

Bill Kraus: Early handicapping on the governor's race: Walker assumed favorite, but ...

Posted on Thursday, Aug 10, 2017

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Gov. Scott Walker's deal for 13,000 jobs may have the Dems feeling "Foxconned," but the 2018 governor's race in Wisconsin still has a ways to go.

The official Democratic field is still in formation, so the list of wannabes below will not all be in the likely August 2018 primary.

Here's some early handicapping with betting odds.

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Care to make a wager?

****Republicans**

— Scott Walker: Walker is the only GOP candidate, and it's likely to stay that way. Money is not a problem. If any of the Dems think, as most Republicans do, that the campaign is all about the money, they might as well withdraw. Nobody in sight or in mind is going to outspend Walker and his allies.

Unless. The unpredictable, unprecedented. President Trump could crash. If he does, those too close to him could crash with him. Like Walker. Walker's campaign will be about Act 10 and probably Foxconn and the low unemployment rate. All three could go south on him. Lincoln Hills, the 250,000 jobs promise, the transportation budget argument, and the weak wage and job growth generally will not be mentioned.

He is the favorite at the moment unless it becomes obvious to a bigger percentage of the voters that he is still running for president using the governorship as a stepping stone and/or one of those swords of Damocles that hang over his head comes crashing down. 2-1.

****Democrats**

— Andy Gronik: Gronik is in and under the wing of former WEAC chief Morris Andrews. The campaign will be adequately funded. The revealed issues will be to repeal Act 10 and embellish state employees everywhere with free health care, pensions, and other benefits. If Andy and Morris have read Kathy Cramer's "The Politics of Resentment," they didn't believe it. 25-1.

— Kathleen Vinehout: The western Wisconsin state senator ran for governor before, and made a budget bill her main campaign feature. And there's no reason to think she won't do it again. She joined her caucus for the trip to Illinois and can expect a "Where's her campaign headquarters? In Rockford." jab from any and every Dem candidate. 25-1

— Dana Wachs: Wachs, a state rep and trial lawyer from Eau Claire, has been a beneficiary of the 2010 gerrymandering, because his district is 90 percent or more Democrats which leaves him free to test the gubernatorial waters. He is on the road giving speeches in places as remote as Milwaukee. He has pretty much self-funded to date and is a big customer of the campaign business. He has bought direct mail advice, issue research, analytics, and other consulting advice from various sources who, he will find, are more interested in their cash flow than in his voters. He should talk to Ben Carson. 50-1.

— Paul Soglin: Madison's longtime mayor may be toying with us, but there are reasons he should be taken seriously. He is not from Milwaukee, but he is from Madison which is emerging as an outstate stigma. He is, was, always will be a maverick candidate. He is pro city, and putting aside Cramer's book for the moment, Wisconsin is more and more an urbanized state. The farm vote has been diminished numerically by 5,000 acre farm factories. Political campaigns are a mixture of who, what, and how. Paul would be mostly who. 20-1.

— Tony Evers: the current state schools superintendent represents an attempt to put education issues at the top of the political agenda. He is a kind of one trick pony, but he rides an interesting pony. His candidacy is almost as surprising as

Soglin's. The reaction is sort of "Where did he come from?" And why? Education is perhaps the most important responsibility of state government, and the least important organizationally. The governor is a surrogate schools superintendent. The legislature a ditto school board. The department that Tony heads mostly sorts and distributes the money that comes from elsewhere. It is really hard to take Tony seriously. 75-1.

— Mike McCabe: the former head of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign currently listed as a founder of something called Blue Jean Nation. He is the self-appointed heir to the Ed Garvey mantle and the only contender so far who says the Foxconn deal is less important than other items on the "people's" agenda. 100-1.

— Bob Harlow: Harlow is yet another surprise outsider who no one ever heard about. This is not dismissive. He has legislative experience and a website which offers up eight bullet points that are good reasons to vote for him or for anybody for that matter. He is well educated, has a background in government service in former state Sen. Dale Schultz's office. And he knows what infrastructure really is and what it can do for Wisconsin. But, differing from Soglin, he is mostly a "what" candidate and a "who" no one knows. Yet. He has \$650 in the bank. 75-1.

— Matt Flynn: Flynn has interesting credentials [former Dem Party chair and congressional candidate], one very large liability [Milwaukee], and a campaign that is mostly talk. The big announcement was going to be in May. It's August. No odds yet.

— Mahlon Mitchell: The head of the state firefighters union is also a more talk than action possibility. No odds yet.

— Others: Susan Happ: the Jefferson County DA made a respectable run for AG in 2014 and might be sniffing at this race, but really hasn't spoken up yet. Rep. Gordon Hintz of Oshkosh is another sniffer as is state senator Jon Erpenbach of Middleton; both are members of the Joint Finance Committee. Supreme Court Justice Ann Bradley, who has been at the top of Stevens Point sage Bob Williams' list of favorites for years, and Barbara Lawton, the former lieutenant governor who got pushed out of a race earlier by DC know-nothing-about-Wisconsin-know-it-all also deserve a mention. No odds yet.

— *Kraus, a former leader of Common Cause in Wisconsin, is a longtime Wisconsin politico*

who advised Govs. Dreyfus and Knowles.