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Scott Walker Spent 88% of the Money to Get 53% of the Vote

Here's a headline you won't see, but should: "Scott Walker Spent 88% of the Money to Get 53% of the Vote."



Political pundits will spend the next few days and weeks analyzing the Wisconsin recall election, examining exit polls, spilling lots of ink over how different demographic groups -- income, race, religious, union membership, gender, party affiliation, independents, liberals/conservatives/

moderates, etc -- voted on Tuesday.

But the real winner in Wisconsin on Tuesday was not Gov. Scott Walker, but Big Money. And the real loser was not Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, but democracy.

Walker's Republican campaign outspent Barrett's Democratic campaign by \$30.5 million to \$4 million -- that's a 7.5 to 1 advantage. Another way of saying this is that of the \$34.5 million spent on their campaigns, Walker spend 88% of the money.

Walker beat Barrett by 1,316,989 votes to 1,145,190 votes -- 53% to 46% (with 1% going to an independent candidate).

Here's another way of saying that: Walker spent \$23 for each vote he received, while Barrett spent only \$3.47 per vote.

But the reality is even worse than this, because the \$34.5 million figure does not include so-called independent expenditures and issue ads paid for primarily by out-of-state billionaires (like the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson, and Joe Ricketts), business groups, and the National Rifle Association, which were skewed even more heavily toward Walker. Once all this additional spending is calculated, we'll see that total spending in this race could be more than double the \$34.5 million number, that Walker and his business allies outspent Barrett by an even wider margin, and that he had to spend even more than \$23 for each vote.

In other words, business and billionaires bought this election for Walker. The money paid for non-stop TV and radio ads as well as mailers. There's no doubt that if the Barrett campaign had even one-third of the war-chest that Walker had, it would have been able to mount an even more formidable grassroots get-out-the-vote campaign and put more money into the TV and radio air war. Under those circumstances, it is likely that Barrett would have prevailed.

Pundits can have a field day pontificating about the Wisconsin election, but in the end it's about how Big Money hijacked democracy in the Badger State on Tuesday, and how they're trying to do it again in November.

Peter Dreier is professor of politics at Occidental College, and the author of [The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame](#). He writes regularly for the Los Angeles Times, The Nation, and American Prospect.


AlterNet / By [Peter Dreier](#)
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