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Rep. Sheldon Wasserman has Repeatedly Broken his Taxpayer Protection Pledge

Wasserman Voted to Raise Taxes then Refused to Sign the Pledge as a Senate Candidate

Washington, D.C. – Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) today condemned ads and statements made by State Rep. Sheldon Wasserman (D-Milwaukee) that he has not voted for a single tax increase, noting that they contrast sharply with his legislative record. Wasserman has also misled voters with his statements that he signed the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, while failing to retake the Pledge in his race for the 8th Senate District. The Pledge commits signers to “oppose and vote against” any and all tax increases.

Rep. Wasserman signed the Taxpayer Protection Pledge in 2002, but has failed honor the Pledge by sponsoring, supporting, or voting for at least three tax increases during his tenure in the State Assembly:

- In 2005, Rep. Wasserman sponsored a bill to increase the state’s cigarette and tobacco taxes by well over \$300 million per year. The bill would have pushed the cigarette tax rate from \$0.77 to \$1.77 and increased the tax rate on chewing tobacco to 57%. (2005 AB 451, SB 211)
- In 2007, Rep. Wasserman voted in favor of advancing a \$48 million tax increase on garbage collection. The bill would have increased the current tax by 233%. (2007 AB 76)
- Last October, Rep. Wasserman expressed willingness to break his Taxpayer Protection Pledge by supporting a tax hike included in the 2008-2009 Budget. (2007, WI Act 20)

“Despite his Pledge to taxpayers, Rep. Wasserman has repeatedly sought to increase taxes on Wisconsin consumers and families,” said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform. “Not only that, but he has violated the very spirit of the Pledge by dismissing it in support of tax hikes.”

Additionally, while Wasserman signed the Taxpayer Protection Pledge as a state representative, he failed to retake the Pledge for the 8th Senate District where he is currently challenging State Sen. Alberta Darling (R-River Hills), who is a Pledge signer. This despite repeated claims that he did sign the no-new-taxes pledge. The Taxpayer Protection Pledge guidelines state that a legislator’s Pledge is only in effect for the “duration of their tenure in the office to which they were elected” and signers who run for another office must re-sign the Pledge for the new office they are seeking.

“Why should taxpayers trust Wasserman when he broke his Pledge in the Assembly and now promises not to raise taxes while failing to re-sign the Pledge?” added Norquist. “I welcome Wasserman to re-sign the Pledge in his race for the 8th District, but that in no way purges his record of supporting tax hikes on Wisconsin residents.”

Americans for Tax Reform does not endorse candidates for office. State Rep. Sheldon Wasserman signed the Taxpayer Protection Pledge for the 22nd District and State Sen. Alberta Darling signed the Pledge for the 8th District.

Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact John Kartch at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jkartch@atr.org.

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