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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** It's beautiful. It's in the mountains.

[00:00:03] **Speaker 2** Right on. I mean, I understand the sort of odd.

[00:00:22] **Speaker 3** Can

[00:00:23] **Speaker 1** Can you guys tell me what I'm... With Democratic Governor Tony Evers' announcement that he will not run for a third term, the November 2026 election for governor is wide open. And already, candidates are lining up. On the Republican side, Whitefish Bay businessman Bill Barion and Washington County Executive Josh Showman have entered the race. Democratic Lieutenant Governor Sarah Rodriguez is also formally declared. Now, there are a whole lot more names potentially throwing their hat in the ring. For more on this, we turn to our political panelists, Republican Bill McCaushan and Democrat Scott Ross. And nice to see you both again.

[00:01:21] **Speaker 4** Great to be with you.

[00:01:23] **Speaker 1** So, Bill, what kind of opportunity is this for Republicans?

[00:01:26] **Speaker 4** It's pretty rare. It's the second time in my 60 years on this earth where we've had an open gubernatorial seat. 2010 was the last time. Scott Walker beat Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. So the fact that it's an open seat is an opportunity for Republicans to actually win here. Both of the national prognosticators, whether it's the Cook Political Report or Larry Sabato's crystal ball, move this race from lean Democrat as soon as Tony Evers made his announcement to toss up. It's an opportunity for the Republicans to potentially take back the governorship in 2026 here in the state of Wisconsin.

[00:02:00] **Speaker 1** So Scott, as to that toss-up kind of status, how would policymaking change if, in fact, a Republican were to win?

[00:02:09] **Speaker 2** Well, I mean, obviously, if the Republican Party, which is wholly controlled by Donald Trump, were to win the gubernatorial election and Democrats not pick up either of the chambers, it would be the most radical, extreme, partisan handout to special interests and corporate and the wealthy that we've ever seen in the history of Wisconsin. But I think that you have to look beyond, you know, the sort of toss up numbers when it comes to the court. Yeah, on on you know if you look at on faith, Wisconsin, you knows, goes back and forth. But if you look at the real numbers and where the Republican Party is right now, you know, if you're not Donald Trump, the party has, Wisconsin voters have rejected you in statewide elections. Election after election after election. We I think we've only had two of any consequence that have gone Republican in the last like 15 years Ron Johnson, of course who got in there because you know the D triple DSCC abandoned Mandela Barnes And he was outspent by 26 million dollars in racist third-party ads Go and and and the Supreme Court race where they just you know They were a Democrat quite didn't quite hadn't quite figured out how to lock up those races yet Now it's a completely different universe, and the Republican Party, with Donald Trump in full control of the government, isn't getting more open for, isn't getting more accommodating for swing voters. It's getting even more, you know, barbaric, more, the cuts that are coming, the cuts that are already here, the storm troopers on our streets pulling people off in masks and disappearing them, and that's not the American way.

[00:03:38] **Speaker 1** Bill, as to the Washington influence set in the Congressional District, Republican Tom Tiffany has been talking about running for a long time, what's he waiting for?

[00:03:49] **Speaker 4** He says he's going to make a decision sometime around Labor Day. I hope he does it sooner than that. There are several congresspeople in the House now that are running for governor in different states. Byron Donald's being at the top of the list in Florida. I think the president's a little concerned about that because the margin, the House, the GOP majority in the house is so slim to begin with. So I don't know if Tom Tiffany is going to get in. If there's he's got a lot of strong suits for sure, but probably his weakest areas is fundraising He's got $125,000 cash on hand which today and Scott would agree that's a good assembly race. That's not a gubernatorial race So fundraising is his biggest shortcoming We'll see if he gets in at the end of the day where Scott and I actually do agree Donald Trump's gonna pick the winner of this primary whoever he endorses in this primary will win the race for sure on our side

[00:04:38] **Speaker 3** So who else? Go ahead, Scott.

[00:04:42] **Speaker 2** I'd say $125,000 is a good start for an assembly race, you know, and here's how narrow that House majority is in the Congress, that they have all fled so that they don't have to keep taking votes to release the Jeffrey Epstein files about how Trump was fully engaged in what was going on with the sex trafficker and predator who hung himself.

[00:05:03] **Speaker 1** Who else are Republicans looking at, Bill? I mean, there is a long list of people out there.

[00:05:09] **Speaker 4** Well, other names that are being bandied about are State Senator Mary Felskowski, who comes from roughly the same geography as Tom Tiffany. She represents the 12th Senate district up north. If she won't get in, if Tiffany does get in. But if Tiffany doesn't get it, I would expect to see her join the race. You might remember she voted against the state budget. She's the first Senate president to ever vote against the State budget. Eric Kuvde's name still gets talked about. And I think there's a player to be named later. Again, because it's an open seat, it's a real opportunity. So I think, there's probably somebody on our side that people aren't talking about yet who could get in this race. Remember, we got 375 days between now and the August 11th, 2026 primary.

[00:05:47] **Speaker 1** It was interesting to see that Scott Walker kind of was toying with it and then said no, he's not in.

[00:05:53] **Speaker 4** Yeah, well, he got some attention for himself and for Young America's foundation. I think he'll be involved in the race in some way, just like my former boss, Tommy Thompson will. Hopefully they'll agree on the candidate in the primary this time. They didn't in 2022. For our side, hopefully we learn some lessons about 2022. You can't destroy your GOP opponent in the primary and hope that the party can come together during the general election, because it won't happen. If we want to win this thing and it's a real opportunity to win, we got to hang together and whoever wins the primary, that's our person.

