

WisDems: ICYMI: Chief justice criticizes Lazar's past work for 'right-wing interests'

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MADISON, Wis. — Today, the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) reported on Maria Lazar's long and documented history as a flagbearer for right-wing interests throughout her career. From representing Republican lawmakers in cases over Act 10 which gutted workers' rights and decimated collective bargaining power across the state, to leading cases against Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin in order to further restrict abortion access, Maria Lazar's campaign's claim of independence stands in stark contrast to the reality of her record of championing right-wing interests.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Chief justice criticizes Lazar's past work for 'right-wing interests'](#)

By: Mary Spicuzza | 3/04/26

Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Jill Karofsky slammed Appeals Court Judge Maria Lazar, the conservative candidate running for a spot on the state's highest court, saying that Lazar carried "the flag of the right-wing interests" during her time working at the state Department of Justice.

"What I have seen of Judge Lazar is that she talks about being independent, and yet the work I saw her do at the Wisconsin Department of Justice was to really - in a couple of very stark examples - be the person who was carrying the flag of the right-wing interests," Karofsky, one of the court's four liberal justices, said in an interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Lazar, 62, has been on the Waukesha-based District 2 Court of Appeals since 2022. She previously served as a Waukesha County judge, an assistant attorney general

under Republican Attorneys General J.B. Van Hollen and Brad Schimel, and as an attorney in private practice.

Lazar is running against liberal Appeals Court Judge Chris Taylor in the April 7 election for an open seat on the court, after conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley decided not to run for another 10-year term.

Karofsky cited Lazar's work as an assistant attorney general defending controversial laws passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature and signed by former Gov. Scott Walker. Her work included representing Republican lawmakers in cases over Act 10, which all but ended collective bargaining for most of the state's public workers, and defending the "gerrymandered" 2011 electoral maps that all but guaranteed years of large Republican majorities in both chambers.

Lazar also represented the state in a case filed by Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin over a law that required physicians performing abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals.

Karofsky, who worked at the DOJ with Lazar, also pointed to several of Lazar's appeals court decisions that have been overturned.

*In one, *Kaul v. Wisconsin State Legislature*, Lazar authored a 2-1 ruling that upheld a 2018 lame duck law requirement that the DOJ must get approval from the Legislature's finance committee before settling most cases. The state Supreme Court unanimously overturned the ruling in 2025.*

*In another case, *Wisconsin Voter Alliance v. Secord*, Lazar authored another 2-1 court of appeals decision that would have given a conservative activist and 2020 election denier access to personal voter information.*

At issue in the lawsuit was the balance between protecting the right to privacy for individuals who have been declared ineligible to vote based on incompetency and preventing valid votes from being canceled or diluted by ineligible votes. The state Supreme Court overturned her ruling 5-2

"As far as following the rule of law, I just gave you two examples of two cases where she got the law wrong, clearly," Karofsky said.

Lazar's campaign countered that she has "consistently maintained her status as an independent jurist."

"During her tenure at the DOJ, her role was to provide steadfast representation for the state, its officers, and their established legal positions," campaign spokesman Nathan Conrad said. "Her advocacy was a function of her professional responsibility to the office, performed with equal dedication regardless of the prevailing political administration."

"In her work on the Court of Appeals, Judge Lazar has remained committed to an independent interpretation of the law. While the State Supreme Court may occasionally reach different conclusions, these instances are a natural part of the judicial process and do not diminish the thoughtful, deliberative, and good-faith analysis she applies to every case."

Karofsky's criticism of Lazar echoed comments she made about Schimel when he was the conservative candidate in last year's Supreme Court race.

In February 2025, Karofsky said Schimel, her former boss at DOJ, could have moved faster to clear a decades-old backlog of untested rape kits when he took over as attorney general in 2015.

Karofsky said that Schimel did not ask his fellow Republicans who controlled the state Legislature or Walker for funding to more rapidly move testing forward, and accused him of directing resources that could have gone to testing to a new Solicitor General's Office that pursued partisan outcomes in courts across the nation.

Schimel's campaign spokesman at the time pushed back, arguing that Karofsky's current criticism contradicts comments she made when she oversaw the sexual assault kit testing project as executive director of the state Department of Justice's Office of Crime Victim Services. She held that position for part of Schimel's term at the agency's helm after he took office in January 2015.

Schimel lost to liberal Justice Susan Crawford in what became the most expensive judicial race in United States history.

Liberals won a 4-3 majority on the state's highest court in April 2023 and secured it

in April 2025, when Crawford defeated Schimel. If Taylor wins, it would be liberals' fourth Supreme Court victory in a row dating to 2020, and would expand their majority on the court to 5-2.

Schimel is now serving as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin in an interim capacity.