

Grothman campaign: ICYMI: Kohl's first message to Wisconsin is untruthful

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Contact: Timothy Svoboda, (920) 375-1217 or Tim@glenngrothman.com

Washington, D.C. lobbyist turned Congressional candidate, Dan Kohl, released his first television advertisements last week where he claims he is not a politician. This statement was fact-checked by the non-partisan fact-checking organization, Politifact.

Key Takeaway 1: Kohl launched a flight of television ads throughout Wisconsin based on a statement that, according to Politifact, is not truthful.

Key Takeaway 2: The only reason Kohl is not currently an elected official is because he lost his bid for state assembly in 2008. After his third place finish, he decided to move to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress.

Key Takeaway 3: Someone can be a politician, even if they haven't been elected.

Read the story below:

Why Herb Kohl nephew Dan Kohl, opponent of Glenn Grothman, straddles line on being a 'politician'

When Randy Bryce — who is running for the U.S. House seat being vacated by Paul

Ryan — declared he is not a politician, our rating was Mostly False.

“IronStache,” as he is known, is making his fourth run for public office in six years — arguably, enough to make him a perennial candidate. And he’s taken leave from his job as an ironworker, collecting more than \$6 million in campaign contributions along the way.

But what about another Democrat running for the House — wealthy Dan Kohl, the nephew of multimillionaire and former 24-year U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl? He is seeking the east-central Wisconsin seat held by Republican Glenn Grothman.

In not one, not two, but three TV ads released Sept. 4, 2018, Dan Kohl declares: “I’m not a politician.”

The National Republican Congressional Committee actually said in ripping one of the ads that Kohl is correct in saying he’s not a politician. But the group, which works to elect Republicans to the House, also cited to us evidence that he is a politician.

So, let’s take a look.

No clear definition

As we noted in our Bryce fact check, dictionaries aren’t much help, given how widely the definitions of politician vary:

Merriam-Webster

Experienced in the art or science of government; especially one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government.

Dictionary.com

Active in party politics.

Safire’s Political Dictionary

Engages in a career either in government or in a political party on a full-time, usually professional basis.

Vocabulary.com

Campaigns for or holds a position in government.

But the more, and more deeply, involved you become in politics, the closer you are to being a politician.

Kohl's resume

Kohl has never held office, and has run only once before. So, that differentiates him from Bryce.

But Kohl has been involved in politics, in a more behind-the-scenes way.

Here's more detail on Kohl's professional life after he earned a law degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1992, based on information from his campaign website; the business networking site LinkedIn; Vote Smart, a website that backgrounds candidates and elected officials; and news accounts:

1992-2006

Works for the Milwaukee Bucks, a National Basketball Association franchise then owned by Herb Kohl. Dan worked in a variety of positions, ultimately serving as assistant general manager.

2008

Defeated in the Democratic primary in a run for a suburban Milwaukee seat in the Wisconsin Assembly. At the time, he was director of new schools development in Wisconsin for the Washington, D.C.-based SEED Foundation, which develops boarding schools for at-risk students.

2009-2012

Vice president of political affairs and political director of J Street, a liberal pro-Israel advocacy group. According to Kohl's campaign website, he "oversaw the development of the nation's largest pro-Israel political action committee." J Street described Kohl as a veteran political activist and fundraiser "with close ties to the senior leadership of the Democratic party." He served as a "bundler" of contributions for the presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

2013-2017

Senior adviser and lobbyist at BakerHostetler, a large law and lobbying firm in Washington, D.C.

2017

Settles in Mequon, an upscale suburb of Milwaukee, in May, announces his campaign for Grothman's seat in June.

Our rating

Kohl says: "I'm not a politician."

In a strict sense, he's not, given that he's never held public office and this is only his second run in the past 10 years.

But Kohl also spent a total of eight years as a Washington, D.C., lobbyist and senior member of a Washington-based advocacy group, in addition to being a major fundraiser for presidential candidates.

We rate his statement Half True.