

LOCAL & STATE

SPRING ELECTIONS

School board races get political

Nonpartisan posts can launch careers

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In August, several members of the western Wisconsin community of Holmen were escorted out of a School Board meeting for failing to comply with the district's mask requirement. Now two of them who spoke out against COVID mitigation policies are seeking election to the School Board in April.

About 17 miles north of Milwaukee, in the Mequon-Thiensville School District, at least one candidate seeking election to the board ahead of the February primary led a recall effort — driven by frustration with COVID mitigation policies — which was ultimately struck down in November. Two of the four board members targeted in the recall, who are up for re-election, decided against running to retain their seats.

In Dane County, the Mount Horeb School Board contest has drawn 11 candidates in the Feb. 15 primary for three seats with some candidates highlighting hot-but-not-political issues.

"Equality is extremely important to me, but creating a racial divide is not. I don't feel divisive curriculum should be in our schools," candidate Jeff Shields wrote on his Facebook campaign page, where he emphasizes that his motto is "KIDS instead of POLITICS."

Across the state candidates focused on political platforms and single issues have signed up for this April's nonpartisan school board races ahead of the November midterm elections.

"We're certainly seeing the nationalization of school board races here in Wisconsin across the country," UW-Oshkosh associate professor of public administration Michael Ford said. "You're seeing a heck of a lot of talk about things like vaccine mandates, critical race theory, things that are actually pretty disconnected from the reality of being a school board member."

Ford

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EAST HIGH SCHOOL

Sophomore dies after ski accident

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An East High School sophomore died Friday after he was taken off life support following a skiing accident a week ago, according to an email to families from East's interim principal Mikki Smith.

Smith wrote in the email Alex West was involved in a skiing accident on Jan. 28. The email said friends and teachers described him as "an intelligent, funny and very confident young man" who excelled at many things and built "genuine and robust relationships" with his peers.

"Once you were in with Alex, you were in all the way," Smith wrote to families Friday evening. The school does not have information on a memorial or funeral service for Alex, she wrote, but would share any additional details provided by his family.

Counseling support will be available for East High School students on Monday through the Student Services office, Smith wrote. "I am very sorry to share this news," she wrote. "Thank you for keeping Alex's family and loved ones in our thoughts at this difficult time."

FAR EAST SIDE | OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTING

'They tried to kill him'

Family says unarmed Black man shot five times by white officer

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The mother of a Black man who was shot Thursday morning on Madison's Far East Side said a state law enforcement officer shot her son at least five times in the back while he was unarmed.

Quaden L. Wilson, 38, underwent surgery Saturday be-

cause of the gunshot wounds, his mother, Stacy Morris, said in an interview Saturday. The Dane County Sheriff's Office, which is investigating what it said was an officer-involved shooting, characterized the injuries as "non-life-threatening." Morris, 53, said she received an update from the hospital that Wilson made it through the surgery.

Authorities still have not released the name of the man who was shot, nor who shot him. The Sheriff's Office has described the incident as an "officer-in-



Wilson

In a brief update Friday, the Sheriff's Office said the man shot was 38 and wanted on a state Department of Corrections warrant. Wilson has an open disorderly conduct case and several other

criminal convictions that he has served sentences for, but it's unclear whether those are related to the warrant.

Madison police spokesperson Stephanie Fryer said Madison officers were assisting agents with the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation with an investigation when the shooting happened and that no Madison officers fired their weapons and no officers were injured in the shooting.

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FROZEN ASSETS | 'WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL'



JOHN HART PHOTOS, STATE JOURNAL

Galen Heyne and his 3-month-old daughter, Izzy, are dressed for Saturday's cold conditions during a visit to the icy surface of Lake Mendota for the Frozen Assets Festival.

When lakes become parks

Madison celebrates with running, skating, kites and skydivers

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Kurt Loewenkamp and Leah Wicander were better prepared Saturday to take on a run over unusual terrain.

The couple learned from the last time they ran the 5K race on icy Lake Mendota as part of the Frozen Assets festival. Wicander said the sun had come out and started melting snow and ice, causing her to fall multiple times. This time, the Madison East Siders sported Yaktrax — slip-on traction devices — over their running shoes.

And a chilly 10-degree temperature and overcast skies at the race's start time offered preferential weather.

"I prefer cold-weather running, because it's just too uncomfortable otherwise," she said.

