



News Release

WBA Foundation announces dates for gubernatorial, U.S. Senate debates

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For Immediate Release

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Madison, Wis. – The WBA Foundation Board will continue its 30-year tradition of holding statewide televised debates for Wisconsin’s voters by airing debates in the Wisconsin Governor and the U.S. Senate races.

Gubernatorial candidates Republican Gov. Scott Walker and Democratic challenger Tony Evers have been invited to participate in a debate hosted in the Madison market on Oct. 5 at 7 p.m. U.S. Senate candidates Democrat Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Republican challenger Leah Vukmir have been invited to participate in a debate hosted in the Wausau/Rhineland market on Oct. 13 at 7 p.m.

Both hour-long debates will be made available to radio and television stations throughout Wisconsin for live or delayed broadcast.

“The WBA Foundation is honored to provide these important debates to Wisconsin’s voters as part of our 30-year history of using these debates to promote the civic and political process.” WBAF President and CEO Michelle Vetterkind said.

Both debates will be moderated by veteran television debate moderator and WBA Hall of Fame inductee Jill Geisler. Geisler holds the Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity at Loyola University Chicago. She’s from Wisconsin and was one of the first female news directors of a major market affiliate when she was news director at WITI in Milwaukee. She moderated the 2016 debate between Sen. Ron Johnson and Sen. Russ Feingold.

A group of panelists in each market will be tasked with researching questions to pose to the candidates. Both debates will include a panelist who will use social media to ask questions from the viewing audience. Bios of the panelists are attached to this release.

The WBA encourages its members to inform the public by airing this debate and their own programming to help educate voters ahead of the election.

Further details about the debate will be released at a later date.

Questions or inquiries about the debates should be directed to debate@wbafoundation.org.

Bios of the moderator and panelists and debate criteria are on the following pages.

Wisconsin Gubernatorial Debate Panelists

Oct. 13, 2018, WSAW-TV, Wausau



Jill Geisler
Moderator

Jill Geisler is the Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity at Loyola University Chicago and an internationally recognized expert in leadership and management. She is the author of “Work Happy: What Great Bosses Know” and “News Leadership at the Head of the Class.” Jill’s first career was in broadcast journalism, where she began as a reporter, photographer, and anchor, then became one of the country’s first female TV news directors at WITI-TV in Milwaukee. Her award-winning newsroom was known for its culture of enterprise and ethics. Jill has been inducted into multiple media halls of fame, including the WBA, the Milwaukee Press Club and the Silver Circle of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. She serves on the advisory boards of the Journalism and Women Symposium and the UW Center for Journalism Ethics.



Jessica Arp
WISC-TV

Jessica Arp is the Assistant News Director and Chief Political Reporter for WISC-TV in Madison. She’s covered Wisconsin politics for the station since 2007 and has been honored to receive Edward R. Murrow, Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and Emmy awards for her coverage of Wisconsin elections. In addition to her reporting duties, Arp has been involved in leading efforts in investigative techniques, innovation, and social media amongst the staff to help build the WISC-TV digital brand.



Emilee Fannon
WKOW-TV

Emilee Fannon is the WKOW Capital Bureau Chief. She came to Madison from Springfield, Illinois where she was a statehouse reporter for three years. Her highlights while covering Illinois politics included the rise and fall of the longest budget impasse in modern history as well as a historic school funding reform. Fannon developed a passion for news in high school and her storytelling interest continued to grow in college while she attended Northern Illinois University. She furthered her broadcasting career with a graduate degree in public affairs reporting at the University of Illinois-Springfield. Fannon is a huge Green Bay Packer fan and is happy to finally be rooting for her team in Wisconsin.



Leigh Mills
WMTV-TV

Leigh Mills anchors the early evening newscasts on NBC 15 in Madison, where she has worked for 15 years. Mills is a National Edward R. Murrow award winner, regional Emmy winner, and has also been honored with numerous Associated Press and Wisconsin Broadcasters Association awards. Mills enjoys being involved in the community through volunteer work. She serves on the Board of Trustees for DAIS, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services. She also volunteers with the Wisconsin Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, NAMI Dane County, the Clean Lakes Alliance, UCP, Tellurian and LLS Wisconsin. Mills loves to stay active and enjoys downhill skiing in the winter and running and biking in the summer. She also teaches a turbokick aerobics class every week.



Lupita Montoto
La Movida
Radio

Lupita Montoto and her husband Luis started a Spanish weekend radio show at a small rural station which eventually became La Movida Spanish radio 1480 AM and 94.5 FM and part of Mid-West Family Broadcasting in Madison. She is also co-owner of VozLatina Newspaper, a bi-weekly Spanish publication since 2002. At the same time, she learned English, she raised her family, and volunteered in the community. As a radio personality, she takes time to give not only to Latino women but also to the community at-large by providing access to news and information. The station hosts numerous community events. Montoto was named one of Wisconsin’s 48 Most Powerful Latinos in 2016 by Madison 365 and received a WWOCN Woman of Achievement Award. Lupita describes herself as a happy, positive, strong, and enthusiastic person.

