

Agard, Stroebel debate GOP election bills on 'UpFront'

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A Republican senator sponsoring legislation to change state election laws says he's trying to preserve integrity in elections, while a Dem lawmaker calls it an attempt at voter suppression.

Sen. Duey Stroebel, R-Cedarburg, and Sen. Melissa Agard, D-Madison, appeared jointly yesterday on "UpFront," produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Stroebel has proposed a series of bills he says are needed after the November election. His bills include measures that would: requiring absentee voters to submit identification for every election, instead of having an ID on file; requiring absentee voters to fill out a separate application in the clerk's office; requiring voters under age 65, who say they are indefinitely confined, to provide proof from a medical professional; and prohibiting cities from accepting private donations to help them run their elections.

"We've gotten thousands of calls concerned with the integrity of our elections. There are things that we need to be doing here, and instead of just saying 'nothing to see here,' there is something to see here," Stroebel said.

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"Our elections in Wisconsin are fair, free and secure and they have been for quite some time," Agard countered. "These bills are built out of fear and rhetoric. If what we want to do is to ensure that people do believe in the security of our elections, we need to stop spinning the stories that are coming forward by our previous president and his administration."

Stroebel denied that his bills will make it harder to vote in Wisconsin.

“When you go to, default to voter suppression and restrict the vote, that’s just avoiding the discussion,” he said. “It’s really a cop-out.”

Agard said if Republicans were really concerned with election integrity, they should give municipal clerks “more resources.”

“We don’t need to make it harder for them,” Agard said.

Also on the program, Dem U.S. Senate candidate Tom Nelson, a former state lawmaker who is now the Outagamie County executive, pledged to run a 72-county campaign in his effort to defeat Republican incumbent Sen. Ron Johnson.

On Twitter, Nelson recently accused Johnson of “inciting an insurrection and being a traitor.” Nelson has put up a billboard labeling Johnson “Treason Johnson” and calling on him to resign.

“We’re not going to hold back,” Nelson told “UpFront.”

“We are going to make it very, very clear that this type of behavior from someone like Ron Johnson is completely unacceptable,” Nelson said. “These are things that voters need to know and things that will weigh heavily in people’s minds when they do go to vote next year.”

In another segment, Dr. John Raymond, president and CEO of the Medical College of Wisconsin, called the new Johnson & Johnson vaccine for COVID-19 a “game changer.”

Raymond said the next challenge for health professionals is boosting public confidence in all the COVID-19 vaccines so that more people will get them.

“We didn’t cut any corners on safety, and now that the vaccines have been administered to many millions of people, I think 83 million doses in the U.S. and 28 million people have completed their course, the safety profiles of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are spectacular. So we really need to work on instilling confidence in people,” Raymond said.

See more from the program:
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