

Evers counting his ability to work across party lines as a plus in guv bid

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 11, 2017

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Tony Evers says his nonpartisan background as head of DPI is actually helping him as he ventures into the partisan realm of the Dem guv field.

While he does not list a party affiliation in his current job, Evers told a WisPolitics.com luncheon this week that he likes to say he's only "allegedly" a nonpartisan "because there are many, many things that I oppose the Republican party platform on."

But as his campaign has gotten underway, Evers said he can draw on his nonpartisan background to showcase the bipartisan deals he's struck.

He cited deals in the voucher realm. Though opposed to voucher expansion, Evers said he's still been able to work with the private school choice community to create more accountability and transparency in the system.

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And that, he says, helps show the transition from nonpartisan to partisan is actually working to his advantage.

"Because I have in my nonpartisan way, I'm able to cut deals, make deals with folks that are traditionally viewed as opponents, and we don't have to do that," he said.

Aside from what Evers sees as Gov. Scott Walker's poor economic record, the elected state schools superintendent said he can also leverage his bipartisan history to convince voters to back him.

"I also believe that people respond well to people that do try to seek common ground, who try to not draw lines in the sand," he said. "And I think that's an important piece."

But Evers also knocked the gov for his failure to invest enough in education, saying he would make it a "top priority" in the state.

While Evers has been knocked as a single-issue candidate for his background in education, he drew a connection between education and a host of other issues.

"Public education impacts all sorts of other areas, whether it's early childhood, whether it's economic development, whether it's corrections, you name it," he said.

He also sees a connection between education and the economy, calling both K-12 and higher education the "chief economic driver in the state of Wisconsin."

"Over the years I've seen it (education) deteriorated to the point that I felt it was important to take this plunge," Evers said. "If I thought Gov. Walker was doing a good job, I wouldn't be sitting here today."