

Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition

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Our future is in the hands of Wisconsin voters on April 6

The stakes were high for the November 2020 presidential election, generating the largest voter turnout in Wisconsin history. Now the stakes for our local elections on April 6 are even higher – and the power lies in the hands of the voters.

While politicians in the state legislature are trying to gut voting rights and dismantle conservation policies, many elected officials at the municipal and county levels are working to protect the rights of their constituents and make voting more accessible for residents of all ethnicities and backgrounds.

Wisconsinites have a crucial role to play in this upcoming election by voting for local leaders who will uphold our freedom to vote and work to protect our homes from climate change before it's too late. It's the county executives, mayors, city and town councils, and courts who can push back against the dangerous, and at times unconstitutional, laws that state legislators are proposing by implementing policies at the local level.

These local officials live in the communities they represent, and their decisions have a direct impact on the residents in their neighborhoods and counties. Our vote in this quickly approaching spring election decides who represents us. As voters, we get to decide who the people will be that advocate for our communities.

Jessica Katzenmeyer, a community activist based in West Allis talks about why local elections are important to her:

“Today's children are our future leaders, future CEOs, future elected officials, all of whom will make important decisions which will affect us in one way or another. I don't have any kids, but I care about our future and this is why we all need to pay attention to who we are electing in these races and make informed choices on our vote.”

Leland Pan, a Milwaukee based teacher and activist tells his story about why he's voting for the Milwaukee Public School Board of Directors:

“Our voices can get drowned out in this state or at the national level, but here locally, we can pick a truly representative person to fight alongside us. We need someone who will fight for our students' and families' interests. We need someone who will listen to parents and will treat our children with dignity. We need representation that fights against locking kids up and fights against the school to prison pipeline. We need representation who will fight for healthy food,

healthy environments, and safe school buildings that won't poison our children with lead or asbestos. My neighborhood and my district have a lot of food deserts, lead paint, lead pipes, and health issues like asthma. We need people who will fight with us to change that. At the state level and at the federal level, maybe we can't get the votes. At the local level, we definitely can."

Jane Kettler, president of the League of Women Voters of Sheboygan County, talks about why judicial elections are important, and how the Sheboygan County League has been preparing for the upcoming election, including interviewing candidates on the April ballot and sharing candidate's responses with voters:

"Judicial elections often have low turnout and candidates are more difficult to research, but they are so important because our court systems protect our rights, and provide oversight against abuse by the other branches of government. Many people think of criminal cases when thinking about the court system, but judges make decisions in other types of issues many voters unfortunately find themselves dealing with, including property foreclosures, child custody and civil lawsuits. Since appellate courts are an opportunity to fix mistakes made at the circuit level, we wanted to give voters more information on this year's candidates for our appellate district."

Voters like Dean Shultz from River Hills are voting for Superintendent of Public Instruction, which heads the Department of Public Instruction and has direct oversight over public schools and libraries across the state. **Shultz says why he plans to vote April 6:**

"I have an ongoing interest in education because I have a grandchild who benefits from Wisconsin's public education. Teachers, school districts, and the state education system have valiantly worked to be sure that my grandchild, the children in Oconto Falls, and students across the state have made progress. Wisconsinites need strong state leadership to make this work. My vote for State Superintendent is crucial in my community."

Interview Opportunities:

- Jessica Katzenmeyer, community activist based in West Allis
- Leland Pan, Milwaukee based teacher and activist
- Jane Kettler, president of the League of Women Voters of Sheboygan County
- Dean Shultz, voter living in River Hills

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The Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition is a network of nonpartisan organizations collectively interested in building a Wisconsin where every voter has an equal opportunity to register to vote, cast a ballot, and have that ballot counted. We believe that safe, free, and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and the gateway to ensuring the full and equal participation of all Wisconsinites.