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[00:00:20] **Speaker 1** The following program is a PBS Wisconsin original production.

[00:00:25] **Speaker 2** You're watching Here and Now, 2024 election coverage.

[00:00:30] **Speaker 3** Madam Secretary, the great state of Wisconsin proudly casts all of its 41 votes for Donald J. Trump.

[00:00:46] **Speaker 2** The Republican National Convention is a wrap. I'm Frederica Freiberg. Tonight we bring all the local coverage of the event that put Milwaukee on the national stage. It's here and now for July 19th.

[00:01:02] **Speaker 4** Funding for Here and Now is provided by the Focus Fund for Journalism and Friends of PBS Wisconsin.

[00:01:17] **Speaker 2** Wisconsin is perhaps the most important battleground state in the presidential election, with both campaigns saying the other can't win if they don't win Wisconsin. That put even more emphasis on the city of Milwaukee hosting the Republican National Convention. Here and now, senior political reporter Zach Schultz was on the ground all week and kicks off our coverage tonight.

[00:01:47] **Speaker 5** The culmination of every convention is Thursday night, when the nominee takes the stage and basks in the adoration of the party faithful. Thank you very much. In some ways, the defining moment of the 2024 Republican National Convention didn't come in the host city of Milwaukee. It occurred in Butler, Pennsylvania, last Saturday, when a 20-year-old with a gun nearly took Donald Trump's life. By the time Trump took the stage Thursday night, his supporters had already declared the near-miss as a sign of divine intervention.

[00:02:23] **Speaker 6** Thank you for sparing the life of our presidents, Donald J. Trump. And Trump agreed.

[00:02:28] **Speaker 7** I felt very safe because I had God on my side.

[00:02:35] **Speaker 5** The first question of the week was whether it was even safe to come to the convention. These ladies from Eagle River had to decide if the violence would continue in Milwaukee.

[00:02:44] **Speaker 8** For a split second, I mean, you have to, you need to be prudent to reflect, but it's really more about now I know the police and security and homeland security and everything will probably even step up even more.

[00:02:57] **Speaker 5** UW-La Crosse professor Christina LaPlante saw the shooting on TV and canceled a trip with her students who planned to survey delegates for a class on political parties.

[00:03:07] **Speaker 9** Immediately my mind starts thinking about what on earth is going to happen at the convention now, and I'm immediately thinking about my safety, my student safety, is the political violence going to escalate at the RNC?

[00:03:20] **Speaker 5** Monday morning, the message from Republicans was one of unity.

[00:03:24] **Speaker 10** This is a moment to rise above their behavior and realize it is our task. To save and preserve this nation.

[00:03:34] **Speaker 5** But later that evening, on the main stage, Johnson was back to calling Democrats a threat to the nation.

[00:03:39] **Speaker 10** Are a clear and present danger to America.

[00:03:41] **Speaker 5** And the unity referred to the Republican Party unifying around Trump.

[00:03:46] **Speaker 11** We have the greatest opportunity I have ever seen for a Republican victory.

[00:03:52] **Speaker 5** Democrats hope to tie Donald Trump to a policy plan called Project 2025, a 900-page document created by the Heritage Foundation that creates a plan to give Trump unprecedented executive powers to remake the federal government. But there was no mention of the plan at Heritage's PolicyFest event, and Trump surrogate Vivek Ramaswamy refused to talk about Project 2025 — instead hinting that if Trump had been killed. It would have led to a second civil war. But I think the nation came within a hair's breadth of... God forbid, a second kind of civil war in this country. And we missed it. He wasn't the only one talking that way. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich told the Wisconsin delegation the same thing.

[00:04:38] **Speaker 12** We were right at the brink of falling apart as a country and potentially drifting towards a civil war.

[00:04:44] **Speaker 5** Other Republicans tried to turn down the rhetoric.

[00:04:48] **Speaker 13** I don't see our country on a pathway to a civil war, and we need to just continue to have that dialog to listen and exercise our voice at the ballot box. Trump's speech was supposed to focus on unity.

[00:05:01] **Speaker 7** We unite this evening more determined than ever.

[00:05:05] **Speaker 5** But there were times when the teleprompter didn't move as Trump went off script and returned to his favorite topics.

[00:05:11] **Speaker 7** Grazie, Nancy Pelosi, the whole thing, just boom, boom,

[00:05:15] **Speaker 5** He did find time to pander to the home state and by the way.

[00:05:18] **Speaker 7** Wisconsin, we are spending over $250 million here creating jobs and other economic development all over the place. So I hope you will remember this in November and give us your vote. I am trying to buy your vote!

[00:05:37] **Speaker 5** As the speech stretched out to the longest in convention history, those who started off shouting fight were now sitting quietly looking at their phones. But eventually, the speech wrapped up.

[00:05:50] **Speaker 7** And quite simply put, we will very quickly make America great again.

[00:05:59] **Speaker 5** The balloons dropped and the 2024 Republican National Convention came to an end.

[00:06:08] **Speaker 2** The state Republican party is riding high after the big event in Milwaukee. Its chairman, Brian Schimming, is here. And you do look like a pretty happy guy, a little exhausted.

[00:06:20] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I'm a little exhausted, but I have to tell you, I am so proud of Milwaukee. I'm so proud to the state of Wisconsin. We were able to pull off an excellent four day convention right here in Wisconsin. And as you know, Fred, I, I have a native here. I'm Homer. So I, wanted this to be good for the state, for the city of Milwaukee And it was the security considerations where they were just security was great. The cooperation between the city and the county and of course, all the law enforcement agencies, the chamber, the visitors bureau, just fabulous. So I'm just so excited. And I had people that I, after the RNC meeting this morning from other states, big, you know, convention states like Chicago and LA and Atlanta, whatever, coming up and saying this was the best convention they'd ever been to. So I'm so proud of Wisconsin.

[00:07:14] **Speaker 2** Yeah, super high praise. So a month ago, could you ever have foreseen everything that has happened in this race for president?

