

# McCabe says Dem field following his lead on key issues

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Dem gov candidate Mike McCabe says his seven competitors have been playing catch-up on key issues by throwing their support behind his ideas.

“The thing is, when I take a step out, they chase me,” the activist said at a July 26 WisPolitics.com luncheon in Madison.

Back in fall of 2017, McCabe says he and the other candidates were asked at a forum in Milwaukee if they would take the federal Medicaid expansion money. They all said yes, but McCabe took it a step further.

“I was the first candidate to come out for BadgerCare for all, for making BadgerCare a public option that anybody could enroll in regardless of income,” he said. “And now I think the whole field has climbed on board that train.”

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He says he was also the first candidate in the field to come out for full legalization of marijuana, emphasizing the role its illegal status has played in landing many nonviolent offenders behind bars.

“We gotta stop locking up nonviolent offenders in this state, or we’re going to continue to be doomed with a state budget that spends more on prisons than the whole university system,” he said.

Though other candidates have been following his lead on some of these issues, they haven’t been as keen on pushing for what he says is “what this campaign is really about — challenging and seeking to overcome money power with people power.”

McCabe, the former head of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, isn't accepting a single donation over \$200. Although supporters can donate more than once, each is limited to \$1,000 in total. State law caps that number at \$20,000. He says he made that commitment, because "I thought it was important for me to practice what I've preached all these years."

During the first half of the year, McCabe's fundraising lagged behind most of the other candidates, only surpassing Madison Mayor Paul Soglin, State Sen. Kathleen Vinehout and Kenosha Attorney Josh Pade.

Meanwhile, the most recent Marquette University Law School poll had state schools Superintendent Tony Evers at the head of the Dem gov pack with 31 percent. None of the other candidates had above 6 percent support; McCabe got 3 percent.

Despite weak fundraising numbers and poor polling performance, McCabe says, "I like my chances."

"I don't have the big money on my side, but when it comes to people power, when it comes to grassroots organization, ours is the richest campaign in this race by a long shot," he said. "I hear some of the other candidates in the race ... They say they've got dozens of volunteers working in the state. We've now got more than 2,800 volunteers."

McCabe touched on many issues at the luncheon: boosting wages for low-wage workers, securing debt-free college for Wisconsin students, changing the corrections system and more. His plan to fund these changes boils down to: "If a program works, you keep it and fund it. And if a program doesn't work, you get rid of it."

He says the state could save nearly \$900 million over a two-year budget cycle by cutting the voucher program for taxpayer-subsidized private schooling, and the entire Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation — both of which he argues don't accomplish what they were meant to.

"Don't throw good money after bad; don't flush more money down the toilet," he said. "Use that money for a more constructive purpose."

On top of that \$900 million, he says the state could bring in several hundred million more dollars on an annual basis by having the highest earners pay "a comparable

percentage” to what the rest of the population pays in taxes.

And if the state legalizes marijuana, he says Wisconsin could tax the legal sales at licensed dispensaries and bring in about \$200 million annually.

And McCabe says he’s comfortable with re-establishing inflationary adjustments to the gas tax, and is open to “a modest fee” on heavy trucks, since he says they do the most damage to roads.

“I think we’ve gotta re-prioritize spending to emphasize maintenance and upkeep,” he said. “These are important investments. We have to pay for them, and we have to be up front about how we do it.”

See more on the race, including luncheon interviews with other Dem gov candidates:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2018-governors-race/>