

# How Zuckerbucks Infiltrated the Wisconsin Election



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# KEY FINDINGS

1

MORE THAN 200 LOCAL WISCONSIN JURISDICTIONS RECEIVED “ZUCKERBUCKS” FOR THE 2020 ELECTION, TOTALING MORE THAN \$9 MILLION.

2

NEARLY \$3.5 MILLION WAS FUNNELED INTO THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE VIA TWO GRANTS.

3

GREEN BAY SPENT ONLY 0.8 PERCENT OF FUNDS ON PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT—INSTEAD PURCHASING TWO NEW 2020 FORD 550S AND PAYING A PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM NEARLY \$150,000 FOR VOTER OUTREACH.

4

A REPRESENTATIVE OF CTCL HAD BEHIND-THE-SCENES ACCESS TO ELECTION ADMINISTRATION IN GREEN BAY AND MILWAUKEE.

5

A FORMER GOVERNOR EVERS STAFFER WORKED FOR THE GRANTOR TO COORDINATE GRANT APPLICATIONS IN EAU CLAIRE.

## THE BOTTOM LINE:

WISCONSIN CAN—AND SHOULD—PROHIBIT LOCAL JURISDICTIONS FROM ACCEPTING PRIVATE MONEY FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.

## Overview

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative donated more than \$400 million to fund election administration during the recent 2020 presidential election.<sup>1</sup> Most of the funds were funneled through the Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL), a left-leaning non-profit.<sup>2</sup> Though CTCL claims to be nonpartisan, the organization has significant ties to progressive groups, including being led by a former Obama Foundation fellow.<sup>3</sup>

Pitched as “COVID-19 Response Grants,” CTCL—and Mark Zuckerberg himself—has claimed that grants were given to any and all jurisdictions that requested funding. But evidence is mounting that resources were targeted to Democrat jurisdictions and may have even influenced the election outcome in several swing states.<sup>4</sup>

For example, in Pennsylvania, a large majority of the counties receiving Zuckerbucks went for Biden in 2020.<sup>5</sup> In fact, 92 percent of the money funneled into the Commonwealth went to counties that broke for Biden.<sup>6</sup> And, in Georgia, Biden counties got nearly four times more Zuckerbucks per registered voter than Trump counties.<sup>7</sup>



**92 PERCENT OF THE MONEY FUNNELED  
INTO THE COMMONWEALTH WENT TO  
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## Zuckerbucks Poured into Wisconsin

In a matter of months, Zuckerbucks were widely distributed across the United States, infiltrating 48 states and the District of Columbia during the 2020 election.<sup>8</sup> And Wisconsin was no exception. 218 local jurisdictions—more than 36 percent of Wisconsin municipalities—received more than \$9 million for the 2020 election.<sup>9</sup> The top five most populous cities in Wisconsin, many of which are historically Democrat strongholds—Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Kenosha, and Racine—received more than \$7.5 million in total.<sup>10</sup>

Milwaukee received two grant awards from CTCL, totaling nearly \$3.5 million, while Madison received more than \$1.2 million in Zuckerbucks. Furthermore, more than \$1 million was funneled into Green Bay, amounting to nearly \$20 per registered voter.<sup>11</sup> For context, Green Bay's total elections budget was \$329,820, and the private funding increased their budget by a staggering 331 percent.<sup>12</sup> Racine was also awarded almost \$1 million or \$24 per registered voter.

## WISCONSIN JURISDICTIONS RECEIVING ZUCKERBUCKS

JURISDICTION	REGISTERED VOTERS	GRANT AWARD	AMOUNT PER REGISTERED VOTER
Milwaukee	317,957	\$3,409,500	\$10.72
Madison	191,140	\$1,271,788	\$6.65
Green Bay	56,276	\$1,093,400	\$19.43
Racine	39,155	\$942,100	\$24.06
Kenosha	53,740	\$682,779	\$12.71
Janesville	38,563	\$183,292	\$4.75
Eau Claire	42,242	\$71,000	\$1.68
West Allis	35,117	\$62,068	\$1.77
Wausau	22,269	\$50,000	\$2.25
Sun Prairie	22,679	\$30,758	\$1.36
Appleton	45,077	\$18,330	\$0.41
Fitchburg	18,507	\$16,519.50	\$0.89
Brookfield	30,110	\$14,090	\$0.47
Menasha	10,449	\$7,890	\$0.76
Weston (Village)	9,293	\$6,819	\$0.73
Abbotsford	951	\$5,000	\$5.26
Altoona	5,124	\$5,000	\$0.98
Amery	1,660	\$5,000	\$3.01
Antigo	4,236	\$5,000	\$1.18
Kewaunee	1,722	\$5,000	\$2.90
Lisbon (Town)	7,867	\$5,000	\$0.64
Montfort (Village)	354	\$5,000	\$14.12
Onalaska (Town)	4,172	\$5,000	\$1.20
Plymouth	5,590	\$5,000	\$0.89
Stratford (Village)	984	\$5,000	\$5.08
<b>Total Confirmed</b>	<b>\$8,090,500.50</b>		
<b>Total Projected Minimum*</b>	<b>\$9,055,500.50</b>		

