

WisGOP: Liberals see April election as opportunity for court takeover

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A Neubauer Win Puts Liberals One Step Closer To Overturning Conservative Reforms

[Madison, WI] – Wisconsin liberals consider the upcoming April election as critical to a complete takeover of the state's Supreme Court. A victory by liberal-backed Judge Lisa Neubauer in April would put the future of the court and years of conservative reforms that have reshaped Wisconsin at risk.

Read the full write-up here or find excerpts below.

Liberals eye 2020 takeover of Wisconsin Supreme Court
Associated Press
Scott Bauer
February 10, 2019

Wisconsin liberals hope to take a key step this spring toward breaking a long conservative stranglehold on the state's Supreme Court, in an election that could also serve as a barometer of the political mood in a key presidential swing state.

If the liberal-backed candidate wins the April 2 state Supreme Court race, liberals would be in prime position to take over the court when the next seat comes up in 2020 — during a presidential primary when Democrats expect to benefit from strong turnout.

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If liberals can win in April and again in 2020, they would have the majority until at least 2025.

“It is absolutely critical we win this race,” liberal attorney Tim Burns, who lost a Wisconsin Supreme Court race in 2018, said of the April election. “It does set us up for next year to get a court that’s likely to look very differently on issues of the day like voters’ rights and gerrymandering.”

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A group run by former Democratic U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder that fights gerrymandered maps spent money supporting the winning liberal candidate in last year’s Wisconsin Supreme Court race. It was expected to do so again this spring ahead of the next round of redistricting.

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Given that Wisconsin now has a Democratic governor and Republican-dominated Legislature, the courts will increasingly serve as the battleground where disputes will be resolved, said Douglas Keith, counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice, which tracks spending in judicial races.

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This year’s race, which is officially nonpartisan, pits liberal-backed chief state Appeals Court Judge Lisa Neubauer against fellow Appeals Court Judge Brian Hagedorn, the choice of conservatives.

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Liberals are confident the electorate is on their side. Liberal-backed Rebecca Dallet won a spot on the high court last year in a race where she ran a television ad critical of President Donald Trump.

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Democrats are even more confident about 2020, when conservative Justice Dan Kelly will be up for re-election. That race takes place during a presidential primary that should have heavy turnout by Democrats — but not by Republicans, with Trump at this stage unlikely to face a serious primary challenge.

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Neubauer, 61, was appointed to the appeals court in 2007 by former Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle. She previously donated \$8,100 to Doyle.

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Neubauer's campaign is full of Democratic operatives, including Scott Spector, who managed Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin's re-election victory last year. Hagedorn's campaign is run by Stephan Thompson, a former Walker campaign manager.

Neubauer's husband, Jeff, was a former Democratic legislator and past chairman of the Wisconsin Democratic Party while her daughter, Greta Neubauer, is currently a state representative from Racine.