

# ‘UpFront’ media panel looks ahead to 2022 in Wisconsin politics

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U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson is poised to soon decide whether to seek reelection in what will be one of several high-profile races set to dominate the Wisconsin landscape in 2022.

“As of a few weeks ago, Ron Johnson began the process of interviewing consultants, campaign managers for a possible bid,” WisPolitics.com editor JR Ross said on WISN-12’s “UpFront.” “Now as I reported that, I was cautioned by some Republicans that in moving toward a bid, until it comes out of his month, we’re not fully vested saying that he’s going to run for sure.”

“UpFront” is produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Ross, alongside host Adrienne Pederson, WISN’s Matt Smith and WKOW’s A.J. Bayatpour looked ahead to the key races of 2022.

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Johnson’s decision will not only impact the U.S. Senate race but the race for governor as well.

“You’ve heard of the ‘never ‘Trump’ Republicans,” Bayatpour said. “Are there some ‘never Ron’ conservatives out there who believe he’s gone too far? But would they be able to pull the trigger and vote for a Democrat if that Democratic candidate is someone as progressive as Lt. Gov. Barnes has been?”

Former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch has emerged as the likely front-runner among Republicans, but analysts said the field may still widen.

Also looming is the potential impact of the ongoing GOP-led review of the 2020

election led by former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman.

Gableman, whose initial contract was set to expire at the end of the year, has indicated he may ask Assembly Speaker Robin Vos for more money to continue the probe. Republican lawmakers initially set aside \$676,000 in taxpayer funds for the investigation.

Gableman recently spoke to a group of supporters in Chippewa County who urged him to do more.

“What it underscores is that there’s a segment of the Republican base that is not going to be happy with whatever Gableman produces unless it leads to criminal charges or reverse results of the 2020 election in Wisconsin,” Ross said. “Well, the latter point - we know that can’t happen.”

Also Sunday, the broadcast officially announced the retirement of longtime executive producer Susan MacDonald.

WISN-TV announced Matt Smith has been named the show’s new executive producer. Smith, an already frequent contributor to the show, has spent more than a decade covering politics in Wisconsin.

See more from the program at [wisn.com/upfront](https://www.wisn.com/upfront).