

# KEN, CASH, CONTRACTS

**Cockrel's donors include city contractors: Waste Management, Soave, Nicholson, Fiore, others**

**By Diane Bukowski**  
The Michigan Citizen



Kenneth  
Cockrel, Jr.

DETROIT — If ending corruption is Interim Mayor Kenneth Cockrel, Jr.'s goal, he needs to return large amounts of campaign contributions he received from city contractors in 2008, including \$7,000 from Waste Management's WMI PAC of Michigan.

When announcing the rescission of the scandal-ridden \$1.2 billion Carlyle/Synagro contract Jan. 30, the interim mayor said he was "looking forward to ending this sad chapter in our city's history and ending corruption in city government."

Part of Synagro's work, Cockrel said, will be taken over by Homrich, Inc. That company will truck sludge from Detroit's Wastewater Treatment Plant to Waste Management, Inc.'s (WMI) Pine Tree Facility.

Cockrel noted that WMI is already a city contractor — but Cockrel didn't say WMI is also a hefty contributor to his campaign.

"Waste Management, based in Houston, Texas, is the leading provider of comprehensive waste management services in North America," says the company's website. "Our [1,647] subsidiaries provide collection, transfer, recycling and resource recovery, and disposal services. We are also a leading developer, operator and owner of waste-to-energy and landfill gas-to-energy facilities in the United States."

The company racked up over \$13 billion in sales in 2007, according to Hoover's.

Anthony Soave of Soave Enterprises, Inc. gave Cockrel, Jr., \$3,400, and his Citizens for Michigan PAC added another \$1,000. Numerous companies previously owned by Soave under the City Management Corporation umbrella, including Soave-Volpe Hauling, are now subsidiaries of WMI.

Soave Enterprises says on its website, "In 1998, City Management and its associated holdings were divested and subsequently became a part of one of the largest environmental companies in the world." However, state records do not show that City Management was sold; they list only merger documents without divestments.

WMI has an unsavory history of bribing government officials (\$26 million to Dayton, Ohio's, City Council disguised as "host fees" and \$26-30 million to San Bernardino County in California), wiretapping competitors, environmental pollution, racism, and alleged involvement with organized crime, according to numerous reports.

"Just because an individual or organization may make a contribution to Mayor Cockrel's campaign does not mean he supports them or their causes," Cockrel, Jr.'s, Communications Chief Daniel Cherrin said. "In fact, the Mayor is on record voting against several of those who may have made a contribution in the past."

Also listed in Cockrel's 2008 statements are a total of \$10,200 in contributions from Detroit

Water and Sewerage Department contractor James Nicholson of PVS Chemicals, and funds from Doug Rothwell, President of Detroit Renaissance, Attorney David Lewis, and the Lewis and Munday PAC.

The three men are part of the Business Leadership Group appointed by U.S. District Court Judge John Feikens to form a DWSD governance study group.

The group most recently recommended the sale of DWSD's massive Macomb County Interceptor to that county, without a vote of Detroit's citizens as required in the City Charter.

Nicholson is also a major Republican Party campaign contributor.

Cockrel brought the proposal to sell the Macomb County Interceptor to Detroit's City Council, although that body is not authorized under the charter to vote on it.

"That's pretty amazing," said John Riehl, President of DWSD Local 207 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). "Cockrel gives red carpet treatment to the contractors and vice versa, but the workers get a boot in the butt. Detroit's citizens need to question all these contributions. It would certainly be a nice change of pace to have a mayor who refused to take money from contractors."

Local 207 demonstrated outside Cockrel's State of the City address at the Opera House Feb. 10, and previously joined with Call 'em Out and the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization to protest the sale of DWSD assets and demand affordable water Feb. 5, outside the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center.

"Mayor Cockrel says that if city workers don't take a permanent 10 percent pay cut, he'll lay-off 1,000 of us," said one DWSD worker. "To Hell with these anti-Detroit threats. More layoffs will further depress our neighborhoods. A real leader would organize us to fight for more federal stimulus money."

Other water department contractors who have Cockrel on their pay to play list include Gui Ponce de Leon of PMA Consultants, who twice gave \$3,400, and Thomas DeLaura of Westin Engineering, who gave \$1,000.

The rest of Cockrel, Jr.'s, 2008 campaign finance list is a who's who of city contractors from many departments. Construction contractors include James D'Agostini of D'Agostini Construction, who gave \$3,400; Richard DeMaria of Demaria Building Company (\$1,500); Michael Rosett of Fairway Construction (\$1,000); Frank Jacoboni of Major Cement (\$1,000); Cullen DuBose of Painia Development (\$1,000); and Christopher Fitch of Walbridge Aldinger (\$500).

Joe Capozzoli, President of Capozzoli Advisory for Pensions, which does business with the city's pension boards, gave Cockrel, Jr., \$1,000. The pension boards lost over \$2 billion in the 18 months up to Dec. 2008 due to faulty investments, including \$30 million the city's General Retirement System gave to Lehmann Brothers, which folded during the Wall Street mortgage fund collapse.

Gaspar Fiore, who gave \$500, runs Boulevard & Trumbull Towing and is the city's largest towing contractor. He even sits on a five-member city board that parcels out towing contracts.