

# Barnes campaign: Ilyse Hogue: Elect Mandela Barnes to save Roe

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Today, former NARAL President Ilyse Hogue penned an op-ed calling on Wisconsin to protect *Roe v. Wade* by supporting Lt. Governor Barnes, the best candidate to unseat Ron Johnson in November.

- *“I’ve been helping elect candidates for two decades, so let me be clear: we have one shot to flip this seat in November, and Mandela Barnes — Wisconsin’s first Black Lt. Governor — is the best candidate in the Democratic primary for the task.”*
- *“Some candidates in crowded primaries in other states have decided to put the future of our country over their own political ambitions and coalesce around an undeniable frontrunner. It’s time for Mandela’s primary opponents to do the same.”*
- *“I’m supporting Mandela Barnes because he has proven he will fight to protect Roe and stand up for the people of Wisconsin.”*

**Heartland Signal: OP-ED: [We must beat Ron Johnson to protect Roe. Mandela Barnes is the best candidate to do it.](#)**

[By: Ilyse Hogue, 5/12/22]

With *Roe v. Wade* in peril and the Court eyeing other rights as well, Democrats must expand their majority if we have any hope of protecting abortion access and other

hard fought gains for millions of Americans. Wisconsin is the party's best opportunity to do that — but it's also the only competitive state where Republicans are outraising Democrats. We must learn from the mistakes of past cycles and pour our resources into the most competitive races. This year, that means uniting around Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes, the frontrunner in the Democratic primary, to give him the resources he will need to beat Johnson in the general election.

I've been helping elect candidates for two decades, so let me be clear: we have one shot to flip this seat in November, and Mandela Barnes — Wisconsin's first Black Lt. Governor — is the best candidate in the Democratic primary for the task.

I first met Mandela when he was a state representative at a close friend's wedding. I've met hundreds of candidates in my two decades in politics and I was taken right away by his authenticity and genuine interest in each individual he interacted with, a rare attribute in politics. I was leading NARAL at the time and the questions he asked about abortion access were thoughtful, nuanced and clearly centered on the people being harmed by the increasing restrictions.

That's how Mandela approaches all of the issues that affect Wisconsinites and Americans; truly wanting to understand the experience of those he serves. He combines empathy with an unshakeable optimism and devotion to delivering for working people. He can connect with people just as easily on a farm outside Green Bay as he can in a church in Milwaukee.

That's why he is leading the Democratic field in both polling and fundraising. He's consistently out-raising his opponents — in fact, he has raised more money than all his primary opponents combined every quarter he's been in this race. His message of fighting for the middle class has inspired more than 55,000 ordinary people to pull out their wallets for him — including donors from every county in Wisconsin.

Recently, some pundits have questioned the electability of Black candidates. Doubting the viability of Black candidates is a tale as old as time. But both in Wisconsin and across the country, they couldn't be more wrong. Black candidates are leading the pack in states across the country, and Mandela is no exception.

And anyone who doubts Mandela's electability in Wisconsin should remember when Tammy Baldwin first ran for Senate in 2011. Doubters said Wisconsin would never elect a progressive, lesbian Senator from the most liberal part of the state. Thanks to her ability to connect with and deliver for people from all walks of life, she's been

proving them wrong for over a decade.

I'm confident Mandela can recreate her success. He understands the middle class experience because he shares that experience. He was raised by a public school teacher and a third shift factory worker. Those union jobs were his family's ticket into the middle class. He also saw firsthand how for many across the state, those same opportunities no longer existed. After college, Mandela got to work as a community organizer in his home town in Milwaukee, fighting for a better life for families like his own.

Frustrated by the lack of action from lawmakers and inspired by another Black Midwesterner with a funny name, he ran for and won a seat in the state legislature at 25. Just six years later, in 2018, he won the primary for Lt. Governor, winning 71 out of Wisconsin's 72 counties despite being outspent three to one. He has spent the last ten years serving Wisconsin with grit, hard work and optimism.

The most important lesson I've learned during my time in politics is nothing can beat authenticity and connection. And that is Mandela's superpower.

At the end of the day, what makes Mandela unique is exactly what makes him the best candidate running to beat an out-of-touch multi-millionaire like Ron Johnson. Mandela's leading primary opponents are also multi-millionaires who are self-funding their campaigns to make up for a lack of grassroots support. Democrats, if our case to the voters of Wisconsin is that our multi-millionaire is better than the other side's multi-millionaire, we will lose.

With the Ron Johnson political machine whirring, Democrats must avoid an embattled primary in Wisconsin that wastes resources before the general election. Some candidates in crowded primaries in other states have decided to put the future of our country over their own political ambitions and coalesce around an undeniable frontrunner. It's time for Mandela's primary opponents to do the same.

I'm supporting Mandela Barnes because he has proven he will fight to protect Roe and stand up for the people of Wisconsin. Because he will be an incredible example for the young people who will come after him. And because he is our best chance to beat Ron Johnson.