[00:07:24] **Speaker 1** I said at a press conference yesterday that they'll be writing books, not about the campaign, but the last three weeks, you know, alone, much less the whole campaign. Of course, the tragedy of the shooting in Pennsylvania, which really pulls at you, you know. I mean, you have people that were there to support a candidate. It's not a partisan thing. It's people who came out to this rally. So the tragedy of that rally, and then obviously the debates were within 90 minutes, a political party, my friendly adversaries on the other side, the Democrats and their candidate completely collapsed within 90-minutes. I'm not sure I can think of a parallel to this in recent history anyway. So the Democratic Party and Joe Biden. Went from that kind of confidence that Joe Biden would be the candidate to the calamity of that debate to the crisis they now sit in all within a couple of weeks. I honestly, I can't think of another time in recent history where so much was packed into so little time. And then to it off for us having a successful convention. I think by any account It's really, we'll be talking about it for years.

[00:08:56] **Speaker 2** What's your comment on Wisconsin congressman, Democrat Mark Pocan, telling Joe Biden it's time to pass the torch?

[00:09:04] **Speaker 1** Well, what I would say to my friend Mark Pocan is, where have you been? I think the truth of the matter is my adversaries on the other side of the aisle have known all of this about Joe Biden for a very, very long time. And he's incapable of being their candidate. Frankly, I'm not sure he's capable of being president right now. And I don't make that. I have relatives of my family who have memory and other issues, so I don't make that charge lightly. I think you have an incapable candidate and an incapable president right now. And the dilemma that the Democrats find themselves in here is that we're in July of the election year. We're not in July of last year. We're in july of this year. And the challenge that they face right now is we walk out of this convention unified and they're spending the weekend not knowing what they're going to do next. Historically, it's been an amazing moment.

[00:10:12] **Speaker 2** What would be your reaction to, say, Vice President Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket?

[00:10:18] **Speaker 1** Right, so I have been saying about the vice presidential potential, vice presidential debate between her and JD Vance, that if people see me walking down the streets of Wisconsin with a folding table, it's because I'm gonna sell tickets to that debate. And so I think that would be the same case no matter where she is on the ticket. So here's the Democrats' dilemma. They have a four-year president. You know, on every primary and caucus is a sitting four-year incumbent where now well over 70 percent of the people say he shouldn't be running. The difficulty is Vice President Harris's numbers are very, very similar. So, they don't really get some huge advantage.

[00:11:07] **Speaker 2** Brian Shemin, we leave it there. Thanks so much for your time.

[00:11:11] **Speaker 1** Thanks for having me.

[00:11:13] **Speaker 2** With so many people coming into Milwaukee and opening their wallets through the week, there was an expectation for a $200 million economic boost to the city. But as Stephen Potter reports, while some businesses made out, others fell flat.

[00:11:31] **Speaker 14** For some, the restaurant business this week in Milwaukee has been booming.

[00:11:35] **Speaker 15** From the minute we opened our doors yesterday all the way through, we have been slammed busy. We have been packed full.

[00:11:43] **Speaker 14** For Marla Poytinger, from the new fashion bar and restaurant, which is right across from the Fiserv Forum, the increase in traffic from the Republican National Convention has more than exceeded expectations.

[00:11:54] **Speaker 15** We told our team to expect about the equivalent of one Bucks game every day this week, which would have been fantastic four days in a row. Yesterday alone we did five Bucks games.

[00:12:06] **Speaker 14** But for others who are further away from the convention activity, business has been significantly different and disappointing.

[00:12:13] **Speaker 16** Well, we've been hearing people haven't been coming down because the restaurants are not getting enough business. It seems like where just so many events going on just were also kind of on the outskirts of where everything's taking place. So I mean, people sometimes seems like they're forgetting the little local spots. We had extra staff on ready standby, but we've actually called off. Few people here and there just because numbers have not been what we expected.

[00:12:47] **Speaker 14** In the months preceding the convention, there was a lot of talk and excitement about a substantial financial bump coming from the infusion of the 50,000 convention attendees.

[00:12:57] **Speaker 17** I think originally the thought was it would be $200 million in economic impact.

[00:13:02] **Speaker 14** In steakhouse carnivores, says business at his restaurant has been slower than he'd like.

[00:13:12] **Speaker 17** Not crazy by any means, not really overly busy.

[00:13:16] **Speaker 14** Normally, Sheik says, conventions that come to town for company meetings and trainings are busy, but the Republican National Convention isn't a normal convention.

[00:13:26] **Speaker 17** There aren't restricted areas and security and things of this nature. So I would say this is, political conventions are certainly different.

[00:13:34] **Speaker 14** Sheik says he's also talked to some restaurant owners who decided not to open at all during the week of the convention.

[00:13:39] **Speaker 17** And they said, look, I don't really have a lot of reservations on the books. So if I don't have business, if I order a lot of the product, it's perishable, right? And they don't do business, then they actually lose money.

[00:13:51] **Speaker 14** One person keeping a close eye on the economic impact of the RNC is Dale Coyenga. He's the president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce.

[00:14:00] **Speaker 18** The Milwaukee brand is known. And it's things like this, it's like the Box to Brewers, events like this where you could go around the world and people say, oh, I know Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

[00:14:10] **Speaker 14** As for the lack of business some spots are seeing during the convention, Koyanga says

[00:14:15] **Speaker 18** You can't just look at your four days. You have to look at the longer.

[00:14:17] **Speaker 14** Impact of tourism in Milwaukee. For Sheik, he may have wanted more of an economic impact from the RNC, but he also understands it's a long game.

[00:14:26] **Speaker 17** The greater hope is that everyone that came here from around the world and around the country to say this is an incredible city. I wanna return to that city, I wanna go back to that restaurant, I wanna stay in that hotel. And hopefully that a lot of people and a lot organizations will see how great of a city it is that they'll book large scale conventions here with us.

[00:14:46] **Speaker 2** Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson welcomed tens of thousands of Republican faithful to his Democratic city. Did it pay off? He joins us now, and Mayor, thanks very much for being here.

[00:14:58] **Speaker 19** Happy to see you.

[00:14:59] **Speaker 2** So we reported on the economic impact of the convention. Did it meet your expectations?

[00:15:06] **Speaker 19** Well, as I mentioned, we're not in control of economic projections for the convention. What I can tell you is that there were a lot of people, tens of thousands, that came to Milwaukee, that stayed our hotels, that ventured into restaurants, that spent money with local vendors and left a significant amount of money here and our economy. We'll have to go back and check in with Visit Milwaukee and those other folks to see exactly what the economic impact was. I anticipate that it was. Pretty hefty though.

