

WisDems: Why state parties are the first line of defense against Republicans

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MADISON Wis. — In a [new op-ed published today in The New Republic](#), Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Ben Wikler lays out the crucial role state parties play in saving democracy.

With far-right Republican candidates attacking our freedom to vote and promising to give GOP politicians more power to overturn election results they don't like, state Democratic parties like WisDems have a critical role to play in races from city council to the governor's office.

Read excerpts from Chair Wikler's new op-ed below:

[Why State Parties Are the First Line of Defense Against Republicans](#)

By Ben Wikler // The New Republic

An anti-democracy City Council in Green Bay—and in a few more towns like it across the state—might be able to suppress or discard enough ballots to tip statewide races that, over and over, come down to razor-thin margins.

[...]

This article is about how to stop them.

It's about how, in the absence of federal legislation and facing a hostile U.S. Supreme Court, in a political climate of sinking poll numbers and rising anxiety, friends of democracy can find overlooked levers of power to defeat an authoritarian movement bent on avenging an imaginary crime. The most important vehicle for defending democracy in 2022 might well be the least glamorous institutions in American politics: the much-maligned, typically underfunded, often invisible, absolutely essential legal and political entities known as state Democratic parties.

[...]

Years of patient investment and hard party-building work in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Arizona played a critical role in flipping those five states and making Trump a one-term president.

I know the Wisconsin story best. My predecessor as state party chair, Martha Laning, ignited the turnaround in Wisconsin in the wake of the devastating Trump win of 2016. In the months after that body blow, Laning raised the funds to launch a year-round organizing program—and chose a particularly ambitious organizing model: the Obama-style neighbor-to-neighbor model, in which professional organizers recruit and train neighborhood team leaders, who in turn recruit volunteers to talk to voters in their communities.

[...]

Maximizing our chance to win now will require dedicating more money, more talent, and more time to building state party infrastructure, every precious day between now and when the polls close on November 8—and then through the inevitable recounts and court battles that will follow. **And if we're serious about forestalling authoritarianism, we have to invest everywhere—not just in the battlegrounds.** And not just this year. For the next decade.