**3rdCongressionalDistrictDemocraticDebate.mp3**

[00:00:07] **Speaker 1** Welcome, everyone. I'm Joe Gallo and I have the privilege of serving as the chancellor here at the University of Wisconsin Lacrosse. And we're very proud to have this third congressional Democratic debate on our campus.

[00:00:20] **Speaker 2** We have a rich.

[00:00:21] **Speaker 1** Tradition of having these kind of events. And so this is just the latest in a great series of conversations about our political system. And we have some outstanding candidates here today, and you'll hear more about them in just a second. Like to thank them for coming. And also, I know you all have supporters.

[00:00:40] **Speaker 2** Thank you for your.

[00:00:41] **Speaker 1** Interest and support. And I see many familiar faces in the room. Great to have you on campus. And also, we have a fantastic panel who will from various organizations and media ask some great questions. And thank you for doing that. And then, of course, we have our media here who will air this debate and also tell the story. So we're very grateful for that. So I'm going to turn.

[00:01:06] **Speaker 2** It over.

[00:01:07] **Speaker 1** To one of the outstanding UW faculty who has really established himself pretty quickly here in our region and state as one of the go to people when it comes to questions about politics. And that's Professor Anthony Trigg asking.

[00:01:30] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Chancellor. Well, hello and welcome to this debate featuring the Democratic Party candidates in the election for Wisconsin's third congressional district. Out of all the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, this upcoming election in this seat here in Wisconsin is absolutely one of the most closely watched in the nation. Congressman Ron Kind has announced his intention to retire at the end of his current term in office. And Derek Van Orden is the only candidate in the race on the Republican side to be his party's nominee in this November's election. All of that brings us here today to the campus of the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse. We have the four Democratic Party candidates with us who are competing in the upcoming primary election on August 9th. And each candidate is seeking to be the Democratic Party's nominee in the November election. The candidates joining us are Rebecca Cook, Mark Newman, Deb McGrath and Brad Path. We have a panel featuring members of the local media who will be asking questions of these candidates. Our media panel includes Mike Burmeister of WSO W News 19 Hope Kerwin of Wisconsin Public Radio, Scott Robert Shaw of WIC AM Radio, Chris Hardy from Seven Rivers Alliance and Emily Emily of the La Crosse Tribune. Thank you for all our media guests here today. In addition to our media panel. Yes. Let's hear. In addition to our media panel I'd like to thank was politics.com the League of women voters of the La Crosse area and leader ATX for their support of this debate. The rules are simple. Each candidate will get up to 60 seconds to respond to each question. If a candidate directly references another candidate by name, I will allow additional time for that candidate to respond. But first things first. We began with opening statements 60 seconds for each candidate, beginning with Rebecca Cook.

[00:03:36] **Speaker 3** Great. Thank you. I am Rebecca Cook. I grew up in this district on a dairy farm in Eau Claire, where I learned the values of hard work and showing up for your neighbors. I now run a small business in downtown Eau Claire that I ran for the last seven years, as well as a nonprofit that supports women entrepreneurs throughout ten counties here in west central Wisconsin. And because of that work, Governor Evers appointed me to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation Board, where I've been able to serve and advocate for those same rural communities and small businesses, not just at people's kitchen table, but at the board level. And I'm running for Congress to be a relentless fighter for small businesses, union workers, working families and farmers. I feel like everyone in this district deserves access to affordable, quality health care. I want to work to protect Medicare and Social Security and fight inflation. We need to take on corporations that are price gouging consumers. Thank you.

[00:04:35] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Mark Newman.

[00:04:37] **Speaker 1** Hi. My name is Mark Newman and I'm going to adjust this so I don't have to lean forward too much. I am a resident of La Crosse and also a member of the Common Council here on La Crosse. But I was born in Quincy, Illinois, which is burg, about the same as La Crosse, down river on the Mississippi. And there I met Franciscans who were serving in my local parish. And this caused me to recognize a lifestyle that made a lot of sense to me. Simplicity, no personal ownership, living in fraternity and living a life of service. To the point that I joined the Franciscan Brothers and was able to go to Africa, where I served as a medical missionary. After that, I returned to the United States and I met my wife in Madison. And I like to say that's how I married into Wisconsin. And then about ten, 12 years ago, I took a job with the Gundersen medical staff, where I joined and worked as a pediatric critical care until 2019. But in the meantime, I recognized that my democracy that I had received from my father was not as healthy as I believed it was when I was growing up. And so I made this determination that I would spend whatever time I have left to work as a Democratic operator, as a Democratic politician, and that my reason for doing this is very simple, it's maybe very simple, simplistic, and that is I want democracy to work.

[00:06:09] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Deb McGrath.