Source: Foundation for Government Accountability

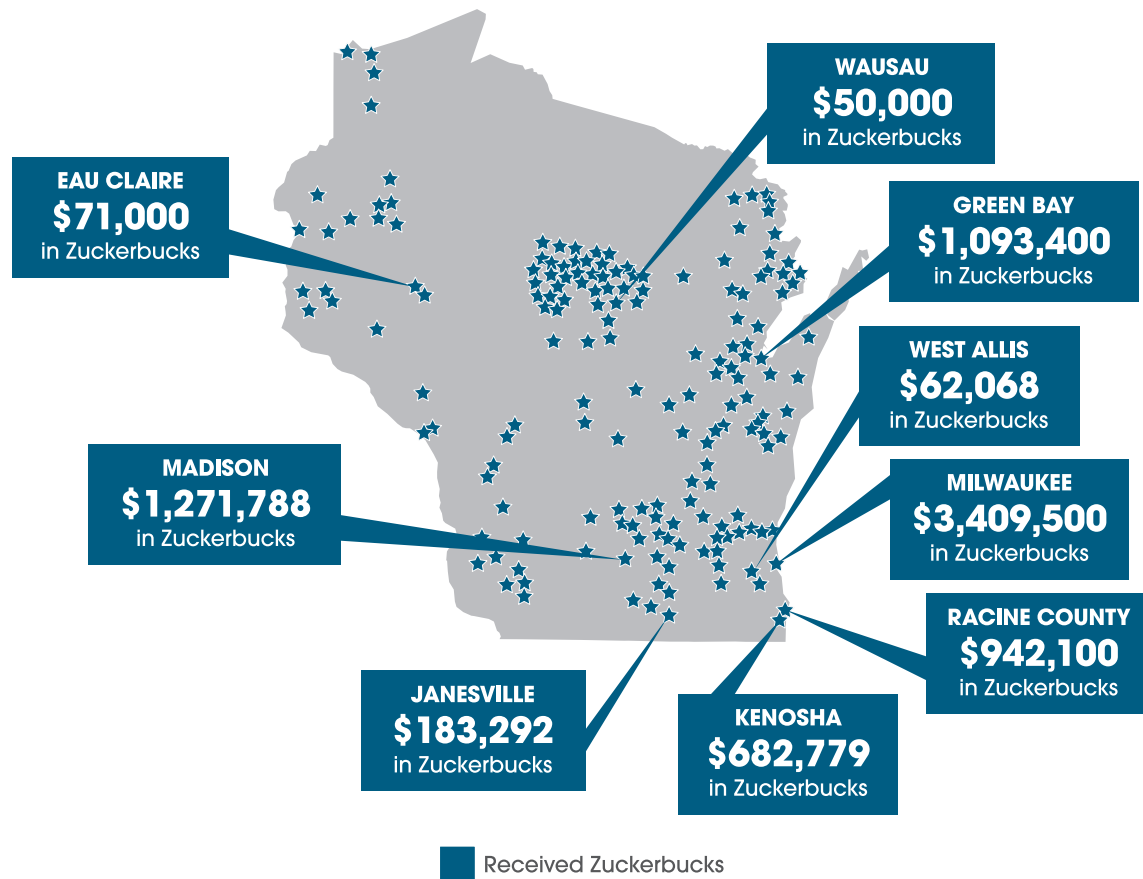
\*This table excludes 193 jurisdictions for which dollar amounts are not yet specified. According to CTCL the minimum grant amount was \$5,000, resulting in a total projected minimum amount of \$9,055,500.50.

