

COMMENTARY: A match made in Madison

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By Kevin Binversie

It's an age-old story in politics. Boy gets elected to the Legislature. Boy meets girl lobbyist. They date. They fall in love. They plan to wed.

Boy seeks higher political office. Girl has the political organization she runs endorse boy.

Sound familiar? Yes, but I'm not talking about former Speaker of the State Assembly Mike Sheridan, D-Janesville. I'm talking about state Rep. Fred Clark, D-Baraboo, who now seeks to unseat state Sen. Luther Olsen, R-Ripon, in a recall election Tuesday.

Clark is set to wed Kerry Schumann. [Schumann is executive director of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters](#) ^[1] and until recently [a lobbyist](#) ^[2]. It is to be the second marriage for each.

Clark is no stranger to getting the support of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. In his first run for the State Assembly in 2008, the League received \$17,159 in independent expenditures, according to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. In 2010, the League fronted thousands of dollars to the Greater Wisconsin Committee, which ran ads against Clark's Republican challenger Jack Cummings, a small businessman and farmer from Marquette, according to the Government Accountability Board, or GAB, the state's election agency.

For next week's recall election, [the League has publicly endorsed Clark](#) ^[3], according to an official news release from the group. The only Republican endorsement of the group is Green Bay area state Sen. Robert Cowles.

[GAB filings for the summer recalls](#) ^[4] show the League again is funneling money to the Greater Wisconsin Committee, or GWC. They also show a series of payments to "HSC Campaigns," [a Milwaukee-based consulting show that specializes in working with unions.](#) ^[5]

As for Schumann, she has personally donated twice to Clark's campaigns — [\\$135 in 2008 and maxing out the full \\$500 in 2010](#) ^[6]. But her most vocal support has been on her Facebook page. On June 5, in a Facebook posting marked as "Via Fred Clark for Wisconsin" regarding news the Republican Party of Wisconsin would be running placeholder candidates, Schumann wrote "More dirty tricks by Luther Olsen and his ilk. You know what they say about bridezillas? Well, I might become one if this election gets postponed by Republicans' dishonest tactics."

Schumann's Facebook account has a number of supportive comments about Clark and dismissive comments about his opponent and other Republicans. It featured a number of photos of the two together, including one of the pair marked "Smokey Mountain Christmas!" from this past December.

Given the [recent media reports about possible collusion](#) ^[7] between state Rep. Sandy Pasch and the liberal group, [Citizen Action of Wisconsin](#) ^[8], the same sort of questions need to be brought up regarding Clark and the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. Certainly the imagery of a candidate working with an outside group behind the scenes in some smoke-filled back room is one thing, but doing it at the dinner table they share is all together something different.

Calls made to the Clark campaign and the Democratic Party of Wisconsin for comment about this column were not returned.

Kevin Binversie is a Wisconsin native who has been blogging on the state's political culture for more than eight years. He has served in the George W. Bush administration from 2007-2009, worked at the Heritage Foundation and has worked on numerous Wisconsin Republican campaigns in various capacities, most recently as research director for Ron Johnson for Senate. Contact him at kevin.binversie@franklincenterhq.org.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Schumann is executive director of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters:
http://www.conservationvoters.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=31

[2] a lobbyist:
<http://ethics.state.wi.us/scripts/2009Session/Lobbyists.asp?LobID=3163&start=S>

[3] the League has publicly endorsed Clark:
http://www.conservationvoters.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=85%3A2011-endorsements-&catid=3&Itemid=18

[4] GAB filings for the summer recalls: <http://cfis.wi.gov/>

[5] a Milwaukee-based consulting show that specializes in working with unions.:
<http://www.hsgcampaigns.com/who-we-are/>

[6] \$135 in 2008 and maxing out the full \$500 in 2010:
http://www.wisdc.org/index.php?module=wisdc.websiteforms&cmd=searchadvanced&filter=+Search+&contributor_name=Schumann%2C+Kerry

[7] recent media reports about possible collusion: <http://www.wisconsinreporter.com/pasch-faces-campaign-bribery-other-election-accusations>

[8] Citizen Action of Wisconsin: <http://citizenactionwi.org/>

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