

# Dallet, Screnock meet in final debate, exchanging charges of 'activist,' 'rubber stamp'

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Michael Screnock on Friday sought to portray Supreme Court rival Rebecca Dallet as a liberal activist who would seek to rely on her political views rather than the law as a justice.

But Dallet, a Milwaukee County judge, countered Screnock would be a rubber stamp for the groups backing him, including the state's largest business group Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, the National Rifle Association and Wisconsin Right to Life, among others.

Dallet cited reports WMC is spending \$1.35 million on TV ads backing Screnock, a Sauk County judge, as well as the \$400,000 the state Republican Party plans to spend on her rival's behalf.

"People don't just give money away," Dallet said. "They have an expectation. The voters all understand that. The viewers understand."

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Screnock countered when Dallet has talked about fighting for "values," she is really talking about allowing her political views to influence her as a judge.

"When you have promised to work for policy change from the bench, to me that is the ultimate expression of an intention to be an activist judge," Screnock said.

The two met Friday in a debate hosted by Wisconsin Public TV and Public Radio. It was their final meeting ahead of Tuesday's election, which will decide who succeeds conservative Justice Michael Gableman after he decided not to seek re-election.

The debate included a more than six-minute unmoderated segment that Screnock opened by pressing Dallet for any evidence from his time as a judge to suggest he would be an activist.

Dallet countered she's seen Screnock take positions during the campaign and evidence in his life that suggest he would be a rubber stamp for conservative causes. That includes his arrests in 1989 for blocking access to a Madison abortion clinic. Dallet added Screnock has said during the campaign he doesn't regret his actions.

"It's very hard to see how you wouldn't follow the money and follow your extremist views in making decisions," Dallet said.

In addition to pushing Dallet for evidence he's been an activist in court, Screnock noted his local district attorney found Dallet's claims to be "amusing" and were "born of ignorance."

"You know that I think you will be an activist judge," Dallet said.

She fired back, "I understand you believe anyone who doesn't share your views will be activist judge."

Srenock insisted that was not true.

Meanwhile, Screnock also hit Dallet on "San Francisco values" following her appearance at a recent California fundraiser, as he drew a contrast between himself as "Wisconsin through and through" compared to his opponent.

The state GOP has honed in on that point in recent days, launching an ad campaign centered around Dallet's remarks at the event and sending a "San Francisco-style trolley" to circle the Capitol Friday afternoon. The ad campaign, which includes a radio ad, digital spot, mail and billboards, is airing to back Screnock as the campaign comes to a close.

"While I have been traveling the state since (the fundraiser), people have come up to me and said 'San Francisco values are not my values,'" he said.

But Dallet later countered that Screnock "doesn't understand the value of fair and independent courts, a value that is shared not just here in Wisconsin but across the nation."

“It’s time we bring back Wisconsin values of independence and fairness,” she said.

Screnock also declined to weigh in on whether WMC should pull a TV ad knocking Dallet over the sentence she gave a man who sexually assaulted his granddaughters. He noted the victim’s family had already asked WMC to take the ad off the air and the group refused, saying the spot “repeats publicly available information.”

The WMC ad shows a young girl on a swing as the narrator says three-time felon Donald Skenandore was arrested for assaulting his granddaughters, “a nightmare that lasted six years.” The ad includes Skenandore’s mugshot.

“They’ve chosen not to, and that is their choice,” Screnock said of WMC, adding that as a judge, he doesn’t “tell people what to do outside of the courtroom” or weigh in on issues.

But Dallet later in the debate slammed Screnock for failing to “express any kind of concern” or empathy with the victims and their family.

“It makes me think that he just doesn’t understand morally or just doesn’t have the experience to understand the impact of all of that,” she said.