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**Project Vote Smart and FollowTheMoney.org Mashup Data
Shines Light on the Collision of Public Interests and Special
Interests**

Helena, MT –Project Vote Smart and FollowTheMoney.org have collaborated to produce an online tool that allows citizens to easily view state legislative committee rosters alongside campaign donor data. This Legislative Committee Analysis Tool (L-CAT) illustrates how campaign donations may affect public policy and lawmaking.

The mashup draws from FollowTheMoney.org's database of campaign donor information and Project Vote Smart's database of candidates and elected officials, providing citizens a greater level of transparency in state government. The recent launch of the L-CAT has been timed to coincide with Sunshine Week 2009 (March 15-21), which is focusing a national government transparency project on the availability of public records at the federal and state levels.

The L-CAT enables a very close look at often-overlooked legislative committee proceedings. Bills referred to a committee may be altered or outright killed.

“The final vote is often the public face put to fierce infighting and maneuvering that occurred in legislative committees,” said Edwin Bender, executive director of the National Institute on Money in State Politics, whose web site is FollowTheMoney.org. “The committee room is where the action is, and where political donors and lobbyists do most of their work to influence legislation.”

This tool gives users the freedom to view information in several ways. First, users can see which campaign contributions from a particular economic sector went to a specific member of a committee. In addition, users can see which industries and organizations donated the most money to all members of that committee.

(Continued)

The L-CAT is available at the website <http://www.FollowTheMoney.org>.

Relationships and conflicts between special interests and the public interest can further be examined by easy access to other data from www.votesmart.org on federal and state office holders, including their voting records, issue positions, grades by special interest groups, speeches, backgrounds, and contact information. Project Vote Smart, a national non-partisan research organization, tracks the job performances of more than 40,000 candidates and incumbents at the presidential, congressional, gubernatorial and state legislative levels, and provides the information at votesmart.org and over the toll-free Voter's Research Hotline (1-888-VOTE SMART), which also serves as a help line.

The nonprofit, nonpartisan FollowTheMoney.org collects and analyzes campaign contribution information for state-level candidates, political party committees, and ballot committees in each of the 50 states. Its searchable database of contributions is available online at www.FollowTheMoney.org.

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