

WisDems: “Knives Out” - May 27

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MADISON, Wis. — Welcome to “Knives Out”— Rebecca Kleefisch’s favorite phrase and a weekly roundup of the infighting between the radical Republicans running for Wisconsin governor.

The GOP is locked in a heated and brutal primary for governor, where Rebecca Kleefisch, Kevin Nicholson, Tim Ramthun, and Tim Michels are each trying to prove they are the most divisive candidate in the race. What’s going on in the Republican Party is so outrageous, it’s hard to keep track of all of their blunders — so here is a roundup:

Who Said It?

Can you guess who said the following?

“So again, conventions, right, think of what conventions are. Backroom deals, insider deals, lobbyists, again, I’ve got a cabal of metastasized lobbyists [...] and it’s a warring tribe of lobbyists fighting each other on that side of the thing.”

Scroll to the end of this newsletter for the answer.

Ron Johnson: Acknowledges Divided and Chaotic GOP Convention

In an interview following the dumpster fire Wisconsin GOP convention, Ron Johnson acknowledged that things didn’t go so well for the gubernatorial candidates.

“Yes, we need to unite as a party, and I know there were, you know, hard feelings with the convention, people didn’t necessarily get the result they wanted, some did, but my appeal, certainly on August 10th is we must remain united [...]” [[Dan O’Donnell Show, WISN, 5/23/22](#)]



Ope — awkward. So it isn't just the Democrats who think that the GOP primary for governor is a divided mess. And it's not as if Republicans can depend on self-serving Ron Johnson to unite them.

Yes, Tony Evers Will Be Hard to Beat

For the state convention, Rebecca Kleefisch called in her insider political bigwig to take the podium: Scott Walker.

But he wasn't particularly... helpful?

"We're going to need a fighter because beating Tony Evers is not going to be easy."
[\[52:12\]](#)

Scott Walker would know. Do we have to remind him that he and Rebecca Kleefisch already lost to Gov. Evers once?

Tim Michels: Part-Time Wisconsinite AND A "Tough Guy"

In his speech at the WisGOP convention last weekend Tim Michels [said](#):

"Now, you may have heard some people try to make some noise about where I live because I, once again, went where duty called, and because I own some real estate. It's garbage, it's political smear, but I can take it, I'm a tough guy."

Michels has had trouble selling to people that he is more than a [part-time Wisconsinite](#). He spent more than \$30 million on properties in New York and Connecticut between 2015 and 2020, and *"still owns the Manhattan penthouse he bought in 2015 for \$8.7 million."* He was even trying to build a tennis court on his Connecticut property... less than twelve months ago.

You can really hear it in his voice, a real tough guy, isn't bothered by the accusation at all. Suggestion for Michels, we know you love to build things, so maybe try building a thicker skin.



Kevin Nicholson Loses To Tim Ramthun (Again)

Kevin Nicholson may be lying to himself that the convention was a [victory](#) for him, but it must be a blow to the ego to lose to Tim Ramthun. Tim Ramthun took home [5.1%](#) of the delegate count, over Nicholson's [3.1%](#) in the first round of voting. While they both finished far behind Rebecca Kleefisch's [51.7%](#), Ramthun's lead was enough to make it to the second round.

This isn't Nicholson's first loss to Ramthun, however. In [an April straw poll from the 3rd Congressional District GOP caucus](#) in Onalaska, Kevin Nicholson almost came in dead last. He lost to Tim Ramthun by 40 votes.

"Who Said It" Answer Revealed

It's [Kevin Nicholson on the Dan O'Donnell Show](#) taking some language from Rebecca Kleefisch. [Kleefisch has also taken to tearing up](#) the "cabal" of insider lobbyists, particularly those supporting Tim Michels.

The comments from Kleefisch and Nicholson are meant to position themselves as "outsiders" but regardless of what they claim, Rebecca Kleefisch, Kevin Nicholson, and Tim Michels are all *INSIDERS*.

A quick reminder:

- Rebecca Kleefisch, former lieutenant governor of Wisconsin for eight years, married to a lobbyist, endorsed by Wisconsin's largest business lobby [[00:33:56](#)]: *"I'm happy to take on the establishment once again."*
- Kevin Nicholson, failed 2018 candidate, political appointee in the Walker-Kleefisch administration, backed by billionaire Dick Uihlein [[WTM](#)], [5/12/22](#)]: *"... The Republican Party in the state of Wisconsin has lost 11 out of 12 statewide general elections, in part because we have a pathetic machine running it from Madison. And see, it's the same people, you name it, from the Robin Voses of the world to the cabal of lobbyists that are backing my respective primary opponents."*
- Tim Michels, who was on the board of a lobbying group, GOP nominee for Senate in 2004, owns a multi-million dollar penthouse in Manhattan, held fundraisers for GOP bigwigs including Ron Johnson [[:17](#)]: *"I think the lobbyists are not gonna like me at all, they're gonna be very frustrated. I'm not beholden to them."*
- Nicholson, again [[WTAQ](#)], [5/19/22](#)]: *"Now, look, I'm running against two insider candidates here who have warring tribes of lobbyists that are surrounding*

them in terms of Kleefisch and Michels and that is what it is, you know? I mean, I am the outsider candidate that can win the general election."