Rep. Andre Jacque, R-De Pere, $199,500 raised, $257,879 spent, $31,074.45 in bank. He also listed $6,500 in loans and raised $131,194 from committees.

#### 5th – Open seat

Rep. Dale Kooyenga, R-Brookfield, $201,304 raised, $466,664 spent, $26,551 in bank. He reported $5,109 in incurred obligations and $155,529 from committees.

Democrat Julie Henszey $126,654 raised, $102,878 spent, $89,159 in bank. She listed $5,100 in loans and $27,697 from committees.

#### 17th

Democrat Kriss Marion $345,262.35 raised, $318,465 spent, $26,998 cash on hand. She raised $235,953 from committees.

Sen. Howard Marklein, R-Spring Green, $336,901 raised, $772,574 spent, $55,847 in the bank. He raised $214,864 from committees.

#### 19th

Democrat Lee Snodgrass $282,870 raised, $219,714 spent, $108,724 cash on hand. She raised $216,416 from committees.

Sen. Roger Roth, R-Appleton, $93,613 raised, $217,584 spent, $183,712 in the bank. He raised $51,536 from committees.

#### 23rd – Open seat

Rep. Kathy Bernier, R-Lake Hallie, $266,376 raised, $382,556 spent, $18,758 cash on hand. She raised $201,376 from committees.

Democrat Chris Kapsner $95,660 raised, $96,353 spent, $43,343 in the bank. He pulled in $69,503 from committees

#### 25th

Republican James Bolen $179,697 raised, $208,417 spent, $10,776 cash on hand. He raised $136,047 from committees.

Sen. Janet Bewley, D-Ashland, $46,782 raised, $29,669 spent, $93,109 in the bank. She raised $31,571 from committees.

#### 31st – Open seat

Democrat Jeff Smith $51,903 raised, $34,866 spent, $34,145 in the bank. He raised $17,296 from committees.

Republican Mel Pittman $31,395 raised, $79,095 spent, $7,213 cash on hand. He listed $42,000 in loans and raised $7,570 from committees.

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