Common Cause to launch attacks against large PAC contributions

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By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Common Cause President Fred Wertheimer has announced an intensified campaign against political action committees on behalf of the 240,000-member citizen's lobby group.

"PACs are squeezing the life out of our representative system of government," he said in a press release, "and it's time to draw the line."

Wertheimer outlined a strategy the organization proposes to undertake. This includes a heavy media campaign to publicize PAC influence on congressional decisions. It will also include a legislative agenda to push for major congressional campaign financing reforms, including enactment of a public financing system.

Rep. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, received $128,951, of which $117,601 was from business PACs and $3,000 from labor PACs.

Rep. George Hansen, R-Idaho, got $54,775, of which $47,675 was from business PAC but none from labor.

Sen. Pete Wilson, R-Calif., became the country's first million-dollar recipient when he accepted $1,101,951 in campaign contributions from PACs.

In 1980, the top Senate recipient of PAC money was Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, $722,211.

Other top Senate recipients were Sens. David Durenberger, R-Minn., $975,130; Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, $877,782; and Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, $760,325.

Winners of the 33 Senate races in 1982 received $14,870,631, an average of $450,625 each.

Wertheimer said more than half of that total came from business PACs which contributed $8.5 million to the 33 members. Labor PACS were second with $3.1 million.

Twelve senators raised more than $500,000 from PACS, and six raised more than $500,000 from business PACs alone.

PACs also invested $4,367,014 in the 1982 campaigns of the 42 representatives serving on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Half of them received more than $100,000 each and 17 more received between $50,000 and $100,000 apiece.

Business PACs contributed $2.3 million, nearly twice as much as labor PACs with $1.2 million.

The top recipients of PAC money for the committee members were Tom Wirth, D-Colo, $197,800; Philip Sharp, D-Ind., $182,432; and John Dingle, D-Miss., $180,005.

Forty-seven House members received more than $100,000 from business PACS in the 1982 campaign.

The top business PAC recipients were Rep. Robert Michel, R-Ill., $353,957; and Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill., $212,100.

The top labor PAC recipient was Rep. John Burton, D-Calif., $259,050.

House will consider bill to increase aircraft fees

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BY BEN J. PLASTINO
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State Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said Tuesday the House next week will consider a bill tripling the registration fee for general aircraft.

Sessions said the committee last week narrowly approved the bill by a 6-5 vote but recommended the increases will apply to general aircraft, meaning primarily the private airplanes, and not airlines.

The revenue would increase the state revenue from an estimated $56,000 to $188,000, said Sessions.

The registration fee is based on age and weight of an aircaft. As an example, he said a registration fee on a Cessna 210, costing $200,000, would be increased from $36 to $90 a year.

Exempted from the increase would be the scheduled carriers in Idaho of United, Western, Wien, Pacific Express, Cascade, Skywest and Transwestern.

Sessions also said the proposed gas rate hike of 1.5 cents per gallon, or from 3.5 to 5 cents, "is dead for this session."

Airline representatives in a hearing two weeks ago strongly opposed the increase, asserting their shrinking revenue could not stand further expenses.

Mrs. Carol Luther, Denver, Frontier, Airlines representative, testified against both the gas tax and registration fee increase in the two meetings.

Sessions said Mrs. Luther also told him that Frontier is considering expansion of service into Idaho, including Idaho Falls.

She said Frontier is reviewing its entire system of service.