

GOP's Stalker says he wants to offer alternative message in heavily Dem 64th AD

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Republican Mark Stalker says he's running for the heavily Dem 64th AD in the Kenosha area to give voters "another message" and add some ideological diversity to the special election ticket.

The 62-year-old former school board member noted in a recent interview with WisPolitics.com that former Dem Rep. Peter Barca had largely been unopposed in his recent re-election bids for the seat — save for the 2018 general, when Constitution Party candidate Thomas Harland challenged the Kenosha Dem.

Stalker said at the time he'd told his wife, Kim, he'd run for the seat during the next race so it wouldn't go uncontested.

"It worked out," he said. "(It) came up a little quicker than I expected, to be honest. I did want a Republican on the ticket, and that's the main reason I run, and I think it's just because I want people to have another message."

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Stalker will face off against Dem Thaddeus "Tip" McGuire, an assistant DA for Milwaukee County who lives in Kenosha, in the race to replace Barca on Tuesday. Barca left the seat vacant after joining the Evers administration to become Revenue secretary.

McGuire, a former Barca aide, won a three-way Dem primary for the seat earlier this month.

Among Stalker's top issues are worker retraining efforts, education and health care.

Stalker, who spent several decades in the paint business in various sales positions — including time at True Value Company and PPG Industries — first came to Kenosha in the 1980s to take over as head baseball coach at Carthage.

Stalker said would have supported two of the major bills the Assembly took up on the floor so far this year: the GOP version of a middle-class tax cut plan, which has been voted by Gov. Tony Evers, and legislation to guarantee the coverage of pre-existing conditions, which has yet to be taken up by the Senate after receiving bipartisan support in January.

On road funding, Stalker said his priority is finding efficiencies within the Department of Transportation, adding he's "not positive the money they're taking in is being used properly."

"I want to get there and get elected and then I'll review it," he said.

He also repeatedly referenced a critical audit of DOT from two years ago that showed the department didn't do all it could to manage expenses and underestimated cost estimates for a series of major highway projects.

After addressing that side of things, Stalker said he'd be "open to looking at new ideas," though he ruled out tolling completely.

Though he didn't comment on Evers' budget proposal to raise the gas tax by 8 cents a gallon, he said: "It really disturbs me that we take just about 52 cents out of every gallon for federal and state gas tax and we're not able to address the roads."

Hear the interview:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/MarkStalkerInterview.mp3>