

# Pocan campaign: Pocan calls on broadcasters to open debates to all gubernatorial candidates

Posted on Tuesday, Jun 5, 2018

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MADISON, WI – Today, U.S. Representative Mark Pocan (WI-02) sent a letter to the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association (WBA), after the organization announced that it would limit the number of candidates in the Democratic gubernatorial primary debate scheduled for July 27, 2018. Pocan called on the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association to reverse course and allow all ten candidates on stage, citing the closeness of the race and interest among Wisconsin voters.

The full letter follows:

President Vetterkind  
President and CEO  
Wisconsin Broadcasters Association  
44 E. Mifflin Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53203

Dear President Vetterkind:

Following reports that the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association (WBA) plans to limit participation in the July 27 Democratic gubernatorial primary debate to four candidates, I strongly urge you to reconsider and allow all ten of the candidates on stage. Currently, all of the candidates are within just points of each other in both polling and fundraising. By hand-selecting just four candidates to join the debate,

the WBA is unjustifiably restricting the field for voters and giving an edge to the candidates it chooses.

With ten Democratic candidates for governor, each one of them will rise and fall in the polls at various points over the next ten weeks. To use an arbitrary date and fundraising level for selection is wrong, especially within three weeks of the primary date when a debate performance could significantly impact the state of the race. As Charles Franklin, Director of the Marquette Law School Poll recently said, "All polls have a margin of error, making small percentage differences between candidates in a crowded field especially uncertain. We think the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association should not use our poll in this way."

While I understand that the WBA's proposed format would include each candidate delivering ten minutes of opening remarks, this aspect of the debate is unnecessary and could be eliminated. With the additional time generated by eliminating opening remarks, all ten candidates would have the opportunity to debate a number of issues critical to Wisconsin voters. As we saw with the 2016 Republican presidential primary debates, it is possible to have debates with ten candidates and successfully give each of them the opportunity to present their vision and platform to voters.

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association plays a critical role in our elections and reversing this decision is essential to maintaining free and open discourse in our electoral process. Restricting debate only serves to damage the fairness of our elections and for both the candidates and voters. For these reasons I hope that you will reconsider.

Thank you,

Rep. Mark Pocan (WI-02)