

# Olson campaign: Eric Olson announces candidacy for Portage County Executive

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## **Pledges to bring independence, collaborative leadership, and a countywide perspective to the elected post**

Long-time Stevens Point resident, community organizer, and educator Eric Olson announced his candidacy for Portage County Executive today. He is seeking support from voters countywide this spring to elect him as the fourth person to hold the office since it was first established in 2010.

Olson has worked in the College of Natural Resources (CNR) at UW Stevens Point (UWSP) since moving to the county for a teaching and extension position at the Center for Land Use Education. He is now director and lakes outreach specialist with Extension Lakes, a statewide program working with local governments and nonprofits to care for lakes, rivers, and streams. If successful in his bid, Olson would resign his post and take an indefinite leave from UWSP.

Olson's campaign centers on the need for an independent County Executive who can provide a more holistic view on county issues. "Portage County deserves a leader who shows up and engages with communities throughout the entire county," Olson offers. "As Executive, I will hold listening sessions in every town, village, and

the City of Stevens Point because your voice matters no matter where you live.”

There are a wide range of pressing issues that motivated Olson to take this step. “I believe the county can and should be doing more to address the ongoing pandemic, tackle public safety space needs, head off threats to our county’s water resources, and rise to the challenge of sustainably growing our local and regional economy,” he says. Olson will draw on lessons he learned working with communities across Wisconsin to tackle water and land use issues. “A tried and true approach begins with learning where people are coming from and understanding their perspective. Regardless of a person’s party, ideology, or viewpoint, everyone deserves the respect of being heard and valued and the dignity of being a part of something greater than themselves.”

Olson registered his campaign on December 14 at the Portage County Clerk’s office and started circulating nomination papers that day. In just two weeks more than sixty volunteers helped gather nearly 350 signatures, well above the 200 required. His campaign has also launched a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. Olson notes that the community response so far has been encouraging. “My friends, colleagues, and people who are just learning about me are reaching out to tell me how happy they are that I’m running and asking me what they can do to help,” he shares. “From the Town of Grant to the Town of New Hope, from Rosholt to Stevens Point, we are going to build a positive campaign that leverages the power of volunteers and stakeholders to win this election.”