U.S. Senate Debate Panelists

Oct. 5, 2018, WMTV-TV, Madison



Jill Geisler
Moderator

Jill Geisler is the Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity at Loyola University Chicago and an internationally recognized expert in leadership and management. She is the author of "Work Happy: What Great Bosses Know" and "News Leadership at the Head of the Class." Jill's first career was in broadcast journalism, where she began as a reporter, photographer, and anchor, then became one of the country's first female TV news directors at WITI-TV in Milwaukee. Her award-winning newsroom was known for its culture of enterprise and ethics. Jill has been inducted into multiple media halls of fame, including the WBA, the Milwaukee Press Club and the Silver Circle of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. She serves on the advisory boards of the Journalism and Women Symposium and the UW Center for Journalism Ethics.



Holly Chilsen
WSAW-TV

Holly Chilsen joined the NewsChannel 7 team in August 2012 as a producer for the 6 and 10 evening weekday newscasts. Since then she's anchored Sunrise 7 Sunday, NewsChannel 7 Weekend, and is now the producer and anchor of Fox WZAW News at 4 p.m. Chilsen is a 2010 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She majored in Radio/TV/Film and has a minor in Journalism. Chilsen is a native of Appleton and is thrilled to be able to share her love for storytelling and connect with those who make the stories come to life. She celebrates a passion for food and cooking. She is also a diehard Packers fan.



Chris Conley
WSAU Radio

Chris Conley joined WSAU in 2004 as News Director and morning news anchor. A year later he became Brand Manager for WSAU and then Operations Manager for the Midwest Communications in Central Wisconsin in 2009. Conley began working in radio at 15, and is now in his 33rd year of broadcasting. He's worked most of his career in the northeast, in Connecticut, Long Island, and suburban New York City. Conley has been honored by The Associated Press and the broadcasters associations of Wisconsin, New York, and Connecticut for on-air excellence. Conley is the writer and announcer of the 'This Day' feature, heard on WSAU and radio stations across the Midwest. Conley has four children and lives in Wausau.



Melissa Langbehn
WAOW-TV

Melissa Langbehn anchors News 9 WAOW's Live at 5 p.m. and co-anchors News 9 WAOW at 6 p.m. She joined TV-9 in 1991. Her work has been recognized by both the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and Associated Press. In 2008, the AP awarded her the Carol Brewer Award. Langbehn also attended the prestigious Poynter Institute. Also, she has repeatedly taken home top honors as "Favorite Television Personality" by readers of the Wausau City Pages. In addition to her journalism work Langbehn is involved in number of volunteer activities.



Ben Meyer
WJFW-TV

Ben Meyer is the managing editor and senior reporter at WJFW-TV in Rhinelander. In his six years at the station, Meyer has been the primary political reporter. His coverage responsibilities include national, state, and local government and politics. Coverage areas of particular interest include elections, education, natural resources, mining, and rural development. Outside of his work at WJFW, Meyer is the president of Rhinelander Partners in Education and serves on the boards of ArtStart Rhinelander and the YMCA of the Northwoods. Meyer also announces play-by-play on the radio for Rhinelander Hodags sports. Meyer is a 2010 graduate of UW-Madison with a degree in political science and lives in Rhinelander.



Jeff Thelen
WSAW-TV

Jeff Thelen is the most veteran member of the Newschannel 7 team. The Campbellsport native started as a part-time reporter in 1994 while working as news director at WDUX Radio in Waupaca. He is Assistant News Director and anchors the evening newscasts. Thelen has received awards for his work from the Military Reporters and Editors Association, the WBA, the Wausau Police Department and Wisconsin Associated Press. He's also been nominated for three Emmy awards in the Chicago Region of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He's an avid Packers and Badgers fan, and loves spending time with his family, friends and dog, Nala.



Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Foundation Debate Criteria

It is the WBA Foundation's goal to provide a forum to help educate voters on the issues in the campaign with a focus on the candidates who have a realistic opportunity to determine the outcome of the election.

The WBA Foundation will sponsor debates in the general election campaign for Governor/U.S. Senate in Wisconsin and will invite all candidates who have established themselves as viable candidates based on the following criteria:

1. The candidate has qualified for a place on the ballot in November either by winning his or her primary or by other means, and;
2. The candidate has shown support of at least 10 percent of those polled in a statewide political survey conducted by a recognized and respected political polling firm and/or a recognized and respected sponsoring organization that is released at least seven (7) days prior to the scheduled debate. Candidate sponsored polls are not eligible. and;
3. The candidate has an active campaign with an office, staff, literature/website, and funding apart from the candidate's own resources, and;
4. The candidate has raised a minimum of \$250,000 in campaign funds as reported in the pre-primary filing with state or federal election authorities.

The WBA Foundation recognizes that there may be other candidates who don't meet these criteria. The criteria are intended to provide voters with a forum to help educate them on the issues in the campaign with a focus on the candidates who have a realistic opportunity to determine the outcome of the election.