

Three possible GOP Senate candidates decline to fully discuss Comey firing

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This post is part of our coverage of the 2017 state GOP convention in Wisconsin Dells. See more coverage [here](#).

Three possible U.S. Senate candidates this weekend declined to fully weigh in on President Trump's decision to fire former FBI Director James Comey.

The three — state Sen. Leah Vukmir, state Rep. Dale Kooyenga and Kevin Nicholson, a business consultant and former Marine — attended the state GOP convention this weekend at the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

Nicole Schneider was there on Friday at events that weren't open to reporters; she's the daughter-in-law of the late Donald Schneider, former head of the Green Bay-based trucking company Schneider National.

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Madison businessman Eric Hovde, who ran in the 2012 Senate primary, was planning on going but wasn't able to make it, a source said. Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, wasn't at the convention because he attended his son's graduation at UW-Oshkosh.

Nicholson, who spoke to reporters Saturday, declined to get into details of Comey's firing and said anything that "needs to be investigated will be investigated and will be done well, completely within the bounds of the law."

"Here's the bottom line," he said. "I feel confident the next director for the FBI will be someone qualified and competent and that person will be in place and whatever

investigation that were in place before had will be in place afterward.”

Nicholson [also defended his bona fides as a conservative](#) as he was pressed on details about his 2008 vote in the Dem presidential primary.

Vukmir, meanwhile, said in an interview “there were enough questions” surrounding Comey. But the Brookfield Republican said she’ll wait to comment on whether the firing was appropriate because the public is “not privy to all the” details.

And Kooyenga, R-Brookfield, said in an interview it’s “difficult for me to make a determination” on whether Trump should’ve fired Comey. That’s because, the military intelligence officer said, he knows there’s much more to the story than what’s in the papers.

“On matters of that nature, I think it’s important to reserve judgment because you don’t know all the classified portions of it,” Kooyenga said.

Kooyenga said he’ll make his decision on running sometime after the state budget is signed. Once that happens, he said, he’ll spend time with his family, fellow soldiers and finishing a few books — his reading list includes an Abraham Lincoln biography and the book “Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging” about returning veterans.

Kooyenga pitched himself as a problem-solver, pointing to his work on developing a transportation and tax plan for the Assembly GOP. He said taking on that effort “wasn’t a safe political play but it was the right thing to do.”

Kooyenga said he’s “gotten things done” on the battlefield, in the private sector as an accountant and at the Capitol.

“That’s a good three-for-three, and you can actually go to D.C. and make things happen,” he said.

Vukmir, meanwhile, said she’s had a “steady stream of people asking me to consider” challenging Baldwin but will decide after the state budget is done.

Vukmir’s staff wrote shirts supporting her this weekend, and some attendees also wore “I heart Leah” stickers. Vukmir noted she’ll be running for the Senate “one way or the other,” as she’s up for re-election next year to her state Senate seat.

Baldwin, she said, has “aligned herself completely with the far left of the party” by joining Senate Dem leadership with U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer and Elizabeth Warren. Baldwin also “looked the other way” on reports of substandard care at the Tomah VA, Vukmir said.

“Tammy Baldwin is vulnerable but she will be formidable, and it’s going to require somebody who’s not going to be afraid to take her on and take her on the important issues,” she said.