

# The Truth About Democrats' Longtime Involvement in Local Elections

## A FACT SHEET

La Crosse County Republican Party

### Summary

The La Crosse County Democratic Party has begun to portray efforts to recruit fiscally conservative candidates to run for local office as somehow an unprecedented introduction of party politics into local elections.

The evidence, however, tells a different story. This fact sheet provides that evidence.

This fact sheet will demonstrate that:

- The current La Crosse County Board is stocked with Democrats and adherents of liberal causes;
- Liberal leadership has stacked the County Board with like-minded people, rather than allowing elections for open seats;
- Individuals like Rep. Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) and Congressman Ron Kind (D-La Crosse), along with their allies, have been involved in local elections for years
- The narrative pushed by partisan power brokers like Steve Doyle is dishonest, relying on depriving the public of the facts.

Liberals in La Crosse County have worked for years to tilt the county government in favor of tax-and-spend policies. That's their right under the First Amendment. Likewise, conservatives are also volunteering their time on behalf of candidates for local office, an effort to give voters a fiscally conservative option at the polls and limit the number of unopposed office holders.

### The False "Unprecedented" Narrative

Recent coverage in the La Crosse Tribune entitled "Madison volunteers raise questions of partisan influence on county board" was sadly lacking a thorough, balanced examination of both sides of the argument. In fact, the article impugns the volunteer work of three individuals who have long been involved in conservative politics in the La Crosse area as "unprecedented," which is both misleading and inaccurate. Voters deserve all the facts.

The narrative being pursued by partisan power broker Steve Doyle, who retains his County Board seat while co-chairing the state Democratic Party's committee to elect Democrats to state Assembly seats, centers on the claim that involvement by political party activists in local elections is a novel and unethical undertaking, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The facts show that La Crosse County Democrats have long been involved in local partisan

#### Lies of the Year:

"Local elections are nonpartisan, and I wish they would stay that way."

-Tara Johnson (D-Shelby)  
La Crosse Tribune

"This should not be bare knuckle politics. This should be public service."

-Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska)  
La Crosse Tribune

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politics, particularly the local Democratic Party and Doyle's Assembly campaigns. More information about that activity is included in this fact sheet.

### **Stacking The Board**

Thanks to the fact that Democrats have controlled the County Board for years, they have been able to go far beyond just helping candidates - they've actually been able to cherry-pick individuals of their choice for appointments to the County Board due to retirements.

Five incumbent supervisors found their way to the County Board by being appointed, rather than elected. In fact, a 2014 motion by Supervisor Hubert Hoffman to require a public vote to replace exiting supervisor Andrew Londre was voted down. Steve Doyle and his allies voted against this attempt at giving voters a choice, opting to keep that power for themselves.

The following incumbent supervisors were initially appointed, not elected, to their seats:

#### **1. Monica Kruse**

- Appointed August 2009
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

#### **2. Nancy Stoll-Caucutt**

- Appointed May 2014
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Signed Scott Walker recall petition

#### **3. Maureen Freedland**

- Appointed Sept. 2005
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

#### **4. Patrick Barlow**

- Appointed Nov. 2013
- Contributor to Peter Flesch campaign
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee
- Contributor to Mary Burke Campaign
- Contributor to Jennifer Shilling Campaign
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

#### **5. Tina Hundt Wehrs**

- Appointed Sept. 2009
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign

If intermingling political parties with local elections causes the erosion of our government, then our government would've long since turned to dust thanks to the long-standing, direct relationships between the local Democrats and their incumbents on the County Board.

