

WisDems: Leading prospective GOP candidate attacks NRSC as Republicans get desperate for a senate candidate in Wisconsin

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MADISON, Wis. — As Republicans continue to try to find someone to lose to Tammy Baldwin next November, leading potential candidate Sheriff David Clarke [said the NRSC should reach out to him while calling them losers in the same sentence](#). Per Clarke, the NRSC “suck[s] at raising money,” has “a terrible get out the vote strategy,” and “are beholden to the ‘stuck in the mud’ GOP establishment.” He also asked “why the hell would I talk to them?”

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[**Daily Beast: Republicans Get Desperate for a Senate Candidate in Wisconsin**](#)

By Ursula Perano

Wisconsin Republicans need someone to run against Sen. Tammy Baldwin: a two-term incumbent who’s up for re-election in the swing-state of Wisconsin next year.

But, for now, they’re getting crickets.

Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI), the top pick of Republican Senate recruiters and leadership, said no in June. He recently nabbed the chairman spot on a new Select Committee on China—one of his legislative priorities—and says he wants to stick with it.

Then, Rep. Tom Tiffany (R-WI) weighed the option. Reporters earlier this year

flocked in interest as newly created “Tom Tiffany for Senate” websites were flagged by web crawlers—a typical indicator that a candidate is reserving URLs because they are at least considering a bid.

But earlier this month, Tiffany passed on running too.

“While Tammy Baldwin is vulnerable due to her record as a rubber stamp for President Biden, I can make the greatest impact continuing to serve the great people of Wisconsin in the House of Representatives,” Tiffany told The Northwoods River News.

The remaining four Republican Wisconsin Reps.—Bryan Steil, Derrick Van Orden, Scott Fitzgerald, and Glenn Grotham—have all also said no for their own variety of reasons. Former House Speaker Paul Ryan has also passed.

Republicans will of course eventually find someone—even if it’s a sacrificial lamb candidate. But going this far down the list, getting this far into the cycle, it’s making the chances of flipping Wisconsin, which the Cook Political Report rates as a “Lean Democratic,” harder.

Baldwin is considered a formidable but not untouchable opponent for Republicans—especially as the GOP managed to re-elect Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) just last year.

If Republicans are hoping to take back the power in the Senate, Wisconsin could be huge. While Democrats have virtually no pick-up opportunities in 2024, Republicans are on offense in Montana, West Virginia, Ohio, Arizona, Nevada, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Two flipped seats could land the GOP the Senate majority.

In a number of those key races, the GOP’s top recruits have already launched their campaigns, and are laying the groundwork for primary contests next year.

And yet, even though the Wisconsin GOP’s prospects seem a tad murkier, Republicans still claim they’re going to be just fine.

“We will have a strong candidate in Wisconsin that highlights Tammy Baldwin’s record as a far-left rubber stamp for Joe Biden,” National Republican Senatorial Committee spokesman Tate Mitchell told The Daily Beast in a statement.

Chief among the remaining possibilities are Eric Hovde and Scott Mayer, who **both fit the bill of “rich guy” that Senate Republican recruiters have been looking for this year.** Both are businessmen in the state with a record funding Republican candidates—and the potential to substantially contribute to their own campaigns.

Hovde, who runs a real estate development firm and identifies as a “Republican activist,” also ran for Senate in 2012.

Mayer is a former racecar driver too—and has said he’ll make a decision on the race by Labor Day.

Although Hovde and Mayer in themselves fit the ticket of what Senate operatives are likely hoping for in the state, they also have the added bonus of being a contrast to the other possible contender this cycle: former Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke.

Clarke—a conservative who rose to fame as a prominent supporter of former President Donald Trump—would enter the race with a long record of controversial statements and behavior that could easily turn away moderate voters. His persona—cowboy hat, flashy garb, unfiltered commentary—could put him at odds with other candidates like Hovde and Mayer, who would likely enter the race with a more polished presentation.

In an early preview of that Clark-esque style, the former sheriff responded to a request for comment sent to his spokesperson by sending The Daily Beast a 528-word note that said an invitation to discuss questions by phone was “not a fair way to do this” because he could be “taken out of context.”

“There is a lot to go over, and I won’t be rushed or held to some consultant’s timeline about a decision. I am not your typical politician,” Clarke wrote.

Clarke went on to detail that he believes the NRSC *should* reach out to him—though he said they haven’t yet. But he also said the NRSC does “suck at raising money” and has “a terrible get out the vote strategy.”

“They are beholden to the ‘stuck in the mud’ GOP establishment. Why the hell would I talk to them? If a candidate wants to lose, they contact the NRSC,” Clarke added.

Clarke spent the rest of the note outlining his policy positions and criticizing Baldwin. “The key to beating her is to run an asymmetrical campaign,” he said.

The NRSC has been meticulously recruiting candidates this cycle after a disappointing midterms. NRSC Chair Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) has been focused on candidates he believes can win general elections—meaning candidates that have some crossover appeal with independents and swing voters.

In an interview with CBS News last month, Daines was asked what went wrong with recruiting in Wisconsin. Daines responded that “the jury’s still out” and that NRSC is “engaged with a couple of other candidates.”

“Wisconsin can be a very competitive race. We’re encouraged there... stay tuned,” he added.

Hovde did not respond to a request for comment. Mayer responded to a request for comment by saying he’s been busy with board meetings, but did not address the questions sent by The Daily Beast.

There is technically one Republican in the race so far: Rejani Raveendran. She is a 40-year-old college student who serves as chair of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point College Republicans. Raveendran launched her longshot campaign last week, though it does not appear she’s filed paperwork with the Federal Elections Commission yet.

Meanwhile, the lack of competition as other Senate races shape up has left Democrats thumping their chest in Wisconsin. Baldwin’s already got the benefit of incumbency and name recognition, as well as the support of the Senate Democrats’ campaign arms behind her.

But having already launched her campaign and beefed up her staff—she’s also got the benefit of time.

“While Tammy Baldwin has been working to lower health care costs and bring made in America manufacturing jobs to Wisconsin, the Wisconsin GOP has been pushing a radical agenda to roll back our freedoms and cut Social Security and Medicare,” Wisconsin Democratic Party spokesperson Arik Wolk told The Daily Beast in a statement.

“That’s why they’re now facing a messy primary between McConnell-

picked multimillionaires,” Wolk added. “And Sheriff David Clarke.”