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**Lieutenant governor primaries on tap for next year**

*By WisPolitics.com*

The primary election for lieutenant governor is just under 11 months away. So far, no Democrats are making noise about getting into the race.

With Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes gunning for the U.S. Senate, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers is in need of a running mate in 2022 as he seeks a second term. Democratic Party insiders thinking about who would best complement the governor have a long list of qualities they’d like to see in an eventual nominee. That includes someone who could help excite the Democratic base.

Insiders are also looking to Evers for any clues on the person he may prefer. A senior Democratic source told WisPolitics.com Evers has decided not to immediately endorse anyone as the field starts to take shape. The source added that Evers hasn’t ruled out an endorsement as the Aug. 9 primary draws closer.

As speculation swirled this summer about Barnes’ prospects for getting into the U.S. Senate race, some mentioned state Sen. LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, and Milwaukee County Board Chair Marcelia Nicholson as possible candidates. But Johnson has publicly said she’s not interested in a bid. Nicholson told WisPolitics.com in July that she wasn’t planning to launch a bid unless she was encouraged to run. Since then, she’s taken a new job as national director of Civic Engagement and Independent Political Power for Popular Democracy, which helps community-based organizing groups.

Insiders say a number of factors are behind the slow-developing field. That includes the uncertainty over how redistricting will impact state lawmakers who might be interested in a run.

State Rep. Evan Goyke, D-Milwaukee, has been mentioned as a possible candidate, and he told WisPolitics.com he had considered a bid, in part, because he’s not sure how redistricting will reshape his district. But with a 3-month-old at home, he decided it wasn’t the right time for a run and he instead plans to seek re-election to the 18th Assembly District.

“What that looks like is out of my hands,” Goyke said of his seat post-redistricting. “What is in my hands is getting ready and being a strong incumbent running for re-election.”

Insiders also have mentioned freshman Democratic Rep. Sara Rodriguez, of Brookfield, as a possible candidate, particularly if her seat is redrawn significantly. As currently constructed, the district has trended the Democrats’ way. Hillary Clinton won 45.6% of the vote in the suburban Milwaukee district in 2016, narrowly losing it to Donald Trump. Last fall, Joe Biden took 53.6% of the vote there while winning by 9 points. Rodriguez lives in the northwest corner of the seat. If she were drawn into a seat that strongly grabs GOP territory in Waukesha County to her west, it would change the dynamic of a

re-election bid in a big way.

Another state lawmaker giving the race a look is Rep. David Bowen, D-Milwaukee. He was first elected to his Assembly seat in 2014 and lost a bid for state Democratic Party chair in 2019 to Ben Wikler.

Democratic Party insiders have also mentioned Kriss Marion, who’s run for Assembly and Senate seats in southwestern Wisconsin the last two cycles, as a possible candidate, as well as Wausau Mayor Katie Rosenberg.

Democrats note Barnes didn’t announce his bid for the lieutenant governor’s office until early 2018. Some have also suggested candidates in the crowded field for U.S. Senate may take a look at the race if they can’t gain traction for the party’s nomination.

Republicans, meanwhile, have two candidates who have already filed to run for lieutenant governor next fall: Lancaster Mayor David Varnam; and David King, of Milwaukee. King has run for a series of offices over the past decade, including secretary of state in 2010, the 4th Congressional District in 2014 and Milwaukee mayor in 2020.

Others mentioned as possible GOP candidates include: state Rep. Scott Allen, of Waukesha; Matt Cordio, an entrepreneur; state Sen. Rob Stafsholt, of New Richmond; state Sen. Pat Testin, of Stevens Point; Ben Voelkel, a former aide to U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh; and Cindy Werner, who ran unsuccessfully for the 4th Congressional District in 2020.

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