

WisDems: ICYMI: Tim Michels wants his family's construction business to keep seeking state contracts if he is governor

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MADISON, Wis. – The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [reported](#) that the Republican gubernatorial primary's newest candidate, Tim Michels, hopes his family business continues to bid on state contracts.

While Michels indicated in a [tweet](#) that he would “divest” himself from the company, there is no separating the personal benefit Tim Michels would receive if he were able to sign off on contracts for large infrastructure projects to a company his family will continue to own and operate.

According to the [Journal Sentinel](#), his continued role in the company “could create ethical challenges for him because state law bars officials from taking actions that benefit them financially. [...] State law requires governors to sign road construction contracts valued at more than \$1,000.”

Frankly, Tim Michels [owes Wisconsinites a lot of answers](#). Michels' ties to Rebecca Kleefisch's [1848 Project](#), his participation on the [board of Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce](#), and the anti-gay and anti-abortion platform he ran on in his losing 2004 Senate election indicate he has an extreme agenda in mind for Wisconsin, and voters should hear from him on the record about his plans for the state.

Read more about the ethical problems Tim Michels would face, if elected governor.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Tim Michels wants his family's construction business to keep seeking state contracts if he is governor, raising ethics](#)

questions

Tim Michels wants his family's construction business to continue to seek millions of dollars in state contracts if he's elected governor, arguing he wouldn't have a role in whether the firm gets any work.

The approach he plans to take could create ethical challenges for him because state law bars officials from taking actions that benefit them financially. The amount of money in question is huge — Michels Corp. of Brownsville has received more than \$660 million in payments from the state in the last five years, records show.

Michels [jumped into the Republican primary](#) last week with plans to bankroll his campaign using the fortune he has amassed from his family business.

Mac Davis, a former state senator and former judge who previously served on the state Ethics Commission, said Michels would have a difficult time navigating the state's ethics code if he is elected and maintains his ownership stake in Michels Corp.

State law requires governors to sign road construction contracts valued at more than \$1,000. The requirement to approve those contracts is in conflict with the ethics code's ban on taking official actions that benefit oneself, Davis said.

"What are the governor's official duties? And I don't think he can delegate them," Davis said. "He can't say, 'Well, I just, on Michels' road contracts, I'll leave that to the lieutenant governor.' I doubt that works at all because he's made the decision to delegate it, so he's still in charge, so to speak."

[...]

Michels told WTMJ-AM on Monday he was "stepping aside" from Michels Corp., which according to his campaign means he is no longer on its payroll. The campaign has given no indication that he has given up any of his ownership stake in the company he and his brothers have run for years.

[...]

Asked whether the company would seek state work if he became governor, Michels said: "I certainly hope so. It won't be my decision. It will be my brothers' decision but again we bring value — we bring value to the taxpayers of Wisconsin."

While state officials have little discretion in awarding construction contracts because they go to the lowest qualified bidder, governors can prevent or delay roadwork by putting off signing contracts.

Governors also have a large say in how much the state spends on roadwork every year in budgets they write in conjunction with lawmakers. The more spent on roads, the more opportunities for all contractors to win state work.

The state is spending more than \$2.2 billion on road and bridge projects this year. Those jobs are being funded with a mix of state and federal money, with the state money largely coming from gas taxes and vehicle registration fees.

Michels' opponents see his business ties as a campaign issue.

“Wisconsinites deserve a governor who will make decisions because they’re best for our state, not because they’re best for their personal interests,” said a statement from Kayla Anderson, a campaign spokeswoman for Evers. “Anyone running for governor, and especially a candidate whose business relies on state contracts, needs to give Wisconsinites a clear plan on how they’ll avoid conflicts of interest and protect taxpayer dollars.”

[...]