## **Democrats Dominate the County Board**

The La Crosse Tribune article mentioned earlier states that "several prominent members of the board" are "well-known Democrats." This, too, is misleading at best in light of the information we found. Following is a non-exhaustive list of facts about incumbent supervisors' involvement in the Democratic Party, Democratic causes, and liberal politics:

### **1. Monica Kruse**

- Former Vice Chair, La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### **2. Vicki Burke**

- Current Chair, La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Past Chair, La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

### **3. Steve Doyle**

- Current Democratic Representative, 94th Assembly District
- Co-Chairman, Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee (ADCC)
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

### **4. Joe Veenstra**

- Former Vice Chairman, La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Democratic Congressman Ron Kind sent letter endorsing Veenstra in 2010
- Donated to Jennifer Shilling in 2012

### **5. Matt Nikolay**

- 18-year former aid to Democratic Senator Russ Feingold
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

### **6. Dave Holtze**

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party

### **7. Peg Jerome**

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### **8. Sharon Hampson**

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### **9. Nancy Stoll-Caucutt**

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- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### 10. Kim Cable

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### 11. Pat Scheller

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign

### 12. Maureen Freedland

- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### 13. Tina Wehrs

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign

### 14. Patrick Barlow

- Contributor to Peter Flesch campaign
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Signed the Scott Walker recall
- Contributor to the Assembly Democratic Campaign Committee
- Contributor to Mary Burke Campaign
- Contributor to Jennifer Shilling Campaign

### 15. Mike Giese

- Signed the Scott Walker recall

### **Recent Former La Crosse County Board Members**

#### **Andrew Londre**

- Former Chairman, La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Former county board supervisor who quit weeks after re-election, enabling County Board leadership to appoint his successor

#### **Beverly Mach**

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party
- Signed the Scott Walker recall

#### **Karin Johnson**

- Signed the Scott Walker recall
- Graphic Designer for Steve Doyle

#### **Don Meyer**

- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign
- Contributor to Jennifer Shilling campaign

## EVERY VOTER SHOULD HAVE A CHOICE AT THE POLLS.

In another **La Crosse Tribune** article, County Board chair Tara Johnson made the claim, "Local elections are nonpartisan, and I wish they would stay that way," in reaction to finding out voters in her district will finally have a choice at the polls. So we examined her relationship with party politics, as well. What follows is hardly a surprise:

### Tara Johnson

- Former Democratic State Senate Candidate, 32nd Senate District
- Contributor to Steve Doyle campaign (\$250 per current report, husband also gave \$250, for a total of \$500) -*Current continuing report*
- Contributor to La Crosse County Democratic Party (\$117.50 per current report, husband also gave \$117.50, for a total of \$235) -*Current continuing report*

Three years ago, another La Crosse Tribune article **mentioned** that then-mayoral candidate Tim Kabat's campaign was run out of Steve Doyle's law office. Former Tribune opinion page editor Dick Mial wrote similar reports.

Further, Congressman Ron Kind, Democrat from La Crosse, wrote a letter endorsing Joe Veenstra in 2010. The letter failed and Veenstra lost that election in a landslide to La Crosse GOP Chairman Bill Feehan. Veenstra returned only after re-districting put Feehan's street in the district of another Doyle foe, Andrea Richmond.

## Conclusion

The information presented here is only recent data from 2012 until now. The fact is that efforts of the Democrats have historically dwarfed efforts of local Republicans and conservatives. In fact, the La Crosse County Republican Party stayed out of local elections for decades, which is reflected in the liberal makeup of the board, a who's-who of Democratic activists, adherents, operatives, and donors.

Democrats and tax-and-spend liberals long ago organized to take control of local government, and they succeeded. ***However, we believe it's their First Amendment right to freely associate, organize, and help elect people they think will advance their priorities.***

Republicans and fiscal conservatives have the same rights to affect change in their local governments, but somehow get special scrutiny in the media. That's a shame. That's why we're offering this fact sheet to correct the record and ensure the public is properly informed.

In conclusion, we offer the following:

1. Partisan involvement in local elections is nothing new;
2. Democrats have been doing it for decades;
3. There is nothing inherently wrong with organizing to recruit and support candidates;
4. In fact, encouraging and supporting future leaders who choose to step up and run for local office is good for democracy;
5. Given the number of unopposed seats in the typical local election, we believe every voter should have a choice at the poll.

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### Contact with Questions

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