[00:15:37] **Speaker 2** After Donald Trump called Milwaukee a horrible city, do you think that had any influence on convention goers?

[00:15:46] **Speaker 19** On the convention goers, no, I mean, these are folks that were coming from far across the country. I don't know if they paid attention to his comments, like we paid attention to them here. That's, you know, unfortunately, because Donald Trump, Mr. Trump, unfortunately has a history of saying these wild, outlandish things. And so people tend to not really pay them much attention, although they should. Because sometimes some of the things that he says can have a detrimental impact on individuals' rights on the direction of the country and so forth. So things can be outlandish, but that doesn't mean they're not important for us to listen to. We certainly listened when he said that Milwaukee was a horrible city.

[00:16:27] **Speaker 2** So following the rally attack, kind of going back specific to the convention itself, following the attempted assassination of Donald Trump, how tense were security considerations in your city now that it's wound up and maybe we can talk about it a little more?

[00:16:43] **Speaker 19** Well, first, let me just say that that attempt, that assassination attempt on Mr. Trump was terrible. That was actually horrible. That should never happen. That is just, there's no place for that sort of action in our politics at all whatsoever. And after it happened, I did have the opportunity to wish Mr.Trump very well in his recovery, had the chance to speak to him and told him the same thing. So in terms of individuals being here in Milwaukee in. Having a chance to follow up after that incident, with security here, we took the opportunity to make sure that this city was safe. And we had an NSSC, that was a designation here. It's a national special security event in Milwaukee. That's the highest designation you could possibly get for an event of this magnitude. So by definition, it was a secure event than what the rally was that Mr. Trump held last week, Saturday.

[00:17:38] **Speaker 2** So there were definitely concerns, though, and criticisms of so many out-of-state police officers in the city and on the streets, including those from Ohio, who as you know shot and killed a man outside the perimeter. What is your response to that shooting?

[00:17:55] **Speaker 19** Well, as it relates to the number of officers who were here from out of state, I mean, look, Milwaukee won the Democratic National Convention in 2020 and now unfortunately didn't pan out because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But had it actually taken place the way that we envisioned, you would have seen the same sort of security footprint with officers coming in from outside the state of Wisconsin and in from across the country in terms of the officers from the outside. Milwaukee police would not have been able to make sure the convention was secure all by themselves and still provide policing services to the balance of the city. So there was a need to bring in officers from the outside. This was a collaboration, not just with Milwaukee police, but with Secret Service and law enforcement agencies from across the country. I'm thankful for their assistance. It was tragic that that there was an incident that happened where a man was killed. Outside of the security perimeter. The officers from Columbus, Ohio, they were there not in a patrolling front-facing mode. They were actually doing a briefing, a debrief. And one of the officers happened to notice that there was an altercation taking place. Notice that one of individuals had a knife. Later on, we will find that there were two knives. Officers approached the individual, made numerous commands to drop the weapons, to drop weapons. That didn't happen instead. Um the individual lunged in a threatening manner at an unarmed man and you know and and and possibly could have caused him a serious bodily harm or death and the ox and the officers took action and i'm saddened that uh life was lost uh there but i'm also uh thinking about the individual who possibly could have lost his life and what's more is that when i talk to officers um including law officers at the local level here i'm told that any officer in that situation would have taken the exact same action in order to make sure they preserved the life of the unarmed person who was being attacked.

[00:19:54] **Speaker 2** Alright, we leave it there, Mayor Cavalier-Johnson, thanks very much. Community advocates say the city should be held accountable in the fatal shooting of a man who had been living in a tent less than a mile from the security perimeter during the RNC. The Columbus, Ohio Police Department released body cam footage of its officers shooting and killing Samuel Sharp as he wielded a knife in an apparent street fight.

[00:20:24] **Speaker 20** Stop! Drop the knife! Drop your knife! Drop the Knife! Police! Drop your Knife!! Drop! Drop Your Knife Now!

[00:20:38] **Speaker 2** But why were out-of-state police patrolling city neighborhoods beyond the security zone? Angela Lange from Black Leaders Organizing for Communities calls Sharpe's death devastating. Angela, thanks very much for being here.

[00:20:52] **Speaker 21** Thanks for having me.

[00:20:53] **Speaker 2** So you blame the RNC for the death of Samuel Sharp. Why?

[00:20:59] **Speaker 21** I do. I fully believe that had the RNC not been hosted in Milwaukee, we wouldn't have even had those out of state police even over there. And I think there is calls and questions of why they were over there in the first place. And i've seen accounts from friends and family members that all have said that if this was a local police officer, it probably would not have resulted in his death because they knew him. And they would be more trained in de-escalation.

[00:21:30] **Speaker 2** Have you gotten any answers as to the question as to why those officers were there?

[00:21:37] **Speaker 21** I have not. I did see some commentary from law enforcement trying to explain why they were out there. And I know that there was a response that on the last day of the RNC, if there were out of state cops patrolling some of those areas, they would be accompanied with the Milwaukee Police Department officer, which doesn't quite answer the question. And I don't think actually really solved or got to the heart of the issues.

[00:22:01] **Speaker 2** Just ahead of the convention there were sweeps downtown of unsheltered people. How did that play into this?

[00:22:08] **Speaker 21** Yeah, I mean I think with any convention and we had similar concerns if we were to host the DNC about unhoused folks and the additional security and when you have a large convention or a large event like this, a lot of folks they want to beautify their city and make it look as attractive as possible and so a lot folks were told I believe by last week's Saturday that they had to find a different place to go. Folks have said that law enforcement did provide resources But. There's only so many shelters and so many beds that I can imagine it pushed folks to go to other areas away from maybe where they typically were.

[00:22:47] **Speaker 2** Now, before the convention, you said that you felt betrayed by the mayor for, quote, rolling out the red carpet for people who hate us. How about now after the convention?

[00:23:01] **Speaker 21** I'm even more betrayed and saddened that this is actually what happened in our city. And there had been years of warnings from community members and residents that said we did not want this hateful language and this hate full party, but had also been saying about the increase in law enforcement would have been a concern. And it goes to show what happens when you don't actually listen to community members and actually listen to our concerns because unfortunately now we're having to deal with this tragedy and losing a Milwaukee community member.

