

Justice, Politics & Money in Wisconsin

<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/31/nx-s1-5343482/out-of-state-billionaires-donate-big-money-in-wisconsin-supreme-court-race>

Task 1: Warm-up

Elicit information about the following people and places briefly:

1. Who is Elon Musk? Briefly, what do you know about him?
2. What do you know about President Trump? (Briefly)
3. Do you know who George Soros is? What do you know about him?
4. Where is the state of Wisconsin? Do you know anything about it? What is a “swing state”?

Task 2: Listening

Listen to an NPR report about an election of a Wisconsin Supreme Court judge in the programme *Morning Edition*. As you listen, complete the blanks in the sentences below with ONE or TWO or THREE words. 0 is the example.



0. *Example:*

The total amount of money spent in the judiciary races is close to \$ 100,000,000.

1. The new Wisconsin Supreme Court judge will have to decide about issues like abortion, _____ and _____ rights.
2. Elon Musk says that the result of the election will affect the _____.
3. The liberal candidate Susan Crawford and the conservative candidate Brad Schimel accuse each other of being controlled by _____.
4. Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein, who also support Schimel, own a company that has many _____ and _____ around the country.
5. Retired judge Janine Geske says that she is worried about the _____ of the third branch of government.

Task 3: Vocabulary

1. Listen to the report with the script. Underline the difficult words. Try to guess their meaning from context with your partner. Finally, ask the teacher about the words you do not know.
2. Choose three words you would like to learn from this lesson. Tell your partner and then, share them with the rest of your class.

DISCUSSION

After doing the listening comprehension and the vocabulary tasks in pairs, you can discuss these questions as a whole class:

- Do you think that there should be a limit to the donations that individuals can give to political parties or to judiciary candidates in elections?
- Is it easy to be a judge and pass a fair sentence?
- Would you like to be a judge?
- Do you think that the courts in your country are fair and independent, or are they controlled by the ruling party or by the president of the country?
- Do politicians often complain that judges are partisan or biased in your country?
- Is there a perfect procedure to guarantee the independence of the judiciary power in a democracy?
- Different constitutions have different ways to guarantee the independence of the judiciary power (judges and justices): In the U.S.A. Supreme Court judges are appointed for life by successive Presidents and in some state constitutions, like Wisconsin, the people have a vote between the final two candidates, whereas in other constitutions, like in Spain, the political parties have to negotiate a qualified majority in Congress (three fifths) to name the judges of the Consejo Superior del Poder Judicial (CSPJ) the Constitutional body that, later on, will appoint and promote the judges in the lower courts. Do you think it is a good idea that the people have a direct vote to elect some judges, or is it better that the political parties reach a consensual decision to appoint the leading judges, so that the people only have to vote in general, state and local elections?

ANSWER KEY (2): Listening

- 1) **Voting and labour law**
- 2) **Destiny of humanity**
- 3) **Millionaires/ Billionaires/ Megadonors/ Rich sponsors**
- 4) **Cardboard boxes and trucks**
- 5) **Independence**