

Nelson Campaign: Wisconsin State Journal, “Tom Nelson takes aim at Mandela Barnes at US Senate candidate forum”

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APPLETON, Wis. – Outagamie County Executive and pro-labor populist U.S. Senate candidate Tom Nelson took on rival Mandela Barnes’s weak-kneed advocacy for Medicare for All and highlighted Barnes ducking media interviews during a forum Friday sponsored by Our Wisconsin Revolution (OWR).

Nelson was a 2016 delegate for Bernie Sanders, with whom OWR is affiliated, and has made Medicare for All a pillar of his grassroots Senate campaign.

As the Wisconsin State Journal reports:

“Nelson said, ‘I support Medicare for All. I do not support just a pathway to Medicare for All. I don’t bury it in one sentence on Page 10 of a supposed economic plan,’ referencing Barnes’ statement that he supported ‘building a path to Medicare for All’ on the fifth page of a small business plan Barnes released this week.”

Nelson also made reference to the fact that Barnes, the outgoing Wisconsin lieutenant governor, frequently dodges press interviews:

“‘We need to have someone who ... does not hide from from the media or refuses to

talk about or explain their flip-flopping on issues,' Nelson said.”

A link to the recording of the forum can be found [here](#).

The full articles appears below:

Wisconsin State Journal: [“Tom Nelson takes aim at Mandela Barnes at Democratic US Senate candidate forum”](#)

Alexander Shur | Feb 26, 2022

In a sign the broad Democratic U.S. Senate primary field is growing more contentious, Outagamie County Executive Tom Nelson took aim Friday at Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes as a flip-flopper on various issues.

Asked his stance on health care policy at liberal group Our Wisconsin Revolution’s Democratic candidate forum, Nelson said, “I support Medicare for All. I do not support just a pathway to Medicare for All. I don’t bury it in one sentence on Page 10 of a supposed economic plan,” referencing Barnes’ statement that he supported “building a path to Medicare for All” on the fifth page of a small business plan Barnes released this week.

“When the GOP is in charge they don’t ‘build a path’ they enact the policies they want,” Nelson said early Friday on Twitter. “We need a bold leader who will take on the tough issues and get results. It’s what the voters demand — and deserve.”

Barnes in his subsequent response said he did support Medicare for All — a popular stance among Democrats that receives widespread opposition from Republicans.

“I do support Medicare for All because in the richest country in the world, nobody should go bankrupt because of their medical bills,” Barnes said Friday. “We need America on the path of universal health care with lower costs and high-quality coverage, and Medicare for All is the quickest way for us to get there.”

Later in the forum, Nelson again challenged Barnes, who has emerged as a top contender for the nomination, raising \$1.2 million in the fourth quarter of last year, about \$1 million more than Nelson. Two other top-tier contenders, state Treasurer Sarah Godlewski and Milwaukee Bucks executive Alexy Lasry, who have each loaned their campaigns more than \$1 million, did not participate in Friday’s forum.

“We need to have someone who ... does not hide from from the media or refuses to talk about or explain their flip-flopping on issues,” Nelson said.

Nelson’s comments stood out from a relatively tepid forum where Democratic U.S. Senate candidates Barnes, Nelson, Peter Peckarsky, Steven Olikara, Darrell Williams, Adam Murphy and Jeff Rumbaugh provided their policy stances on health care, the environment, stock trading among lawmakers, immigration policy and other national issues.

The only other candidate referencing Barnes was Williams — the administrator of Wisconsin Emergency Management — who praised Barnes for his leadership as chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Climate Change.

Barnes said he supports a Green New Deal “that works for Wisconsin,” while Nelson

said he's the only candidate who has been campaigning aggressively in support of a Green New Deal.

"What might be right for California or Florida might not be right for Wisconsin, so when Mandela gets to the Senate he'll evaluate all the options being proposed," Barnes spokesperson Lauren Chou said in a statement. "He will be looking for legislation that creates good paying jobs in Wisconsin by curbing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to 100% renewable energy as soon as possible."

Nelson's comments Friday followed a more explicit callout last week on progressive show "The Young Turks," where he said Barnes was "entirely confused" after distancing himself from the "Abolish ICE" and "defund the police" movements that he appeared to support in the past. Last week, the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) reported that Barnes denied being part of the Abolish ICE movement despite once posing for a picture holding an Abolish ICE T-shirt.

Godlewski, according to spokesperson Sarah Abel, had to cancel at the last minute because her child care plan fell through. Lasry, spokesperson Thad Nation said, "has a scheduling conflict tonight and will not be attending."

Also absent from the event was Gillian Battino, who this week announced her plans to instead run for state treasurer.

In the past, the liberal group that hosted the event has singled out Lasry, calling into question how his family has used its wealth.

"He informed us that he had a schedule conflict," Our Wisconsin Revolution executive director Andre Walton said. "We are not sure what that conflict is."