[00:23:37] **Speaker 2** In a city that Donald Trump called horrible, do you feel like so many eyes on Milwaukee helped show it in a different light?

[00:23:48] **Speaker 21** You know, I'm not sure. You know we've seen reports and commentary that some of the folks weren't necessarily seeing some of great amazing places of Milwaukee. There are restaurants, beloved restaurants and attractions that were closed and didn't have as many reservations. So I'm curious of how much the participants actually saw of Milwaukee, I hope that they left with a different perspective. Um but I will say that even tweeting about the shooting that happened and seeing some of the comments in my mentions, I'm not sure if people um have any sympathy for Milwaukee and I think some folks still can see consider it a place of murder and crime in these terrible stereotypes and Thanks for watching, and I'll see you in the next one.

[00:24:36] **Speaker 2** What would you like people to know about the city of Milwaukee?

[00:24:42] **Speaker 21** I want people to know that Milwaukee is an incredibly beautiful and special place. And I say this as a lifelong resident by choice. I chose to live here and to work here and one of my favorite things is the summer, but also the people and the resilience and that in the face of tragedy, we always find a way to center joy and come together and find a way to make things work even under really tremendous circumstances.

[00:25:07] **Speaker 2** Angela Lang, thanks very much for joining us.

[00:25:10] **Speaker 21** Thanks for having me.

[00:25:12] **Speaker 2** Security was always planned to be tight around the convention, and the assassination attempt on the eve of it only heightened awareness for the thousands of law enforcement from across the state and nation assigned to the city. Planned protests added to the mix. Here and now, Stephen Potter has this report.

[00:25:33] **Speaker 20** We've got to do what? We've gotta fight back!

[00:25:39] **Speaker 22** I came here to loudly and proudly oppose the racist and bigoted agenda of the Republican Party.

[00:25:46] **Speaker 14** With thousands of delegates, attendees, and guests arriving for the first day of the convention,

[00:25:51] **Speaker 23** N-N-NATO RACIST U.S.

[00:25:54] **Speaker 14** Protesters also showed up in Milwaukee to denounce the Republican Party and its policies.

[00:25:59] **Speaker 24** We're being led down a dangerous path with the Republican Party. I'm concerned. I'm nervous. I'm a 20-year Army veteran, and I consider the direction that our Republican Party is going, and particularly their nominee, Trump, is super dangerous. And I consider him a bit of a traitor. He's out for himself. He's not out for the citizens, and that's what we need.

[00:26:22] **Speaker 25** As you can see, there are hundreds, even thousands of protesters here at the Republican National Convention. Many different groups are represented, with many different reasons to protest.

[00:26:31] **Speaker 26** We're looking to defend immigrant rights, we're looking to defend LGBTQ rights, we're look to defend reproductive rights as well. I mean, the list could really go on, and they have had attack on civil liberties, on civil rights, all for too many years now, and we're here to oppose it.

[00:26:44] **Speaker 14** Omar Flores is a lead organizer with the Coalition to March on the RNC. He says that despite the intense heat earlier this week, a wide range of protesters made their voices heard.

[00:26:55] **Speaker 26** We're seeing a lot of folks from the student movement, from the Palestinian movement, from the anti-war movement, and from the movement against police crimes.

[00:27:01] **Speaker 14** Flores says that it was no small task to organize the protest, rally, and march.

[00:27:06] **Speaker 26** It takes a lot of time and a lot of very hard work and honestly, the city did not make it any easier up until recently. You know, we shouldn't have had to file a lawsuit to get to where we are today.

[00:27:15] **Speaker 14** Protest organizers filed a lawsuit in federal court to move their march route closer to where most of the convention activity will be held. They lost in court, but came to an agreement with the city to march through downtown and within a block of the Convention. Milwaukee resident Jackie Clark says attending the protest was a chance to express her right to free speech.

[00:27:36] **Speaker 27** That's democracy. That's America.

[00:27:38] **Speaker 14** Another protester thought of the past and worried for the future.

[00:27:42] **Speaker 28** And I guess it's like the circle has turned, and I don't want the progress that we fought hard, both in our professions and as students and as demonstrators 50 years ago, to be undone. Why?

[00:27:56] **Speaker 14** While most who attended the protests were there to show their disgust with the Republican agenda, some counter-protesters also brought their megaphones to Red Arrow Park.

[00:28:05] **Speaker 3** God can save you right here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

[00:28:09] **Speaker 14** And a handful of Trump supporters also showed up to watch. Milwaukee resident Philip Reitz wasn't impressed. Well, that's to be expected. It happens at every convention in every town. Protest organizer Flores says he doesn't expect Monday's rally in March to sway any Republicans, but he still thinks protesting serves a purpose.

[00:28:29] **Speaker 26** We don't think that we're gonna be changing any minds, but we do know that we can put the pressure on and make it so politically inconvenient for them to continue with business as usual.

[00:28:36] **Speaker 14** Reporting from downtown Milwaukee, for Here and Now, I'm Stephen Potter.

[00:28:42] **Speaker 2** In the 2020 election, Donald Trump received just 7% of the black vote nationwide, which is comparable to what Republican presidential candidates have received, dating back to the passage of the Civil Rights Acts in the 1960s. But Republicans in Wisconsin think that's going to change this fall. Here and now senior political reporter Zach Schultz has this story about the GOP's voter outreach program in Milwaukee.

[00:29:13] **Speaker 5** There are 50,000 visitors in Milwaukee for the Republican National Convention. But around the secure perimeter, it's a sea of white, save for people working security or selling Trump merchandise. Inside the Fiserv, the GOP delegates are overwhelmingly white. But Republicans like Bob Spindel say black voters look back at the first Trump presidency with fondness.

[00:29:37] **Speaker 11** Well, I'll tell you, I've been involved in the black community, and I noticed during his time, people were happy.

[00:29:43] **Speaker 29** Well, we're going to have a big splash this election cycle. So get ready.

[00:29:49] **Speaker 5** Gerard Randall is first vice chairman of the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

[00:29:54] **Speaker 29** Well, good afternoon, everyone, and welcome.