## How was the money spent?

Leaders of the top five most populous Wisconsin cities claimed that without the additional funds they would be forced to decide between “health and the right to vote.”<sup>13</sup> But only a fraction of the total funds requested or spent was for personal protective equipment (PPE). In fact, Milwaukee spent a mere 5.8 percent of their grant funds on PPE.<sup>14</sup> Other jurisdictions did not spend any of their grant award on PPE at all. Brookfield spent their \$14,090 award on election administration equipment.<sup>15</sup> And Menasha spent their entire award on absentee voting equipment and supplies.<sup>16</sup>

**Green Bay spent only 0.8 percent of grant funds on PPE—instead purchasing two new 2020 Ford 550s and paying a public relations firm nearly \$150,000 for voter outreach.**<sup>17</sup> West Allis spent the bulk of their grant funding on drive-thru voting, absentee voting equipment, and election administration equipment.<sup>18</sup>

### WISCONSIN CITIES RECEIVING ZUCKERBUCKS



## Zuckerbucks Infiltrated the Wisconsin Election

A prime example of the problem with allowing private funding of election administration occurred in the City of Green Bay. In this scenario, a political operative affiliated with CTCL with a history of working for Democrat campaigns was given behind-the-scenes access to local officials and the election administration process.<sup>19</sup>

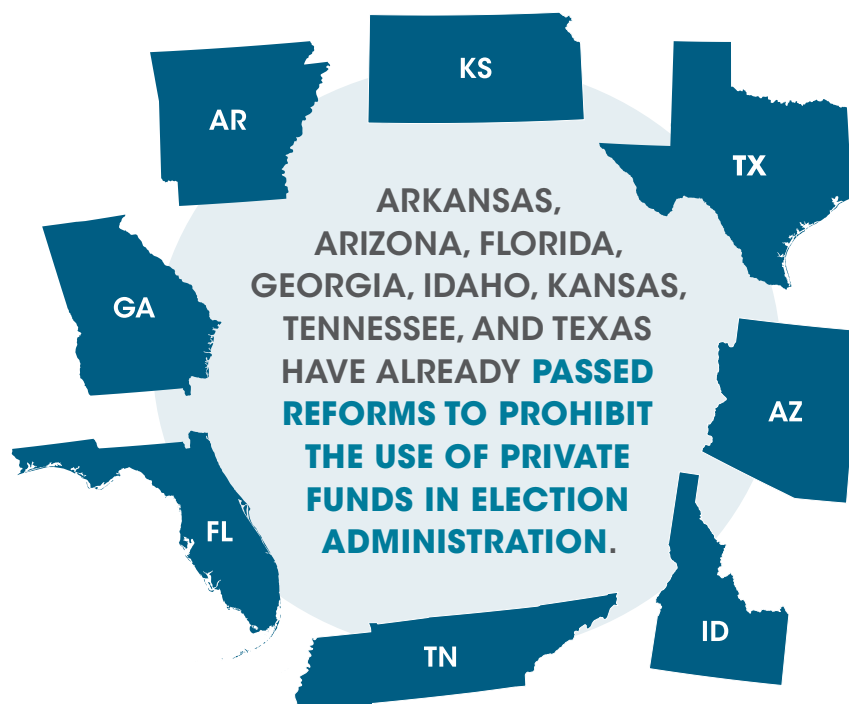
Correspondence with Green Bay officials revealed that the operative aggressively sought to engage in the administration of the city's election.<sup>20</sup> The operative tried to assist in the ballot curing process, including offering to call voters about rejected ballots.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, he had access to absentee ballots prior to the election.<sup>22</sup> **And the operative reportedly had four of the five keys to the facility where ballots were stored.**<sup>23</sup>

But even the appearance of outside influence can erode public trust in the election process. For example, email correspondence revealed that a current CTCL employee was a former policy advisor to Governor Evers.<sup>24</sup> The CTCL employee offered to help the Eau Claire city clerk put together application materials, seeking to ensure the city would receive the maximum grant.<sup>25</sup>

## The Future of Wisconsin Elections is at Stake

Allowing private money to fund the process that elects public officials opens the door to impropriety and outside influence. It enables powerful private individuals and nonprofits to influence the election administration process. But there is a simple solution—**prohibit local governments from accepting funding for election administration from private individuals and third parties.** Wisconsinites should be able to support the candidate of their choice with their vote and their voice. A few billionaires should not have the opportunity to pick winners and losers by influencing local election administration processes with private money and their own political agenda.

Robust efforts to ensure election integrity are developing across the country. States are pushing back by prohibiting the use of private funds in election administration. Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Tennessee, and Texas have already passed this reform. Wisconsin can and should prohibit local jurisdictions from accepting funds from private organizations to safeguard future elections and restore public confidence in the election system.



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