[00:06:24] **Speaker 1** Scott, let's talk about that.

[00:06:26] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I'm sorry. I just want to say like I think the reason you know part of the part of the challenge of the Republicans I have in contrast to the Democrats is that their two Republicans have no experience. I mean you know you know God bless Washington County, but it's not even one of the top 10 largest counties in Wisconsin. Whereas on the Democratic side there is a very long list of people with credentials who have delivered for the people of Wisconsin starting with the lieutenant governor you know continuing with the attorney general who's gotten $750 million back from opioid settlements, something that the previous Republican administration and previous Republican attorney general refused to allow us to get. You've got the county executive in the state's largest county, David Crowley. You've state Senator Kel DeRoyce, who's on the Joint Finance Committee and who's run a couple of times before. There's a long list of people with real credentials about doing the things that Wisconsinites want. They want people who are going to lower the cost of living, who are gonna get affordable health care and affordable housing who are gonna make sure that education is protected and strengthened and make sure that everybody's treated with dignity, the way that they need to be treated and stop this dividing that's gone on with the Republicans under this onslaught of whether it's ICE or it's DEI or whatever prejudices they're bringing to the table.

[00:07:37] **Speaker 4** The one Scott didn't mention was Ben Wickler, former party chairman. Nobody has raised more money than Ben Wicklar. He is the best fundraiser on their side or our side. So if he decides to get in, he'll be formidable.

[00:07:50] **Speaker 1** What do you say to that?

[00:07:53] **Speaker 2** Oh, absolutely. Yes. I mean, Ben's a great guy who's traveled around the state doing the rubber chicken circuit, you know, for years. I mean it's a reason why a lot of us thought in 2022 that Rebecca Clayfish was going to be the nominee for the Republicans. But the Republicans decided they don't want to have a woman at the top of the ticket. So they went with an out of state businessman who lost.

[00:08:11] **Speaker 1** Scott, as to the toss-up status of the governor's race, how much confidence, though, does the most recent 10-point victory of Justice Susan Crawford give Dems?

[00:08:21] **Speaker 2** Well, there are two different races, but it also shows that Democrats have been able to mobilize their voters in a way that Republicans simply have not been able to do for a very, very long time. Again, they've won a couple statewide elections, but the margins, percentage-wise and number-wise, are so much more narrow than the blowouts that the Democrats have be able to. Because again, they're talking about the things that people want. They want to make sure that people are protected. They want make sure abortion rights are protected and restored in some cases. You know, they want to make sure that when you go into court that you have your day in court and it's not balanced towards the rich. That's completely different to what the agenda of the of the Republicans are most embodied by the fact that, you know we've got this big bad bill which is now going to bankrupt, you, know the country, you kick 270,000 Wisconsinites off of their health care, you snatch snap benefits, you literally take the food out of babies and That's the agenda of the Republicans and Democrats will continue to run on that in contrast to what we're trying to do.

[00:09:22] **Speaker 1** I wanted to just jump to the next Supreme Court election and have you describe the stakes of that.

[00:09:28] **Speaker 4** Well, we have Rebecca Bradley, who hasn't decided whether she's going to seek re-election or not. On her most recent finance report, she hadn't raised any money. My advice to her is if you're not going to run, get out and give people time to raise money. I think one of the dynamics that there's a relationship between the two races. I don't think the Supreme Court race is going to be as hotly contested as the last two were. I don't think it will be a $100 million race because it isn't for the majority. I think the gubernatorial race now that it's an open seat will be the political Super Bowl in Wisconsin in 2026.

[00:10:01] **Speaker 1** Scott, we know that appeals court judge Chris Taylor is running for Supreme Court. How formidable is she?

[00:10:09] **Speaker 2** I think she's an incredible formidable candidate and has built a career on protecting the rights of people in Wisconsin, you know, whether it is for living with dignity or abortion rights or whatever, you just, that's the, that is the profile that she has, the record that she hasn't, especially as a judge. And you know that contrast again with Rebecca Bradley, who's one of the most divisive, one of most noxious elected officials that we've had in the history of the state of Wisconsin. And I think, you know, for her. What's, you know, the problem is if she's waiting for a federal judgeship, like, what's the incentive to taking out the incumbent from a judicial race when, by and large, over decades, and Bill will agree with this, the incumbent wins, almost used to be unheard of that. Almost 100%. Judicial candidate wouldn't win, yeah. Yeah, the last two Supreme Court...

[00:10:53] **Speaker 4** Yeah, the last two Supreme Court justices who have lost were appointed. They did not win those seats. And so she would actually Bradley would be our best shot for sure.

[00:11:03] **Speaker 1** Alright, we need to leave it there, but really nice to see you both again. We'll have you on more now that we're heating up into this next election cycle. Thank you.

[00:11:13] **Speaker 2** Great to be with you.

[00:11:18] **Speaker 4** Minutes over. Yeah, there was a lot to cover.

[00:11:22] **Speaker 1** Yeah, yeah, you were both great. I almost had to defend Donald Trump, though, Scott, because we don't know, do we? We don't what his involvement was, if any.

[00:11:37] **Speaker 2** Oh, oh, oh right, right, I was listening. I was looking at the Jeffreys who said they knew if Trump said what he said about their late daughter that he was so