

# Johnson wants to bring corporate structure to state GOP

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U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson pitched his vision for the state GOP going forward, telling activists Saturday he wanted to bring a corporate structure to the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

That entails, he said, viewing the state GOP as the corporate headquarters and the county parties as 72 divisions or franchises. Headquarters would drive policy, direct communications and offer best practices. The county parties then would carry out that mission into their communities — and be held accountable for doing so.

“There’s an expectation of excellence involved in that,” Johnson said. “That’s what we’re trying to do.”

Johnson stressed it was his vision for the party as he presented it alongside Republican National Committeeman Tom Schreiber as part of a lookahead following the postmortem the party conducted following its losses in the 2018 elections.

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That report concluded the party had become too reliant on ads and consultants while not investing enough in its grassroots. It also found the party essentially outsourced its management to Gov. Scott Walker’s campaign.

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, told the convention he wasn’t looking to point fingers. He also said he wasn’t worried about the party’s finances and it wouldn’t be that difficult to implement more stringent fiscal controls.

He focused more on the party’s structure, saying he wanted to open and staff permanent regional or district offices that would work with local activists.

His recommendations, presented to the convention hall via PowerPoint, included:

- \*maintaining a presence in every community and demographic.
- \*identifying and recruiting GOP candidates for races up and down the ballot, saying he was disappointed at the number of legislative Dems who were unopposed last fall and has challenged Republican leaders to address that.
- \*providing more training for county leadership, volunteers and candidates.
- \*developing more effective campaigning practices.
- \*improving voter files and effectively disseminate the data.
- \*improving information sharing.

During the presentation, Johnson told the crowd he received more votes in 2016 than any other GOP candidate in Wisconsin history. As the crowd started to clap, he cut it off, noting that wasn't an applause line because Barack Obama in 2008 received 180,000 more votes than Johnson's mark three years ago, when he outran Donald Trump at the top of the ticket.

"If we're going to win when they're energized, we're going to have to run almost perfect campaigns," Johnson said.