[00:29:57] **Speaker 5** He hosted an event Tuesday at the GOP's Black Community Center, just a few blocks north of the convention, where pictures of Donald Trump and Ronald Reagan hang next to Martin Luther King Jr. And Abraham Lincoln.

[00:30:09] **Speaker 29** We're really excited for this opportunity to showcase a couple of our really outstanding efforts to extend outreach into the African-American community here in Milwaukee.

[00:30:24] **Speaker 5** The headliner of the event was South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, who is promoting the Opportunity Zones created in Milwaukee designed to bring investment to the area.

[00:30:34] **Speaker 30** That the goal isn't simply to lift African Americans out of poverty. The goal is to lift all of Americans out of poverty who are living in poverty. It just so happens that disproportionately African Americans live in poverty more so than any other demographic in this country.

[00:30:51] **Speaker 27** I mean, they're there. They just want to be able to show a presence. It's not like they are doing a lot in the entire community.

[00:30:56] **Speaker 5** David Crowley is the Milwaukee County executive and a Democrat. He says the GOP putting a building with a billboard in a black neighborhood isn't enough to win black votes.

[00:31:07] **Speaker 27** Sometimes folks don't know how to actually address black folks. We've seen a glad senator, Tim Scott, was in a black neighborhood. But let's face it, one of the first things he said on the convention floor was that racism doesn't exist. And whether you're a Democrat or a Republican and happen to be black, living in one of most segregated communities in the United States, like Milwaukee County, then you have to go, not quite, not so fast.

[00:31:33] **Speaker 5** The Black Conservative Federation held a barbecue later that evening, hoping to draw in and engage potential voters. Turnout was low, but the Reverend Harold Turner showed up, saying he was willing to listen.

[00:31:46] **Speaker 31** I would always believe that it's important to know where you come from and then you possibly can go forward. You need to know your opponents as well. So if the Republican is an opponent, we need to if the Democrat is doing a lot for us, we need know that too. And we should hold them accountable to address some of the real needs that we are in heart of the black community.

[00:32:11] **Speaker 5** Aside from being an alternate delegate, Bob Spindel is also a Republican appointee to the Wisconsin Elections Commission. After the 2022 election, he sent out an email praising lower turnouts in black neighborhoods in Milwaukee, saying, "...we can be especially proud of the city of Milwaukee, casting 37,000 less votes than cast in the 2018 election, with a major reduction happening in the overwhelmingly black and Hispanic areas. Spindel says getting black people to not vote for Democrats was the first step to voting for Republicans.

[00:32:46] **Speaker 11** Take a look at what the Dems have done for the community over the last 50 years. Nothing has changed. Very little has changed from what the Democrats have been doing.

[00:32:55] **Speaker 5** Democrats called it more evidence of voter suppression.

[00:32:58] **Speaker 29** There was no effort on the part of the Republican Party, either nationally, locally, or statewide, to depress the African-American vote. Voters may have stayed home on their own volition because, frankly, the message just wasn't resonating with them.

[00:33:14] **Speaker 5** Randall says the proof will come this November, when he says Trump will double his support among black voters in Wisconsin.

[00:33:21] **Speaker 29** We're going to get better than 15% of the African-American votes statewide here for President Trump. I don't know where he's getting those numbers from.

[00:33:28] **Speaker 5** Crowley says the RNC will be old news by November, and black voters remember which party supports their community.

[00:33:36] **Speaker 27** It's about investments. You can be here all you want and say I support you, but I tell people all the time, it's not about being an ally. You know, we need to accomplish. I need you to be right next to me, with me, going down and fighting for the things that directly affect not just me, but affects my family as well.

[00:33:54] **Speaker 2** President Joe Biden is off the campaign trail for now with a case of COVID. There was already what's described as rising anger and panic among many of his supporters about his ability to go on. What must this be like for state party leaders who helped deliver Wisconsin to Joe Biden in 2020? We asked Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chairman Ben Wickler, and thanks a lot for being here.

[00:34:19] **Speaker 32** Thanks so much for having me out, Farika.

[00:34:21] **Speaker 2** So what is this like to watch the Republican National Convention with the growing number of Democrats calling for your candidate to step aside?

[00:34:30] **Speaker 32** What's so striking this week is that the Republican Party has been completely subsumed by MAGA. There's total unity within the Republican party, leaders around a candidate who selected one of the most outspoken proponents of 100% national abortion ban as his vice presidential candidate. There's unity with people like Eric Hovde around Project 2025. Trump and JD Vance, they're staffers going out and writing this playbook. For not only ripping away access to abortion and emergency contraception, but eliminating the Department of Education, shredding any kind of protections for the environment and climate change. It's a wholesale plan to kind of repeal the last 50 years of progress in this country. They didn't talk about it from the convention stage, but they have written down what they want to do. And in this election, it's a choice between a future where Trump's vision of being a dictator on day one becomes a reality. Or the vision that Biden and Harris have laid out, that President Biden laid out in his speech in Detroit right before the RNC, of signing Roe vs. Wade into law, of signing the Pro Act so workers can organize and unionize, of expanding social security and Medicare. I think I know which future most Wisconsinites and most Americans want.

[00:35:45] **Speaker 2** What is your message to Wisconsin voters about Joe Biden's ability to beat Donald Trump with his poll numbers and money slipping?

[00:35:55] **Speaker 32** We're in a moment where so much conversation in the press and around the state and around country, it's not about whether Democrats want to defeat Donald Trump. It's about the best way to do it. And what I know from so many conversations is that there's a enormous level of intensity and focus on making sure that we defeat MAGA this fall and that President Biden's vision for the next term is enormously popular in a way that unites Democrats. So I feel like, you know, debates happen, conversations happen, I think Democrats are going to come together. And I think that when we do that, we're going to reelect President Biden and Vice President Harris and reelect Tammy Baldwin and flip House seats and I think flip the state assembly and break the super majority in the state senate, because what we are fighting for is much, much more popular than what Republicans are trying to inflict on the country.

[00:36:47] **Speaker 2** What do you personally know about Joe Biden's decision to stay in or step aside?

