

Vukmir campaign: ICYMI: A Republican underdog fights for a Senate seat in Wisconsin

Posted on Monday, Aug 27, 2018

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Alexandra DeSanctis from National Review wrote Monday about how nurse and mom-with-a-cause Leah Vukmir beat expectations with her primary win in August, and how Republicans shouldn't count her out for November.

Read the story below:

A Republican Underdog Fights for a Senate Seat in Wisconsin
National Review
August 27, 2018
Wauwatosa, Wisc. —Don't count Leah Vukmir out yet.

While many political observers have written off the U.S. Senate race in Wisconsin as unwinnable for the GOP, Vukmir, a Republican state senator, has already pulled off a big victory in a tight primary earlier this month — and she intends to give incumbent Democrat Tammy Baldwin a real challenge between now and November.

Vukmir, a Wisconsin state senator since 2010, has already weathered one of the toughest Republican primaries this cycle, defeating Marine Corps veteran Kevin Nicholson for the GOP nod last Tuesday.

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The way Vukmir tells it, she never intended to become involved in politics, much less to mount an underdog challenge to an incumbent Senate Democrat. Vukmir made a name for herself about ten years ago in the state legislature, ringleading an effort to bolster Wisconsin's school-choice program, which had reached the enrollment limit set by the legislature and required an expansion to continue flourishing.

It was because of education, Vukmir says, that she became interested in local government in the first place. In the early 2000s, when Vukmir was still working full time as a pediatric nurse, her young daughter Elena brought home a school assignment on which she had made spelling errors that went uncorrected by the teacher. When Vukmir visited the school to inquire further, she says she was told that schoolwork wouldn't be corrected until the second or third grade "in the interest of not stifling student creativity."

Frustrated, Vukmir took her complaints to the local school board, and when she began to believe there were extensive problems with Wisconsin's public-school system, she co-founded a school-reform group called Parents Raising Educational Standards in Schools (PRESS). It was as a result of her activism with PRESS that she started making the political connections that led to her running for Governor Scott Walker's old assembly seat more than 15 years ago.

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The latest poll of the race, the first since last week's primary, shows Baldwin leading Vukmir by only two points, 49 percent to 47. That's a marked improvement from a late-July Emerson poll that gave Baldwin a 14-point lead. The UVA Center for Politics currently rates the race as "likely Democratic," while Roll Call puts it at "leans Democratic."