

Barnes Campaign: Mandela Barnes fights for Wisconsin jobs in new op-ed

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 16, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Today, Lt. Governor and candidate for U.S. Senate Mandela Barnes released an [op-ed](#) calling out Ron Johnson for refusing to fight for good-paying jobs in Wisconsin, and calling on Oshkosh Defense to create jobs here at home instead of shipping 1,000 jobs to non-union labor in South Carolina. **Read the op-ed below.**

Key Points:

- *I come from a proud union family. I am the son of a public school teacher and a third-shift auto worker. My dad spent 30 years assembling catalytic converters and is still an active member of the United Auto Workers union (UAW).*
- *I've joined other leaders in Wisconsin, like Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who are calling for Oshkosh Defense to reconsider. But while we work hard to deliver jobs for our workers, Sen. Ron Johnson is turning his back on working people in our state. He has flatly refused to fight to bring these jobs to his own hometown. He even had the nerve to say we've got enough jobs in Wisconsin, and we should let these jobs go to South Carolina because we don't have enough workers here.*
- *My priority always has been, and always will be, fighting for the middle class in Wisconsin. That's why this week, I sent a letter calling on the leadership at Oshkosh Defense to make those trucks here in Wisconsin. If Johnson won't do it, I will.*

- *We deserve a senator who is on our side, but Johnson has made it clear that he sides with big corporations, not the middle class. Now it's time to send him packing. Because if Johnson won't protect our jobs, why should we protect his?*

The Capital Times: [Opinion | We need a senator who will fight for union jobs in Oshkosh](#)

I come from a proud union family. I am the son of a public school teacher and a third-shift auto worker. My dad spent 30 years assembling catalytic converters and is still an active member of the United Auto Workers union (UAW). He raised me to be proud of the things we build here, and he would be the first to say that if you want something built and built right, build it in Wisconsin.

We got a tremendous opportunity when Oshkosh Defense landed a contract that would have put 1,000 people to work building a new fleet of United States Postal Service trucks in Wisconsin. When the news broke, I was excited to see that a portion of those trucks would be electric vehicles, a great example of how addressing climate change can help us create jobs and shore up our manufacturing.

But now, Oshkosh Defense wants to deny those jobs to our workers and ship them down to South Carolina instead. They're not doing this because the workers are better in South Carolina. They're doing it because they don't want to pay for the skilled union labor that has built the highest quality vehicles for parent company Oshkosh Corp. right here in Wisconsin for nearly 100 years.

I've joined other leaders in Wisconsin, like Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who are calling for Oshkosh Defense to reconsider. But while we work hard to deliver jobs for our workers, Sen. Ron Johnson is turning his back on working people in our state. He has flatly refused to fight to bring these jobs to his own hometown. He even had the nerve to say we've got enough jobs in Wisconsin, and we should let these jobs go to South Carolina because we don't have enough workers here.

I'm thankful that the economy is getting better and our unemployment rate is going down, but that's no excuse for Johnson to stop fighting for good-paying jobs. Because here's what Ron Johnson doesn't understand: It's not just about how many jobs we have, but the quality of those jobs. These are the kinds of jobs that do more than just put food on the table and give families a chance to afford good health care, to save for the future, and send their kids to college. I know this firsthand

because union jobs gave my family a pathway into the middle class.

It's true that many small businesses are struggling to find enough staff. I've spent the last months traveling the state to talk to small business owners and listen to their concerns. Most of them say people want to get back in the workforce, but they can't because they don't have access to child care. If Johnson really wanted to address the worker shortage, he would support expanding affordable child care. But he refuses to do that, because he doesn't actually care about small businesses or families. All he cares about is what's good for the bottom line of his corporate donors.

My priority always has been, and always will be, fighting for the middle class in Wisconsin. That's why this week, I sent a letter calling on the leadership at Oshkosh Defense to make those trucks here in Wisconsin. If Johnson won't do it, I will.

I also sent a letter to President Joe Biden and members of Congress urging them to do everything in their power to bring these jobs to Wisconsin. I'm grateful that we have one senator in Tammy Baldwin who has been leading the charge to ensure these jobs are created here. It's sad that we can't say the same about Ron Johnson.

We deserve a senator who is on our side, but Johnson has made it clear that he sides with big corporations, not the middle class. Now it's time to send him packing. Because if Johnson won't protect our jobs, why should we protect his?

I started this campaign to fight for the middle class. To bring opportunity to every corner of the state. In the Senate, I will always put Wisconsin first and never stop fighting for our jobs.

Mandela Barnes is Wisconsin's lieutenant governor and a candidate for the U.S. Senate.