

WisDems: She said what? Rebecca Kleefisch calls for having “one throat to choke”

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MADISON, Wis. – Just one day after getting caught in front of [a flag representing a hate group](#), the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Rebecca Kleefisch called for abolishing the Wisconsin Elections Commission so that voters could have **“one throat to choke.”**

This comment is just the latest of the many inappropriate things Kleefisch has said on the campaign trail. Kleefisch has called for building an **“army” of “paid fighters” and “mercenaries,”** as well as asking supporters if they were **“ready to throw some hands”** and had their **“knives out.”**

Kleefisch’s rival Kevin Nicholson has been just as divisive, [calling Kleefisch’s ideas for elections “dumb as a bag of hammers.”](#)

Read more about Kleefisch’s divisive language around elections below.

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: ‘One throat to choke’: Republican governor candidates Rebecca Kleefisch and Kevin Nicholson call for dismantling the Elections Commission](#)

The Republicans running for governor want to eliminate the state’s bipartisan elections agency, going further than their GOP colleagues who lead the Legislature.

Former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch in a radio interview last week said she wants to dissolve the Wisconsin Elections Commission and hand over its duties to elected officials so voters have “one throat to choke” if something goes wrong.

Marine veteran Kevin Nicholson expressed a similar view days later when he announced his plan to take on Kleefisch in the Republican primary for governor. He painted Kleefisch as part of the GOP establishment that created the commission under former Gov. Scott Walker in 2015 and attacked her for calling on Republicans last fall to engage in “ballot harvesting” to beat Democratic Gov. Tony Evers.

Kleefisch and Nicholson are taking their stances as Republicans push for overhauling a host of voting rules. Their efforts so far have been blocked by Evers and the courts.

Evers supports the commission and wants to keep it in place. The Democratic support for the agency is a shift. When Republicans created the evenly divided panel, Democrats said it was designed to fail and predicted it would result in endless gridlock.

Republicans who control the Legislature in recent years have led some of the attempts to change election laws but have resisted dismantling the commission.

“I would abolish WEC and I have said that,” Kleefisch said last week to radio host Joe Giganti on WTAQ-AM in Green Bay.

“They have been a lawless agency and they have completely disregarded statutes and the constitution. I think they have turned our elections into a circus. And so whether we choose to put it under the Legislature or the secretary of state’s office, elections in Wisconsin must have more authority for the voters so that they have essentially one throat to choke. They need to be able to bounce someone from office, whether it’s the secretary of state or their legislator if elections go wrong.”

Nicholson — who has called the state’s Republican infrastructure a broken political machine that loses too many elections — in an interview with WISN-AM host Dan O’Donnell called for eliminating the commission. He also railed against allowing political groups to pick up absentee ballots for others, a practice he disparaged as “ballot harvesting.”

“I do want to eliminate ballot harvesting,” Nicholson said. “I want the court to do it, but I want to do it legislative too so it’s basically locked in. And eliminate drop boxes and get rid of the WEC too — and I’m not one of the people who put it there in the first place.”

[...]

Kleefisch in November brought her own lawsuit directly with the state Supreme Court to try to ban ballot drop boxes. The justices have not said whether they will take her case and may deal with the issue entirely through the other case, which was brought by two suburban Milwaukee men with the assistance of the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty.

Republicans in Wisconsin have largely opposed allowing groups to pick up ballots for voters. Kleefisch has said she wants to ban the practice but told a group of Republicans in October that she wants to engage in ballot harvesting this fall to help her win.

“Ballot harvesting in Wisconsin is not technically illegal,” Kleefisch said then. “Democrats do it nonstop and they go hard. Republicans must go harder.”

Nicholson responded at the time by saying anyone who supports ballot harvesting is “as dumb as a bag of hammers.” In rolling out his campaign last week, he again criticized her for her remarks about ballot harvesting.

[...]

Republicans in 2015 voted to create the commission because they believed the agency that oversaw elections at the time was biased against Republicans. They took that step after the state Supreme Court shut down a campaign finance investigation of Republicans launched by the agency, which was known as the Government Accountability Board.

In the years since, many Republicans have turned against the Elections Commission, which consists of three Republicans and three Democrats. They are frustrated that the commission told clerks they could use ballot drop boxes and fill in the addresses of witnesses on ballot paperwork.

[...]

For his part, Evers is backing the commission.

“Republicans created this system, and it works — our last election was fair and secure, as was proven by a recount, our law enforcement agencies, and the courts,” said a written statement from Evers campaign spokesman Sam Roecker. “Rebecca

Kleefisch and Kevin Nicholson just want to get rid of this bipartisan commission in order to stir up divisive political fights and to make sure fewer people can vote.”

Republican leaders in the Legislature have also stood by the Elections Commission, even as they seek to change some election laws.