

# WisDems: Kevin Nicholson throws GOP primary into chaos

Posted on Wednesday, Jan 26, 2022

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MADISON, Wis. — The looming threat of Kevin Nicholson mounting a run for governor has sent the Wisconsin GOP spiraling. This past weekend, at a Republican caucus event, Nicholson put Rebecca Kleefisch and the Republican “establishment” on blast, threatened to fire the chair of the Wisconsin GOP should he win the primary, and said Republicans will certainly lose if they nominate Kleefisch.

Republicans will certainly lose if they nominate either one of these divisive candidates. Kleefisch and Nicholson are so busy with political infighting that they will be far too radical to win a statewide election.

If Nicholson’s comments from this weekend are any indication of how he’ll run his campaign, Republicans are in for a brutal primary battle. It’s even divided marriages – GOP megadonors Richard and Liz Uihlein have each backed a different candidate.

Read more about the chaotic GOP primary below.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Kevin Nicholson isn’t yet in the GOP race for governor, but he’s already shaking up the Republican field](#)

Kevin Nicholson, an all but declared GOP candidate for governor, made clear on Saturday he's planning to run an insurgent campaign after he admonished the leader of the state Republican Party in front of a Manitowoc County crowd and promised to push him out of his job.

In brief video footage of a Manitowoc County Republican Caucus event, Nicholson blasted what he called the "machine" of Wisconsin Republican politics that he claimed was not working to win elections but instead to provide jobs for politicians.

"You represent a broken machine — you're part of it," Nicholson told Republican Party of Wisconsin chairman Paul Farrow in front of the caucus meeting crowd. "It has lost 11 out of 12 races. It will lose the next one if you're allowed to get your way."

Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, who attended the event, said the filmed exchange took place after Nicholson said the state party planned to force candidates who do not receive party endorsements from their primary race.

LeMahieu said that is not the state party's plan. Farrow attempted to interject, prompting the comments from Nicholson, according to LeMahieu. An aide to Nicholson did not immediately respond to questions about the exchange.

[...]

The Saturday episode followed clashes in recent days between Nicholson and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, foreshadowing an anti-establishment campaign that

Nicholson is likely to run against former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch in the GOP primary.

In a statement, Farrow did not directly address Nicholson's comments but said the party would embrace whichever candidate emerges from the Republican primary.

[...]

Farrow is Waukesha County Executive and a former state lawmaker. He was elected chairman of the Republican Party of Wisconsin in August.

Nicholson said if he wins, "it all changes overnight."

"Paul Farrow is not going to be the party chair. And I'll swear by it," Nicholson told the crowd.

At least four Republican lawmakers were standing in the room as Nicholson criticized them as being "bought and paid for" by Kleefisch, referring to campaign donations made by a political action committee Kleefisch established in 2020 for legislative candidates.

A spokesman for Kleefisch declined to comment.

[...]

Nicholson has not yet registered a campaign for governor with the state Ethics Commission but is expected to announce his candidacy for governor any day.

The dustup in Manitowoc County came two days before Republican megadonor Richard Uihlein released a statement suggesting he would spend as much as necessary to elect Nicholson if he chooses to run for governor.

[...]

Uihlein, CEO of Pleasant Prairie-based supply giant Uline, backed Nicholson in 2018 during his unsuccessful bid for U.S. Senate against former Republican state Sen. Leah Vukmir. In all, Uihlein spent about \$11 million on Nicholson's campaign.

Meanwhile, Liz Uihlein, Richard Uihlein's wife, has spent \$220,000 on behalf of Kleefisch.