The Frozen Assets festival brought out first-timers and longtimers Saturday for activities and events on the icy surface of Lake Mendota right outside The Edgewater hotel. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the family-friendly event acts as a fundraiser for organizer Clean Lakes Alliance.

"Our lakes are our biggest assets, and when they're frozen, they are our largest parks," said James Tye, executive director and founder of the nonprofit. "It's really easy to access them and the idea is that Frozen Assets celebrates our lakes."

More than 600 people turned out for the 5K walk and run that had participants racing along the snow-covered lake. Children tried their hand at hockey and sipped hot chocolate. Skydivers with Seven Hills Skydivers put on a show by dropping thousands of feet and gracefully landing on the lake's surface. And colorful kites flown by people from across Wisconsin dotted the air above Madison's largest lake.

Dale Bowden was among those



The Frozen Assets festival, a fundraiser for organizer Clean Lakes Alliance, included several activities to keep children entertained, including a youth hockey rink where volunteer Elissa Tikalsky helped youngsters hit the back of the net.



More than 600 people joined in either running or walking the 5-kilometer course that started outside The Edgewater and went along the shoreline toward the UW-Madison campus before doubling back to the hotel.

with the Wisconsin Kites Club putting on the display. While the large kites were flying well, the Wisconsin Rapids resident and regional director of a national kite flying association said the wind was too spotty to

support "line laundry" — decorative elements hung from the line of a kite.

"I've got 12 cats. I've got a Minion. I've got a bunch of little dogs. I've got a couple fish," Bowden said of his line laundry.

"If the wind was good and steady, I could get everything out. But being spotty, we got to babysit the kites more."

Regardless, the display was still impressive to Robin Ehrler and her husband, who regularly attended Frozen Assets with their children before they were grown.

"In the winter, there's not a lot of things you can actually do outside," the Sun Prairie resident said. "But we do love to come and watch the kites."

Jessie Stankey and her two children were attending their first Frozen Assets after friends told them about the festival, which has raised about \$1.3 million in the past decade for Clean

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VIEW: Watch a video from Saturday's Frozen Assets festival here. Point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. [NEWSJU](#)

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

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Elections

From A3

That theme was on display at a "Parent Empowerment" rally in Richfield on Saturday attended by school board hopefuls from across the state, Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, of Oshkosh, and Frank McCormick, a former educator from Illinois.

McCormick echoed other speakers at the event in railing against COVID-19 mask mandates and declaring that public schools are "indoctrinating" students with "Critical Race Theory, an academic framework that focuses on racism embedded in the nation's laws and institutions and isn't taught in any of Wisconsin's K-12 schools."

"School board elections have now become the most important elections in our lives," he said. "Because we're talking about who controls the future - children."

Potential for obstructionism

While more civic engagement is always welcome, politicizing such historically nonpartisan races threatens to make governing more difficult, Ford said.

"The worry is obstructionism," he said. "You have a one-issue candidate or, more importantly, if you have a few candidates who are just hellbent on conflict, you really start to mess with the group dynamic of a governing board and grind the process to a halt. That's the real fear."

Recent efforts that have gummed up the workings of government, Ford said, include more than a dozen school board recall elections, launched in response to COVID mitigation policies, that took place across the state since the pandemic began. A parent group in Oshkosh that was vocal about the school district's mask policies had a few candidates throw their name into the hat to seek seats on the School Board.

"Just about every major school district in the state has at least one candidate who is running on an issue like critical race theory, and if



ELIZABETH BEYER, STATE JOURNAL

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson speaks to reporters during a "Parent Empowerment Rally" in Richfield on Saturday. Johnson, who is up for reelection this year, has become more vocal in his push to get conservatives on every ballot, including typically nonpartisan races such as school board elections.

you had gone pre-COVID-19 that was not a thing. That was never an issue anybody had talked about," he said.

"It's more of a frustration that some folks have with state and federal government and their inability to gain traction at the state and federal level has brought some of these more social issues to the surface at the local level."

Airing grievances, building candidates

School board races appear to have become a platform used to air grievances about life during the pandemic, UW-Madison political science professor Barry Burden said. Concerns about public health mandates, masks, school closures, possible vaccine requirements and the specter of Critical

Race Theory are being echoed by conservatives nationwide and will bubble up in the November mid-term election, he said.

"School boards are a place where politicians often get their start," he said, citing Michele Bachmann, a school board candidate from Minnesota who was elected to state and then federal office before seeking the Republican nomination for president in 2012.

