

Cooke campaign: Announces campaign for Congress in Wisconsin's Third District

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 13, 2021

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Small business owner, nonprofit advocate, and economic development leader driven to serve as voice for forgotten rural communities she's proud to call home

EAU CLAIRE — Small business owner and nonprofit leader Rebecca Cooke kicked off her campaign for Congress today in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District. Born and raised on an Eau Claire dairy farm and appointed by Governor Tony Evers to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Rebecca understands the economic and social challenges facing the small towns and rural communities for which she's fiercely advocated throughout her career, and if successful, she will make history as WI-03's first Congresswoman.

"Growing up, it was a struggle to make ends meet like it is for so many Wisconsin farm families, but we always showed up for neighbors in need," Rebecca said Wednesday. "Those core values of serving others and building community have guided my life, from my own family's kitchen table to the board room. That drive to bring people together is why I started a small business and founded a nonprofit focused on empowering entrepreneurs right here in western Wisconsin."

"Our rural communities face unique challenges, and it's clear that Washington isn't working for us. I'm running for Congress to better serve communities across Wisconsin, provide more opportunities for success, and be a relentless fighter for our way of life," Rebecca said.

Coming from a long tradition of western Wisconsin farmers that valued hard work, Rebecca was working on the farm at an early age and training calves to show at the fair by the time she was seven years old. She was active in 4-H, showing cattle at fairs throughout the state, started waiting tables in high school, and launched a successful jelly business with her classmates at 16 years old.

Rebecca worked her way through college with the help of Pell Grants, local scholarships, financial aid, and multiple jobs. After helping elect leaders to public office, she came home to Eau Claire and used her savings to open a small retail business – Red’s Mercantile – that sources goods from independent makers locally and throughout the country. Looking to help other local entrepreneurs she founded the Red Letter Grant in 2016, a nonprofit that supports and empowers female entrepreneurs by providing start-up capital, technical assistance and authentic networking opportunities throughout a ten county region of western Wisconsin. In its first five years, the organization has helped launch 23 women-owned businesses.

Governor Tony Evers took notice of Rebecca’s business leadership and activism in the entrepreneurship ecosystem by making her the youngest appointee to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, where she is a vocal member of the board and co-chair of the newly formed Entrepreneurship & Innovation committee.

“We face big challenges as a country, and we need to urgently address the cost of healthcare, create good-paying jobs and opportunity, ensure equal access to education and broadband, make smart infrastructure investments, and protect the dignity and hard work of all Wisconsinites,” Rebecca continued. “Our rural communities are tired of Washington turning its back on us, and I’m ready to get to work because we need representation with the lived experience and drive to get results for our region.”

Currently represented by Congressman Ron Kind, western Wisconsin’s Third District is one of the most competitive seats in the country and is expected to remain as such following redistricting.

On Saturday, October 16, Cooke for Wisconsin will host a campaign kick-off event in Eau Claire (media advisory with additional information to come). Follow the campaign online: CookeForWisconsin.com, Facebook ([/CookeForCongress](https://www.facebook.com/CookeForCongress)), Twitter ([@RebeccaForWI](https://twitter.com/RebeccaForWI)), and Instagram ([@CookeForCongress](https://www.instagram.com/CookeForCongress)).