[00:36:53] **Speaker 32** I was speaking with my friends on the Biden campaign yesterday and others this morning. He is full steam ahead and organizing and working to make sure that this message carries out across the country. And of course, many people are trying to game out how the whole thing comes together. What we know is that when Democrats speak with one voice about the stakes for voters in their lives, then from President Biden down to local state legislative candidates, We're going to defeat MAGA this fall.

[00:37:21] **Speaker 2** So regardless of who is at the top of the ticket.

[00:37:25] **Speaker 32** Well, President Biden's at the top of the ticket and Biden-Harris as a team won Wisconsin last time. We overcame the odds and Democrats won the governor's race in 2022. We flipped the Supreme Court in the course of 1820 and 2023 and on the ground we have volunteers going out every week knocking on tens of thousands of doors having conversations with voters. Ultimately, voters care about how politics affects their lives, and they know that President Biden isn't trying to get into their doctor's offices and override their personal medical decisions. They also have reason to fear JD Vance and Donald Trump. JD Vant has flirted with the idea of tracking menstrual cycles to figure out whether people are accessing abortion care against the law. Trump has floated the idea punishing women who access abortions. Those ideas are politically toxic, and we have to defeat them this fall.

[00:38:16] **Speaker 2** All right, Ben Wickler, thanks very much.

[00:38:18] **Speaker 32** Thanks so much for having me on.

[00:38:21] **Speaker 2** Wisconsin Republican U.S. Senate candidate Eric Hovde snagged a speaking slot at the convention, but he also sat down with reporter Stephen Potter for this interview.

[00:38:32] **Speaker 33** Well, first of all, I think Wisconsin put on a great show for this convention. I'm very proud of our state and the people have been so nice, the weather accommodated, all the rest. But look, I've been talking about the issues all along, how we need change in our country. We have major problems with our economy, the inflation that's impacting people's lives, our open border, the problems that has created, crime in our communities. Our healthcare system, the cost, the accessibility of our healthcare system. You know, there was a whole discussion about how the world, the world's in chaos right now. So I'm just staying focused on

[00:39:15] **Speaker 14** on the issues. This Sir Tami Baldwin has been tough to beat in the past. Do you expect to get any kind of a bump from the top of the ticket?

[00:39:22] **Speaker 33** Well, right now it looks like President Trump is doing very well. You know, I don't get caught up in the daily swings and polls, but I think the message that's come out of the convention has been very favorable. You know and a message that I've been talking about long before what happened this past Saturday is that we need to bring this country together. The politics of division, personal destruction has been so toxic for our country and you I've been saying it, and I've talked about it in my speech. We need to come together. You know, in the world of business, you're never gonna get much done if you take the path that most politicians do. They just camp themselves in their own party and fight amongst themselves. You know in the word of business you have to compromise. That's become a dirty word in politics, which I think is wrong.

[00:40:15] **Speaker 14** What issues do you think there can be a compromise on between Republicans and Democrats?

[00:40:21] **Speaker 33** Let's start with the fentanyl crisis. I cannot believe Washington DC has really done nothing about this for a decade and we're losing a hundred thousand young people every single year. Fentanyl is created in China, it's sent to the drug cartels in Mexico, brought up over our southern border. We have to tack it at every single level and how it's distributed here in our country. So that's a big one. Look there's philosophical differences on health care. But there's issues we can come together. Drug prices, look, I have MS, you know? To see how drug prices have just gone like this in almost every area, that is an area that I think we can find common ground on. So I think you can find common ground with people if you're willing to sit down and talk with them and engage with them.

[00:41:12] **Speaker 2** Did Wisconsinites tune in to the convention? Special Projects journalist Merv Seymour went to West Central Wisconsin this week to gage voter interest.

[00:41:25] **Speaker 34** Hundreds of miles from the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, patriotism runs high in the La Crosse area. You can tell by the American flag that waves throughout this community, in front of homes and on the streets.

[00:41:37] **Speaker 35** To be the next Vice President of the United States.

[00:41:42] **Speaker 34** With the convention so far away, we had to wonder. Drill, baby, drill. Honestly, I think it's overkill on the TV. Is anybody out there watching? We made stops at a local park where people told us, off camera, they know nothing about a convention and didn't care. Later, they said they identify as Democrats. Just up the road at Viterbo Sports Complex, it's Little League night. We spoke with just about everyone in the stands behind home plate. And a long third baseline. Many admit they're Republican, and they don't overly care about the convention, and they do not care to say so on television.

[00:42:22] **Speaker 36** Night 2 of the RNC. Speeches tonight from primary rivals Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley.

[00:42:29] **Speaker 34** Like everyone else around here, talk of the Republican National Convention tops the local news. Surely a supporter with signs of who they support as nominee will talk. After a knock on the door, they told us, no thank you, we're not interested. Back on La Crosse, across the tracks below Grand Dance Bluff near Forest Hills Golf Course right on Main Street, we find Dominic Roswell at Bluffside Tavern having a drink with a friend. Bluffsite has been around for a long time, a really long time. Dominic grew up here. When it comes to voting, he considers himself part of a key voting demographic, the independent voter. When it comes to watching the Republican convention...

[00:43:12] **Speaker 37** It appeals mostly to the base. I think really that's where the target audience is, is strengthening the base, I don't know if the independents like me really care much about it.

[00:43:21] **Speaker 34** So no intention at all of keeping up with the video this week.

[00:43:24] **Speaker 37** Only because it's from Wisconsin, I know everything that's happened recently with the assassination attempt on Trump.

[00:43:32] **Speaker 34** Way up on Grandad's Bluff, you can enjoy a million dollar view for free, or an enhanced one for less than a dollar.

[00:43:40] **Speaker 12** I hope there's a lot of hoopla for the Republican Party. I myself am not decided yet on who I want to vote for.

[00:43:48] **Speaker 34** We found a viewpoint with Granddad Michael Eve, who admits to watching some of the Republican convention. He says he enjoys watching the political analysis more.

[00:43:57] **Speaker 12** Because these politicians just go on and on and say what you want to hear. And then reporters in a nutshell said, well, this is what the guy said. So why should I watch hours of them?

[00:44:08] **Speaker 34** Michael and Dominic don't know each other, but both have the same view on talking politics these days.