"It can be a breeding ground to create a fealty of candidates and it looks like right now the Republican Party is making better use of that, to create a pipeline of people who might seek higher office," Burden said.

He said some of the people seeking public office in Wisconsin are dissatisfied with President Joe Biden and Gov. Tony Evers and motivated to enter the race by issues such as COVID mitigation policies and equity initiatives in K-12 curriculum.

"It's anger more than enthusi-

asm, and the people who they're angry at are the incumbents," he said.

In solidly Democratic Madison there's markedly less enthusiasm for running for School Board than in other parts of the state. Of the three seats up for election this year, only one is contested after two incumbents opted not to run again.



Madison School Board President Ali Muldrow, who is up for reelection but is running unopposed, said interest in serving on the board, or any local office, is like the swing of a pendulum based on the political climate. The district hasn't faced much public outcry over its COVID mitigation or equity policies.

"Madison is a really progressive city. ... And I do think progressives are tired," she said. "Voter engagement is going to matter a

Money and influence

Johnson, who is up for reelection in November and spoke at Saturday's rally, had previously appealed to the public during an August event in Kenosha to get conservatives on the ballot in every race, including local, typically nonpartisan elections. He urged Republicans to take up the grassroots approach to build enthusiasm ahead of statewide races.

"The reason we're seeing our children being indoctrinated, the reason things like Critical Race Theory - whether they call it that or not - are being taught in our schools is because conservatives have focused largely on the federal government," he said Saturday. "They took their eye off the ball of local elections. We can't do that anymore."

Rebecca PAC, a committee former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch launched in 2020 to support Republican legislative candidates, donated at least \$6,400 to school board candidates in 2021 - including \$1,000 to Rob Abraham, the La Crosse assistant police chief who won his bid for the La Crosse School Board in April.

Abraham also received \$1,200 from the La Crosse County Republican Party to support his bid for the seat, during a time when the La Crosse School District and board were struggling with the decision about whether to have police stationed in public schools.

"For me that's concerning for at least two reasons, political parties are getting openly involved in nonpartisan races and a political PAC from across the state is throwing money into a local nonpartisan race in La Crosse -

Quarberg that sends some red flags," said Brad Quarberg, vice president of the La Crosse School Board. "We need candidates who care enough about kids to put their partisan biases aside."



Shooting

From A3

Dane County Sgt. Jeremy White said Saturday the investigation is ongoing and the Sheriff's Office had no further comment. The Department of Justice did not respond to a request for comment.

Wilson's younger brother, Mane Morris, said in an interview Saturday he believes authorities aren't providing more information on the shooting because a white officer shot his brother, who is Black. Morris said police officials - he didn't remember the names of the officers because his family has talked with "so many of them" - told him that a white officer from the Division of Criminal Investigation shot his brother.

Morris said he believes the shooting of his brother was an example of racism, saying he didn't think this would have happened to a white person.

"We feel like they tried to kill him," Morris said of his brother. "We feel like they're trying to cover up their tracks. And they're not telling the community the truth of what happened because their officer was at fault."

"Why can't they tell the honest truth about what happened?" Wilson's father, Nora Morris, 54, said. "That's all I'm looking for is honesty. And it's not happening." Stacy Morris said she was able



CHRIS RICKERT, STATE JOURNAL

A silver sedan was wedged between two SUVs at the scene of Thursday's officer-involved shooting on Madison's Far East Side in which the family of Quadren L. Wilson, 38, says he was shot in the back at least five times by an officer with the state Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation.

Wilson's father, Nora Morris, 54, said. "That's all I'm looking for is honesty. And it's not happening." Stacy Morris said she was able to talk to her son for about five minutes at the hospital but then was told she needed to leave. Wilson told her he was at a stoplight when the truck in front of him started backing up into him, she said. Wilson tried to back up, but then another truck pulled up behind him and "smashed him in the middle," Morris said. Then undercover officers jumped out of the trucks, Morris said.

"They smashed his windows and said, 'Put your (expletive) hands up in the air!'" Morris recalled her son telling her. She said he leaned forward over the steering wheel and put his hands up in the dashboard area.

"He was scared to make any type of move in the car. So his hands went straight to the dash," she said. "And when he did that, he said, 'Mom, they just got to

firing on me.' He told me he heard over 20 gunshots."

A Wisconsin State Journal photo shows a silver sedan wedged between two SUVs at the scene of Thursday's shooting.

