

Power to the Polls Wisconsin: Former Lt. Gov. Barnes named President of Power to the Polls Wisconsin

Posted on Friday, Apr 7, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MILWAUKEE — Today, [Power to the Polls Wisconsin](#) announced that Mandela Barnes, Wisconsin's 45th Lt. Governor and U.S. Senate Nominee, has been named as President of the voting rights organization that serves diverse communities throughout the state, defending our freedoms and inspiring voters to turnout. Barnes played an integral role in Power to the Polls and Power to the Polls Action Fund's' successful efforts to mobilize a multiracial coalition of working class voters ahead of Wisconsin's spring elections which saw the control of the Wisconsin Supreme Court flip and hard-won re-elections of Racine Mayor Cory Mason and Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich.

"Mandela's work to energize voters around the state, guide our organization's grassroots and communication efforts, and raise the resources necessary to win were critical to the victories on Tuesday night," said **Pastor Greg Lewis, Power to the Polls co-founder and Board Chair**. "Mandela has spent his career mobilizing Wisconsinites and fighting for our freedoms. We're thrilled to have his leadership at Power to the Polls in an incredibly consequential time."

"Organizing isn't just about what happens right before an election - it's about mobilizing communities to use their power year in and year out," said **Mandela Barnes**. "Thanks to the leadership of Pastor Greg Lewis, Power to the Polls understands that and has become an integral part of our efforts to defend our freedoms, educate voters, increase turnout, hold our elected officials accountable, and elect working class champions up and down the ballot in Wisconsin. I'm honored to build upon my organizing roots and take on this new role to empower communities across the state to use their voices and their vote."

Power to the Polls Action Fund helped Democrats secure wins up and down the ballot during the spring elections:

- Power to the Polls Action Fund invested **nearly one million dollars** in [digital advertising](#), direct mail, Black radio advertising, and canvasses across the state.
- Power to the Polls Action Fund deployed over **175 canvassers who knocked more than 85,000** doors across the state, in communities from Racine to Green Bay, Brown Deer, Milwaukee, Racine, and Outagamie Counties.
- Power to the Polls Action fund also engaged heavily in the special election in SD-8, where Jody Habush Sinykin came within 800 votes of pulling off a dramatic upset in a seat easily long held by Republicans, until now.
- Turnout in Milwaukee was 64% higher than the most recent Supreme Court election not held in a presidential primary year, compared to a 52% increase statewide.
- Democrats won **4 out of the 5** races targeted by Power to the Polls
- Power to the Polls and Power to the Polls Action fund drew support from key labor and advocacy groups, including SEIU, America Votes, Movement Voter Project, NARAL, Black Voters Matter, Walk the Walk USA, Way to Win, the UAW and many other partners.

Founded by the state's largest and most effective minority-led advocacy groups, Power to the Polls WI and Power to the Polls Action fund have led community-driven organizing to mobilize a multiracial coalition of working-class voters – focusing especially on Black communities – across Wisconsin. As Power to the Polls WI President, Barnes will continue to lead the organization's efforts to defend our freedoms by increasing voter education and turning out infrequent voters across the state heading into critical state and local elections in the spring of 2024, while laying the groundwork for key elections in 2024.

About Power to the Polls Wisconsin

Power to the Polls WI and Power to the Polls Action Fund are Black-led 501c4 and 527 organizing projects co-founded by Wisconsin civil rights, labor, faith and community leaders with assistance from national partners to organize and inspire infrequent voters to show up on issues and in elections, in order to alter the relations of power between those in positions of authority and under-served communities of color and working class families with the goal of increasing accountability and winning concrete changes for those in need.

The largest and most effective Black and Latinx-led advocacy organizations in Wisconsin founded Power to the Polls WI after years of joint work to address major gaps. Those founding partners, including Souls to the Polls, the Fight for \$15, the Service Employees International Union, Voces de la Frontera Action, among others, have decades of experiences inspiring people to turnout and have the largest mobilization capacities of any groups in the state, regularly turning out hundreds of thousands of people every year. In its first year on the doors, Power to the Polls WI immediately racked up the largest base of infrequent Black voters of any similar effort in Milwaukee and has proven our thesis that a community-driven, power-building organizing operation fills key gaps and has the potential to deliver new ways for communities of color and key allies to build power.