[00:44:15] **Speaker 12** Discussion, all of a sudden turns into, you know, they're at each other's throat and they don't talk to each other again, and it's really not worth it.

[00:44:23] **Speaker 37** I'm old enough to remember where you could go to parties and be at different political affiliations and you could still exist at a party and converse with each other. It doesn't seem that case anymore. People just don't want to talk about it. In fact, if they find out that you're of another party affiliation, you won't get invited to the party.

[00:44:41] **Speaker 34** Welcome to Fathead Steves in downtown La Crosse. We were there during primetime coverage of the convention and at other bars. What's showing on TV at Fathead Steeves? Not the convention.

[00:44:53] **Speaker 38** Politics and religion are two topics that just the conversation can't be had.

[00:44:59] **Speaker 34** Bartender Arielle Malvitt says from her experience, politics and drinks don't mix well.

[00:45:05] **Speaker 38** It gets a little escalated and it divides people immediately, right? It's one side or the other, so it's not a healthy conversation, at the bar at least.

[00:45:17] **Speaker 34** And from what we could tell, in some cases, outside the bar either. Reporting for Here and Now, I'm Merv Seymour.

[00:45:26] **Speaker 2** Now that the convention is over, the mandate from Republicans to their delegates is to carry the momentum into the fall. Here and now senior political reporter Zach Schultz has the story of one group trying to do just that, while changing the image of the Republican party.

[00:45:45] **Speaker 5** Thousands of volunteers are needed to make the Republican National Convention a success. Most of those in red shirts have gray hair, but there are some young people getting their first taste of political organizing, and Republicans are hoping to keep them involved into the fall.

[00:46:02] **Speaker 39** I think they see it firsthand and they're gonna be involved. A lot of them, most of them are from Wisconsin. They're gonna here, they're going to be knocking on doors and that's what we're gonna do. That's what do best.

[00:46:11] **Speaker 5** Kyle Schrader is the chairman of the Wisconsin Young Republicans, a group focused on recruiting, training and electing young conservatives.

[00:46:18] **Speaker 39** We are the young professional arm of the Republican Party of Wisconsin here in the state and that's where we fit in and we want to grow the conservative movement for young people because our message resonates directly with them.

[00:46:33] **Speaker 5** The Wisconsin chapter was created in 2017, as the party realized students involved in college Republican groups often didn't have a political home after graduation.

[00:46:44] **Speaker 40** People would get involved in college Republicans and kind of trail off and then come back to the GOP in their like 50s or 60s when they're upset about property taxes or something like that. And that's years, decades of lost engagement.

[00:46:56] **Speaker 5** Nick Redinger represents McWanago in the state assembly and sits on the board of the National Young Republicans. He says they're not content waiting for middle-aged to take office.

[00:47:06] **Speaker 40** A lot of folks like to say we're the leaders of tomorrow. That's not the case. We're leading the way today.

[00:47:13] **Speaker 41** When I was at college, I was the president of the College Republicans at UW-Whitewater.

[00:47:18] **Speaker 5** John Beauchamp is an alternate delegate at the RNC and says without young Republicans, a lot of people his age might not feel comfortable going to party events.

[00:47:28] **Speaker 41** Let's face it, a lot of the county parties have a very traditional way of running things. Very traditional structure. The median age of the individuals that are in the county party tends to be a little older. So the goal with the young Republicans is to kind of provide a sense of more camaraderie amongst young Americans, young Wisconsinites.

[00:47:48] **Speaker 42** I've been involved with the party since I was very small.

[00:47:51] **Speaker 5** Olivia Kurth comes from a politically active family and is working security at one of the delegate hotels during the convention.

[00:47:58] **Speaker 42** We are kind of in charge of just being the eyes and ears here.

[00:48:03] **Speaker 5** She's involved in both college Republicans and young Republicans, and says the groups provide a safe space for young conservatives to speak their minds.

[00:48:11] **Speaker 42** In younger groups, you kind of have to test the waters a little bit. You're like, if I throw out my opinion, is this going to go sour real fast?

[00:48:18] **Speaker 39** We have a lot of Illinois implants coming here in Wisconsin, and they moved to Milwaukee or they moved to Madison, and they're like, are there even conservatives here? There are. It's the young Republicans, and if you're in that 20 to 30 year range.

[00:48:31] **Speaker 5** They all plan to be active on the campaign trail this fall, and their experiences at the RNC will help them power through to November.

[00:48:40] **Speaker 42** The excitement is kind of palpable in a way. I feel like being a part of this and seeing how much energy and excitement people have for being here and for the party and everything.

[00:48:51] **Speaker 41** And there is nothing quite like being in that room and feeling that energy on the floor of the Republican National Convention. So bringing that energy, bringing a boost back into our communities and into our other grassroots individuals is gonna be key for us.

[00:49:08] **Speaker 2** Senior political reporter Zach Schultz brought live analysis from Media Row at the convention all week and tonight wraps it up with our political panelists, Republican Bill McCoshin and Democrat Scott Ross.

[00:49:23] **Speaker 5** Thanks Fred. Well, I am back once again. End of the week. Bill McCaush and Scott Ross. Thanks again for all this weekend for today. Let's start with the big speech last night. Bill, what did you think? Was this Trump's unity moment? Did he sail it through?

[00:49:36] **Speaker 43** I think he did what he needed to do as it related to Unity. CNN had a focus group of females afterwards and they thought they heard a different tone from him and they liked it. They responded to it. Personally, I think the speech was too long. It should have been 45, 50 minutes, not 90 minutes. I think you got into rally mode there and that's a different beast altogether. But I think as far as the unity message, the different tone. I think he was a different man last night. Whatever happened last Saturday night with the assassination attempt had a pretty profound impact on him.

[00:50:09] **Speaker 5** Scott, did you hear two speeches at once? One with the prompter and one without?

[00:50:13] **Speaker 44** What I heard was, you know, I don't want to say I disliked the speech because the Abraham Lincoln adage, which is, I never heard a short speech I didn't like, because it went on a long time. But what I heard from the speech was, his delivery wasn't great, but it just culminated the most divisive, the most extreme, the more alarming national political convention I think we've seen, and again, embodied by the fact that for the first time in American history, a major political party has nominated... A convicted felon to be its presidential nominee, that really says something.

