

Bowen, Wikler lay out visions for party ahead of Sunday chair vote

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Rep. David Bowen touted his work over the past four years as the party's vice chair as he made a pitch to activists to elevate him to the chair's office in Sunday's race.

Meanwhile, former MoveOn.org senior adviser Ben Wikler told Dems his work to fight against the repeal of the Affordable Care Act would serve as a model for how he would lead the party in seeking to beat Donald Trump in Wisconsin next year, win a state Supreme Court seat and take back the Legislature.

The two laid out their visions for activists on the eve of the Sunday election, when delegates will have a four-hour window to vote on who will succeed Martha Laning, who has led the party since 2015.

Wikler told activists while at MoveOn.org he was tasked with developing a strategy to defend Obamacare. He said considering then-House Speaker Paul Ryan had tried repeatedly to repeal the law and Trump had promised to do it on day one, "It looked hopeless. The only thing standing in the way was you."

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He then recalled the celebration as several GOP senators joined Dems in voting against the repeal.

"That became rocket fuel for the 2018 campaigns," Wikler said, adding it led to Tony Evers "ending the Walker dark ages."

Bowen recounted Dems' successes in 2018 as they swept statewide races before asking how less than six months later they failed to win a Supreme Court seat as conservative Brian Hagedorn took an open seat on the bench.

He said Dems fail when they don't work to expand the electorate and focus largely on Madison and Milwaukee to win statewide races without doing the work in other areas. He also was critical of "parachuting organizers" into communities in which they don't live.

Bowen also promised to expand the party's digital strategy, though he was mic was cut off as he hit the six-minute limit for the chair candidate speeches.

"I step up today after being in the front passenger seat of the last four years to say, 'Hey, Chair Laning did an amazing job. I think I know how to drive,'" Bowen said.