

June 2009

## Common Cause Oklahoma

In the May 2009 issue of *Common-tary*, Common Cause Oklahoma's newsletter, Common Cause Board member John Wood outlined the barriers to convincing state legislators to pass an amendment that would publicize the names of lawmakers who do not accept corporate gifts. This past fall, Oklahoma's Ethics Commission rejected legislation that would establish such a "No Gifts List." Wood explained that many lawmakers would likely "not want to make it apparent that they take gifts from lobbyists" who are oftentimes "corporations and are prohibited by the Oklahoma State Constitution from giving money to political candidates and politicians directly."



## This Week

On Wednesday, June 24th, Common Cause Maryland is hosting a happy hour fundraising event at The Big Hunt in Washington, D.C. (1345 Connecticut Ave NW) from 5 to 7 p.m. The suggested donation is \$10. Special guests will include Delegate Kirill Reznik of Montgomery County and City of Gaithersburg Councilman Ryan Spiegel.

# One Common Cause

## Wisconsin Charges Ahead in Campaign Finance Reform

By: Jay Heck, executive director, Common Cause Wisconsin

With strong support from Common Cause Wisconsin, on June 16th, major campaign finance reform legislation passed in the Wisconsin Assembly Elections and Campaign Reform Committee. The bill is now ready for scheduling and consideration by the full Wisconsin Assembly—most likely when it next holds a floor session in September. Assembly Bill 63 passed in a bipartisan six to one vote.

AB 63 would require the disclosure of donors and regulation

money used in currently undisclosed, unregulated campaign communications, known as "phony issue ads." This legislation, first proposed and devised by CC/WI in 1997, would close the single largest loophole in Wisconsin's currently loophole-ridden campaign finance laws.

The second measure, AB 65, passed in a much closer four to three vote, and is known as the "Impartial Justice" bill. It would provide full public financing to qualified candidates for the State Supreme Court who voluntarily agree to abide by spending limits totaling \$400,000.

Both campaign finance reform measures await votes in the State Senate Committee on Campaign Finance Reform. CC/WI will be pressing for these votes to occur so that the State Senate will consider and pass the bills in September at about the same time the Assembly does. For a more thorough explanation of what AB 63 and AB 65 will do, read CC/WI's written testimony at <http://www.commoncausewisconsin.org/2009/05/testimony-may-27-2009.html>.

## New Jersey Hosts Nobel Prize Winner Paul Krugman

A buzzing crowd of over 120 attended a New Jersey Common Cause fundraiser on Thursday, June 18th, at the historic Nassau Inn in downtown Princeton, New Jersey. The event's cocktail reception was followed by a talk entitled, "The Economic Crisis: How we got in—How do we get out?" headlined by Nobel Prize winner and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman and economics writer and former PBS television show host Adam Smith.

The speakers reviewed some of the fundamental questions about the current economic crisis and took audience questions. Topics ranged from President Obama's economic and health care plans, to the state of the stock market.

Bob Edgar, President of Common Cause, also reminded attendees of the link between the historic lax regulation of the financial indus-



Adam Smith asks Paul Krugman about the Obama economic plan

try and the flow of campaign dollars from Wall Street to Capitol Hill. Edgar asked the audience to join in pushing for the passage of the Fair Elections Now Act, which would curtail the need for politicians to seek money from special interests to finance their campaigns.

In addition, New Jersey Common Cause board members David Gruol and Deborah Mohammed Spigner outlined the upcoming agenda for New Jersey Common Cause. An award was also presented to long-time Common Cause New Jersey Executive Director Ed McCool.

## Massachusetts Honors Michael Dukakis

By: Andrew Kingsley, assistant director, Common Cause Massachusetts

On June 13th, Common Cause Massachusetts honored Governor Michael Dukakis for his enduring work to establish open, honest, and ethical government in the state. The ceremony, which took place during the organization's annual brunch and auction, featured remarks by Common Cause President Bob Edgar, Massachusetts Executive Director Pam Wilmot and others. Scott Harshbarger, a former Massachusetts attorney general and Common Cause president, entertained a capacity crowd as the event's auctioneer—teasing several of the politicians and other public servants in attendance.

