

Scot Ross: Some are serious, but all are certainly fearless: One Wisconsin Now's 2018 predictions

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What's in store for Wisconsin politics in 2018? Who knows.

But that's not going to stop us from making our predictions for the year ahead ... some serious and some not, all fearless.

File under hope springs eternal: Democrats at the federal and state level will discover that talking about an economic agenda that addresses the unique financial challenges faced by post-baby boomer Generation X and Millennial voters will, gasp, engage those voters. Student loan debt cough, cough.

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Paul Ryan gives an encore performance of Hamlet: Before becoming Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan publicly agonized over whether or not to take the job and potentially be called to account for the trickle down economic fantasies he's peddled for decades as a GOP "intellectual." Now that his Ayn Rand dreams are coming true with a massive tax giveaway to the wealthy and corporations and he and his cohorts are more unpopular than ever, we're being treated to a return engagement of Ryan as Hamlet, will he stay or will he go?

GOP leaders won't be exchanging Valentines: 2017 saw a chagrined Assembly Speaker Robin Vos call a trio of state senators terrorists and break up with Scott Walker via an angry text after being on the receiving end of what he felt was a budget agreement double cross. Previously Vos and Senate Republican leader Scott

Fitzgerald spent much of the summer sparring in the media, including a bizarre sequence of dueling press gaggles. Our prediction for 2018? These guys won't be sending each other Valentines.

The rarest of sightings, Scott Walker in the State Capitol doing his job: He ended 2017 with a junket to Florida, still apparently nursing national political ambitions despite 2015's crash and burn 71 day run for prez.

Speaking of Scott Walker on the campaign trail: In 2018 the number of times Scott Walker blames former Gov. Jim Doyle, who has not been on the ballot since 2006, for something he has messed up will exceed the number of years career politician Scott Walker has held office (he has been on the public dime as an elected official since 1993).

U.S. Senate cage match: Leah Vukmir and Kevin Nicholson will dispense with the primary election and instead their respective billionaire backers – Dick Uihlein for Kevin and Diane Hendricks for Vukmir – will battle it out in a televised cage match. Think Aunty Entity in Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome ...“Two billionaires enter, one billionaire will leave.”

Brad Schimel will lose his election in November 2018: This one's pretty clear, no need for more words. Or swag.

SCOWIS, enough is enough: The last two justices joining the court have set the bar awfully low. One penned hateful columns attacking the LGBTQ community, equated birth control with murder and suggested women could be responsible for their own date rape. The other, in his writing, equated affirmative action with slavery.

In 2018 the voters of Wisconsin say enough and that's bad news for Gov. Walker's preferred choice of Michael Sorenson, who was himself arrested for physically blocking women from accessing legal reproductive health care services. What is that line about interpreting the law as written not as you would have it, Judge Sorenson?

Foxconn will result in jobs losses, for the politicians that supported it: The meter keeps running on Gov. Walker's desperate deal with Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn, and the bill is going to come due in 2018 for state politicians that took our money and gave it away.

The total tab for state and local taxpayers now stands at \$4.5 billion, and counting. In real terms that's money that could have gone to support our schools, repair our roads and bridges and to help our Main Street businesses. Instead, it is going to pad the bottom line of a giant multinational corporation.

Bradley intellectuals won't struggle to be heard: The right wing noise machine in Wisconsin has the benefit of a home state, nearly \$900 million funding behemoth, the Bradley Foundation. They have paid columnists who appear on newspaper opinion pages, operatives with their own radio shows and a stable of advocates masquerading as experts ready, willing and able to offer their spin on the coverage of the issues of the day.

Oh, and as a bonus, they're funding the groups and supporting the politicians waging the war against free speech on college campuses, passing legislation and policies that threaten students with expulsion for speaking out and creating climates of fear and intimidation.

Bottom line, they ain't going broke in 2018 and we predict you'll have the opportunity to hear what middle age white men think.

— *Ross is executive director of One Wisconsin Now.*