[00:50:47] **Speaker 5** Being in the arena last night, we were all there listening to it. What was your reaction of the people listening to it as it went on? Was he losing the audience? Was he loosing the crowd as it kind of got into the old hits?

[00:50:59] **Speaker 43** Uh, it came and went, right? There were certain lines, uh, bringing back the American dream that, uh... Got huge applause. Uh, eliminating the E.V. Mandate got huge applause. There were a lot of those throughout the night, and I think that may have caused him to go off script a few times when he thought that the crowd was a little subdued. Um, I would have preferred he just go with the speech that was in the prompter, and I would think that would have been just fine. The good news for us is it was a great convention. I've been to five national conventions. My former boss, Tommy Thompson, has been to 12. We both think it's the best we've ever seen. Milwaukee looked great, they showed great. That's gonna lead to more business for Milwaukee and Milwaukee County going forward. I would definitely agree with that. Milwaukee.

[00:51:41] **Speaker 44** Did a terrific job. The facilities were fabulous. Everybody was courteous. I know there were some incidents and stuff outside of the apartment. Well, we probably could do this as a state. Exactly. Exactly. So what was going on sort of outside of what was being talked about in Fiserv was good, but what was talked about in Fyserv I think was alarming. Some of the biggest lines I heard that got applause was the attack on Nancy Pelosi. You know, which is, you know red meat, red meat to the base. It's not under, it's not unexpected. But towards the end, he got into a rant against trans people and that got so much applause and that was really disturbing. I think, you now, it sent the message that I think they wanted to say, which is again, this is gonna be a very divisive person if we put him back in the White House. I think we need to do, in terms of performance, I'll say this, I think that he kind of yawned through it. It was stumbling and long, and I think in the end, he performed the announcement speech version of Joe Biden's debate performance.

[00:52:42] **Speaker 43** I think one of the most notable things is he only mentioned Joe Biden by name one time. And that was an accident. In 90 minutes. He acknowledged it was an accident. Well, he sort of walked into it. So he had to name him and said, I won't name him again tonight. And I think that was smart. I'm sorry.

[00:52:56] **Speaker 44** One mention of Joe Biden, zero mentions of abortion, which I think was the most telling thing about the night. The thing that he bragged about getting rid of the right to choose and making women second class citizens and he doesn't say anything about it in the biggest audience he's gonna get.

[00:53:12] **Speaker 5** Well now the attention will shift to Biden. Earlier today, Congressman Mark Pocan, a Democrat from Madison, announced he can no longer support Biden on the ticket, asked for him to step down. Scott, is this all unraveling here in front of us?

[00:53:23] **Speaker 44** I don't know if the word I would use is unraveling. What it is is it's a challenging campaign because when the focus becomes a referendum on your weaknesses, that is a problem. It happened in 2016. It was a referendum on whether or not Clinton should be around still. In 2020, it was a referendum on Trump because of his performance. Now that it's referendum on Joe Biden's age, that's problematic because he's not gonna get younger. You know, the thing is, is that if the Democrats, If Joe Biden decides he doesn't want to be the nominee and steps down, this goes back to focusing on Donald Trump, which I think is great for the Democrats, because they know what they get with Trump. They got three million lost jobs. They got COVID being bungled. And again, Joe Biden's going to put country first. He always has. I think we can agree with that. He always is put country-first. On the other hand, you got Trump, you know, you've got Trump. Ivanka had 18 new, I'm sorry, if you need to, yeah, I am ready to go on that.

[00:54:17] **Speaker 43** If Dems are in disarray for the next month leading into Chicago, we're totally good with that. The fact that this guy has, he earned 14 million votes in the primary, Dems cleared the field for him so that he didn't have a primary with Robert Kennedy Jr. And now they're trying to push him off, I mean, so much for democracy.

[00:54:36] **Speaker 5** So we're gonna have a big test coming up because Kamala Harris, the Vice President's coming to Milwaukee on Tuesday. What does that look like? What are you expecting to hear?

[00:54:43] **Speaker 43** I think she'll promote the Biden agenda as she has in the past. And if she ends up being the nominee, we'll see if there's an open convention, if she can actually win it. I think the Biden Agenda is what's dragging them down. Yeah, Joe Biden's age is a big negative for them. No question about that. Yes, his debate performance has lingered on for three weeks after, and we've never seen that in our lifetime. But I think he's gonna have to answer for those same policies.

[00:55:09] **Speaker 5** Will she be announcing she's a candidate at that time or she's still the VP?

[00:55:12] **Speaker 44** Still waiting for my call, but I don't know what's going to happen with that. I have to say, you know, again, there's lots of talk. I mean, you, know, it was, there was a buzz, you know, amongst media last night about what is going to happen here. You know, and I have to disagree with Bill. I think it's going to come back. I do think it is going to come to policy, but I think Biden and Democrats win on that. 16 million jobs created, 21 million more people put on health care, and again, you go back to the Republicans' anti-democracy, anti-abortion. An anti-worker given $5 trillion in tax breaks to rich people.

[00:55:45] **Speaker 43** Says the party trying to push their guy out with a backroom deal he gets to do by the influence

[00:55:49] **Speaker 44** The president gets to make his own decisions. He will make the decision and I believe he will put country first.

[00:55:55] **Speaker 5** All right, just a couple seconds for each of you. Absolute chaos in Chicago or orderly convention? Oh, I'm going to have fun. In Chicago? Well, as Nietzsche said,

[00:56:04] **Speaker 44** says out of chaos comes order.

[00:56:06] **Speaker 5** All right, Bill McCaushan, Scott Ross, thank you so much. We will be all together in Chicago for the whole week. Can't wait. Thanks again.

[00:56:14] **Speaker 2** Starting August 19, Here and Now will be in Chicago for the Democratic National Convention with daily live analysis streamed online at 2 p.m., daily updates from Wisconsin on our air at 8 30 p. M., and a Here and now one hour special. To view all of our coverage, including web extras from the RNC, visit our website at pbswisconsin.org and then click on the news tab. That's our program for tonight. I'm Frederica Freiburg. Have a good weekend.

[00:57:07] **Speaker 4** Funding for Here and Now is provided by the Focus Fund for Journalism and Friends of PBS Wisconsin.