During his remarks, Governor Dukakis expounded on the importance of Common Cause to the

civic health of Massachusetts by describing the changes he had seen in his years working alongside the organization. Noting the ethics scandals that have shaken the State House in past months, he also indicated that there is much left to be done.

In addition to commemorating the

work of Governor Dukakis, awards were also given to documentary filmmaker David Burstein and Massachusetts board member Bill Schmidt. Burstein produced the celebrated film 18 in '08 and runs a voter engagement organization with the same name. He is currently enrolled at Hampshire College.



Michael Dukakis and Pam Wilmot, executive director of CCMA



## Common Cause Maryland: Press Coverage

*The Frederick News Post*, a western Maryland newspaper, lauded Common Cause's work in a June 13th editorial. "We're glad that Common Cause is alive and well and remains uncommonly committed—to our state, our nation and our civil liberties."

The article, "Common Good," covered a recent CC/MD house party in Brunswick, a small town in Maryland. The event attracted over 50 people and netted around \$1,000. The article positively named some of CC/MD's 2009 legislative priorities, such as a 2010 constitutional referendum that would allow the Maryland General Assembly to implement voter registration up until Election Day.

The editorial's tone was hopeful, explaining that CC/MD had the potential to bring an important political voice to constituencies outside of Montgomery and Baltimore Counties, the two Maryland counties which tend to receive the most political action attention.

View the editorial at [http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/opinion/display\\_editorial.htm?StoryID=91398](http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/opinion/display_editorial.htm?StoryID=91398). The CC/MD event also received press coverage in *The Maryland Gazette* on June 4th: [http://www.gazette.net/stories/06052009/polinew01600\\_32523.shtml](http://www.gazette.net/stories/06052009/polinew01600_32523.shtml).

## Broadcast Blues Coming to San Francisco

By: Kathay Feng, executive director, California Common Cause

When a toxic spill choked a city, why didn't local radio stations tell residents how to survive? When TV reporters blew the whistle on the dangers of bovine growth hormone in milk, why was the corporate culprit able to kill the story? When half the U.S. population was opposed to war in Iraq, why was there so little anti-war media coverage? *Broadcast Blues* shows how the increasing concentration of media ownership and the decline of locally owned TV and radio are jeopardizing our news, information, and even public safety. The film reminds us that the media has a public interest obligation, and that we have the power to demand accountability. California Common Cause is teaming up with Public Interest Pictures, Media Alliance, and filmmaker Sue Wilson to bring

*Broadcast Blues* to San Francisco. The groups will host a screening of the film at the Victoria Theatre in San Francisco's Mission District on Sunday, June 28th, at 4:00 p.m.

Before the *Broadcast Blues* showing at 3:00 p.m., Common Cause will join the Hispanic/Latino Anti-Defamation Coalition and Media Alliance in leading a rally in front of Victoria Theater. According to a press release about the event, the rally's message will be directed to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the federal agency that oversees broadcasters. The demonstration's goal is to pressure the FCC to schedule hearings on hate radio.

Radio host and Director of Hecho en California Radio, Dr. Marcos Gutierrez, explains, "A recent UCLA study shows a correlation

between hate radio and hate crimes." Emily Pears, a California Common Cause staffer, adds, "Common Cause is concerned when a few corporations own our media resulting in less local programming and fewer viewpoints being broadcast. More alarming, we are hearing more 'hate speech' including broadcasters spreading misinformation, stereotyping, and fostering violence against certain people or groups." Common Cause's June 28th events are aimed at curbing these disturbing trends.

For tickets and more information about the San Francisco screening and other showings around California, visit <http://www.commoncause.org/CA/BroadcastBlues>. For more information on the film, go to <http://www.broadcastblues.tv>.