

Murphy, Neubauer debate campus free speech bill on 'UpFront'

Posted on Monday, Oct 21, 2019

State Rep. Dave Murphy, R-Greenville, said a campus free speech bill is "imperative," while Rep. Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, said the bill would actually "undermine" free speech in Wisconsin.

The two appeared Sunday on "UpFront," produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

The bill would establish penalties for UW students who repeatedly disrupt speakers on campus. Suspension and expulsion could result.

"I've spoken to a lot of college students," said Murphy, Assembly co-sponsor of the free speech bill, which was reintroduced in August.

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"Conservative students are telling me that they feel that their ideas and their thoughts are being oppressed. They feel like they are really a minority on campus, and they feel like they need some protections like other minorities might have," Murphy said.

Neubauer said the bill is potentially unconstitutional.

"Chancellors right now have the ability to determine appropriate action if they feel someone's free speech has been violated. We do not need to mandate that, and we do not need the Legislature pushing that idea. We should allow chancellors to maintain their discretion," she said.

The Board of Regents is working on a similar speech rule, but a spokeswoman for Gov. Tony Evers said he opposes the plan and would kill it. Murphy said that is why

a bill is needed.

“It is imperative to put it in state statutes so that it has that strength of law behind it,” he said.

“We have not seen the public show up in support of this bill,” Neubauer said.

Also on the program, the Democratic candidate in the 5th Congressional District, Tom Palzewicz, said the demographics of the traditionally Republican district are changing. He said there is an opportunity for a Democrat to win there next fall.

The district will have an open seat in 2020 with the retirement of GOP Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, who has held it for 40 years. State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald currently is the only announced GOP candidate in the district.

Palzewicz, who ran against Sensenbrenner in 2018, said he did better in that race than previous Democratic candidates have done in the 5th CD.

“We moved the needle substantially,” Palzewicz said. “We took a 40-point district and turned it into 24-point district, and that was with very little name recognition.”

He said more Democrats are moving into the district. “We have a really good opportunity this time,” he added.

Palzewicz also said he would support the impeachment inquiry if he were in Congress right now.

“If we don’t investigate, this gives an open door to the next president, whoever it’s going to be, to be able to do the things that we think don’t think are right in this country,” he said.

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