

Vukmir wins GOP Senate race; Baldwin knocks her as 'bought-and-paid-for'

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The Associated Press is projecting Leah Vukmir will win the GOP nomination to face U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin this fall.

With more than half of the vote in, Vukmir had 54.5 percent of the vote to 39.5 percent for business consultant and former Marine Kevin Nicholson.

Vukmir pulled out the win even though Nicholson and his allies outspent her on TV by better than 3-to-1. But Vukmir won the state GOP's endorsement at the May convention, giving her an infrastructure to turn out votes, and she regularly questioned Nicholson's conservative credentials after he was president of the College Dems 18 years ago.

Vukmir said her win shows "there's no substitute for the grassroots" and promised to help President Trump "make America great again." She also called Baldwin a "disaster" for Wisconsin for supporting "extremist socialists like Bernie Sanders" and "failing our veterans" at the VA Hospital in Tomah.

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"Wisconsin needs a senator who represents and will work for the people who make our state great — not the far left or out-of-touch elites," Vukmir said.

Nicholson and Vukmir had a contentious primary. But in his concession speech, Nicholson said it was "an easy answer" when asked if he would support Vukmir in the fall, calling her a better option to fix the country's problems than Baldwin.

"That's why we'll be there to work for her," he said.

Nicholson won the backing of Illinois businessman Dick Uihlein, who pumped millions into groups supporting him, while Vukmir was backed by Beloit billionaire Diane Hendricks.

Baldwin seized on that support to say Wisconsinites want a senator who will stand up to special interests, not one “bought-and-paid-for.”

“Leah Vukmir has a long record of putting her corporate special interest backers ahead of hardworking Wisconsin families, making the choice clear this November,” Baldwin said.

Wisconsin’s U.S. Senate race has not been among the top ones to watch, according to most national rankings, even though it has been one of the most expensive in the country thanks to the primary spending.

But even before the AP called the race for Vukmir, the liberal American Bridge put out a [digital ad](#) using Nicholson’s attacks on Vukmir as a “career politician” to go after the state senator.