

WisDems: Nasty GOP Senate primary tests Republican Party of Wisconsin's influence

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Can Gov. Walker's political machine help Leah Vukmir overcome the millions that Illinois billionaire Dick Uihlein is pouring into Wisconsin to buy Kevin Nicholson a U.S. Senate seat?

MADISON — In case you missed it, [Wisconsin's increasingly divisive Republican U.S. Senate primary is testing the Republican Party of Wisconsin's political influence and might](#), as the party throws its political clout and financial resources behind ultraconservative state Sen. Leah Vukmir.

After endorsing Leah Vukmir at its state convention last month, the state party is “putting teeth behind its endorsement” of Vukmir, including by running radio ads for Vukmir and “giv[ing] the Vukmir campaign access to crucial party infrastructure that helps put her in a position for success in the August primary and into the fall election.”

In sum: Gov. Scott Walker's political machine is going all in for Leah Vukmir and accelerating into a head-on collision with [Illinois billionaire Dick Uihlein, who is pouring millions into Wisconsin](#) to buy Kevin Nicholson a U.S. Senate seat.

Via [the Wisconsin State Journal](#):

The Republican Party of Wisconsin is putting its organizational muscle behind its chosen candidate for U.S. Senate, Leah Vukmir, even as her well-funded GOP opponent, Kevin Nicholson, vows to prevail in the Aug. 14 primary.

History suggests Nicholson, a Delafield management consultant and political newcomer, has a tough challenge to oust the party favorite in Vukmir.

But the endorsement puts the state GOP on the hook in a hard-fought Republican primary. If Nicholson prevails with the help of deep-pocketed outside groups, it could raise questions about the value of the party's endorsement — and its role in future primaries.

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Nearly three-fourths of Wisconsin GOP delegates endorsed Vukmir, a Brookfield state senator, over Nicholson at the state party convention last month in Milwaukee.

Since then the party has begun to air ads for Vukmir. It also is giving her lists of potential donors and assisting with voter targeting and turnout.

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Former state Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen, who said he isn't formally supporting either candidate in the primary, acknowledged the primary will be, in some ways, a test of the endorsement's worth.

"It'll just make the endorsement less valuable if it doesn't help decide the outcome," Jensen said.

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The party says it's putting teeth behind its endorsement. Republican Party of Wisconsin spokesman Alec Zimmerman said it "gives the Vukmir campaign access to crucial party infrastructure that helps put her in a position for success in the August primary and into the fall election."

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Democratic Party of Wisconsin spokesman Brad Bainum said "it's no surprise that the Republican Party of Wisconsin is all in for their endorsed

candidate, Leah Vukmir.”

“Now it’s time to see if Scott Walker’s political machine can overcome the millions that Illinois billionaire Dick Uihlein is pouring into Wisconsin to buy Kevin Nicholson a U.S. Senate seat.”

Read more [from the Wisconsin State Journal](#).