

Panel: Hints of Act 10 battle in first week of Trump's presidency

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If some of the immediate counter-reaction to President Trump looked familiar, it's because Wisconsin has "seen this movie before," says Dem pollster Paul Maslin.

Tens of thousands of protesters gathered around the Capitol last weekend to protest Trump, at levels Wisconsin hadn't seen since the 2011 fight over Gov. Scott Walker's Act 10.

Maslin told a WisPolitics.com event at UW-Milwaukee this week that those levels of engagement are "wonderful" but there's "no guarantee" they'll lead to a change in the next election.

Walker, he noted, is "still governor six years later."

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"Marching and actually winning and winning back the country are two different things," Maslin said Tuesday.

Maslin, of FM3 research, was joined on the panel by: WTMJ-TV political reporter and anchor Charles Benson; Dan O'Donnell, a conservative radio host on News-Talk 1130 WISN; and UW-Milwaukee political scientist Kathleen Dolan.

Dolan said Walker and Trump both "played to people's emotions" by telling voters the situation was much darker than it actually was. That, she said, was a sign that voters might dismiss crucial facts.

"It was, in many ways, a sort of miniature run of what we saw in 2016," she said.

O'Donnell, the conservative radio host, also drew a comparison between the two,

though he said Wisconsin's experience showed where Dems went wrong. The protests got in the way of efforts to develop an effective message, he said.

"If you overplay your hand and you're marching in the streets instead of focusing your attention on actual, intelligent messaging, you'll lose in the ballot box," he said. "You're gonna lose in the war of public opinion."

Dems, he added, should have seen a "big red flag" when British voters narrowly approved an exit from the European Union. And while the country is "absolutely" polarized, he said, it's far less so than at other points in U.S. history.

In the coming months, the panelists agreed, Trump is likely to pay close attention to Wisconsin.

Maslin predicted Trump will look to help the state's voters who swung his way because they can "just as easily swing back." That, he said, could mean a "pork-laden" agenda in the states that backed him.

"I don't think he cares one bit about what happens in California," Maslin said.

But Benson said such attention will probably be due to the trio of Wisconsinites with influence in the White House: Walker, chief of staff Reince Priebus and House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville.

Though Ryan and Trump aren't particularly close, Benson said, Priebus will ensure the two of them work together.

And Walker, he noted, has a "direct line to" Vice President Mike Pence, who thinks like Walker and picked him as his sparring partner while practicing for the VP debates.

"They will work together to try to move Scott Walker's agenda forward," Benson said.

[Watch the WisconsinEye recording of the panel](#)