A doctor told Morris that her son was shot several times in the back, she said. She asked how many "several" was, and the doctor directed her to police. Wilson told her he thought he had been

shot at least five times, she said. Mane Morris said part of why his family wanted to talk to the media is because they want to be able to be able to see Wilson.

Stacy Morris said Wilson told her that he was unarmed and didn't know why law enforcement was after him.

"He didn't do nothing wrong," Mane Morris said. "Nothing!"

"But being Black. That's what's wrong," Nora Morris added. Mane Morris said authorities are holding Wilson on a probation violation. That's why the hospital is saying his family can't see him - because Wilson is technically in custody, Morris said.

Wilson was on extended supervision for second-degree recklessly endangering safety in 2017. He was sentenced and served two years in prison for the conviction. He has previous convictions for fleeing police, disorderly conduct, ball jumping, trespassing, intimidating a victim, battery, theft and resisting.

Stacey Morris said she doesn't understand why police needed to corner Wilson and shoot him. She said he had recently checked in with his probation officer.

"There's no getting away. They know where he's at all times," she said. "I don't know why they did this."

State Journal reporter Chris Rickert contributed to this report.

CONGRESSIONAL ROLL CALL

CRISTOBELLA DURBETTE
Medill News Service
Here's how members of Wisconsin's congressional delegation voted on major issues last week.

House

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS and SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 2021: Voting 219 for and 203 against, the House on Wednesday expressed approval for considering (H RES 900) three bills: the Global Respect Act (H.R. 3486), which would impose sanctions on foreign persons who violate the rights of members of the LGBTQ+ community; the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021 (H.R. 4445); and the Bioeconomy Research and Development Act of 2021 (H.R. 452), also known as the America COMPETES Act.

Voting Yes: Mark Pocan, D-Black Earth, 2nd District; Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, 3rd District; Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, 4th District

Voting No: Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, 1st District; Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, 5th District; Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, 6th District; Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, 7th District; Mike Gallagher, R-Green Bay, 8th District

BIOECONOMY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2021: Voting 222 for and 210 against, the House on Friday directed (H.R. 452) the Office of Science and Technology Policy to implement an initiative to boost U.S. semiconductor manufacturing and increase America's competitiveness with China, among other priorities. The bill will invest \$52 billion in semiconductor research and development to combat a worldwide computer chip shortage contributing to supply chain bottlenecks.

Voting Yes: Pocan; Kind; Moore
Voting No: Steil; Fitzgerald; Grothman; Tiffany; Gallagher

Senate

BRIDGET MEEHAN BRENNAN NOMINATION: Voting 61 for and 35 against, the Senate on Tuesday confirmed (PN1494) the nomination of Bridget Meehan Brennan, of Ohio, to serve as the United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio. She previously worked as Acting U.S. Attorney for Ohio's Northern District.

Voting Yes: Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison

Voting No: Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh

CHARLES ESQUE FLEMING NOMINATION: Voting 56 for and 42 against, the Senate on Tuesday confirmed (PN1499) the nomination of Charles Esque Fleming, of Ohio, to be the United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio. Previously, he has worked as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in Cleveland, holding the role since 1991.

Voting Yes: Baldwin

Voting No: Johnson

DAVID AUGUSTIN RUIZ NOMINATION: Voting 62 for and 35 against, the Senate on Tuesday confirmed (PN1506) the nomination of David Augustin Ruiz, of Ohio, to serve as the United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio. He previously worked as a magistrate judge on the court.

Voting Yes: Baldwin

Voting No: Johnson

RUPA RANGA PUTTAGUNTA NOMINATION: Voting 57 for and 38 against, the Senate on Wednesday confirmed (PN386) the nomination of Rupa Ranga Puttagunta, of the District of Columbia, to be the Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for a 15-year term. She has worked as an administrative judge with the D.C. Rental Housing Commission since 2019.

Voting Yes: Baldwin

Voting No: Johnson

KENIA SEAOPE LOPEZ NOMINATION: Voting 59 for and 38 against, the Senate on Wednesday confirmed (PN638) the nomination of Kenia Seaope Lopez, of the District of Columbia, to serve as an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for a 15-year term. Previously, she worked as a magistrate judge on the D.C. Superior Court.

Voting Yes: Baldwin

Voting No: Johnson

SEAN STAPLES NOMINATION: Voting 59 for and 38 against, the Senate on Wednesday confirmed (PN800) the nomination of Sean Staples, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for a 15-year term. She has worked as a magistrate judge on the D.C. Superior Court.

Voting Yes: Baldwin

Voting No: Johnson