[00:06:12] **Speaker 4** Our democracy is at risk, and that is why I'm running for Congress. I'm Deb, Aldous McGrath. And I was born raised and I live in Menominee, Wisconsin. My mom, Molly, was a teacher and my dad was a farmer, a combat veteran and later congressman for this district. I joined the military at a time when few women did. I was the only woman in my jump class, but I was the first one out of the door. I went on to serve our country 25 years in the Army and in the CIA in our toughest assignments. I fought tyranny and terrorism. I saw democracies fall. I saw symptoms at home. Worst of all, on January six, I saw our Capitol under attack, and the Republican opponent in this race was there and he'd almost won. That is why I'm running for Congress. I will be a champion for our families, for our economy and the strength of our nation.

[00:07:13] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:07:14] **Speaker 5** REDPATH Well, good afternoon, everyone. I'm Brad Path. I'm a Wisconsin state senator. I'm a lifelong resident. I was born and raised in this congressional district. I'm running for Congress because I believe that rural America is just as important as anywhere else. And quite frankly, I think it's been overlooked and left behind for too long. I was raised on a family dairy farm not far from here, where my family's been farming since they first came to this country in the 1800s. I met my wife Betty at a four age leadership luncheon. It's here in western Wisconsin that we raised our two children. I've had the opportunity to do rural policy and economic development for U.S. Senator Herb Kohl and Congressman Ron Kind. Both of them have endorsed my candidacy. I spent eight years at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the Obama administration, and I had the opportunity to serve as governor ever. Secretary Baker. Culture until the partizan politicians in Madison won confirmed my nomination because I stood up for our family, farmers and rural residents. Today I'm a Wisconsin state senator representing this area. I ask for your vote on August 9th. Thank you.

[00:08:20] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Our first question, we will start with Mark Newman. That question comes from Mike Burmeister of WCW News 19. Mike, so it took nearly three decades for a piece of gun control legislation to become law. However, some Democrats say the new law doesn't go far enough, while others in Congress say it goes too far. Now, if you're elected into office, would you propose more gun control legislation? And if so, what would that look like?

[00:08:47] **Speaker 1** So a lot of times we talk about, you know, common sense interventions for our gun control or for our gun violence risk in the community. And some of these make a lot of sense. But I'd like to go such as magazine size limitations and assault weapons ban. But I'd like to go further and recognize that when we have something that causes this much injury and death in our community, we recognize it as a public health issue. And we've treated public health issues and all kinds of things like car crashes or infectious diseases. And we do that by making interventions, studying the issue, and then testing whether or not the interventions we do actually result in improvement and more safety for our communities. So I approach it from a sort of a public health perspective as a pediatrician that there is a lot that we got to do to get a better handle on this risk in our community. But we need to do it not so much just as common sense, but scientifically to understand where the risks are and how to manage them.

[00:09:50] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Deb McGrath.

[00:09:53] **Speaker 4** I am grieved by the amount of gun violence in this community and being in our nation and the fear that people have even to go to work, that kids aren't able to ride their bikes, that people are worried about going to a fair or a parade. I know the lethality of weapons. I am the one on this stage that has been trained and has worn a weapon, a Glock and M4 and M16. I have been under attack. I know about active shooter events. It has been my job to get people to safety. I can tell you that warning is the most important thing that we need to do. And I have been sometimes the first candidate and sometimes the only candidate to speak out about gun safety and community safety. I can tell you, we need to ban ghost guns and we need to start violent history checks and we need to have integrated support for state, local and federal response to violence.

[00:10:53] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:10:54] **Speaker 5** REDPATH Well, thank you. Without a doubt, we need to do everything we can to keep our communities and our children safe. As a Wisconsin state senator. I've worked in order in past work to pass legislation, provided amendments on legislation that would fund greater efforts for our law enforcement. We need to make sure that we have background checks that are put in place. We need to make sure that we have red flags, warning signs that are enacted in the legislation. We need to fund mental health assistance when we get the Congress. We need to close this loophole, this Charleston loophole. We need to work together in order to make sure that our children and our communities can feel safe and secure when they go to school and when they go out and about on the town. So I will always work together to make sure our communities stay safe. I have a background of working to make sure that we can provide our law enforcement and our communities with the tools that they need in order to make sure that people stay safe and secure.

[00:12:03] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:12:05] **Speaker 3** The time for thoughts and prayers are over. We need meaningful gun reform now. I know that Wisconsin has a rich heritage in hunting and gamesmanship, but we're not talking about air fifteens at deer camp. As somebody who is a candidate of distinction for Moms Demand Action, I support universal background checks. I support the enforcement of red flag laws, you know, that are put up when someone is having a mental health crisis or is a domestic abuser. So they're not harm to themselves or others. I support the elimination of the Charleston loophole. At a labor union meeting, somebody asked me and raise their hand, Are you going to take away our guns? And I said, No, I'm not going to take away your guns. But I want everyone to be as responsible of a gun owner as you are. And I think these are a lot of things that we can come together on to to solving this issue.

[00:12:55] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Our next round will begin with Deb McGrath. This question coming from Hope Kerwin of Wisconsin Public Radio.

[00:13:03] **Speaker 4** With so many Democratic candidates on the.

[00:13:04] **Speaker 3** Ballot this year.

[00:13:05] **Speaker 4** What? Makes you stand out. Well, first I am the one of the cant the candidate that speaks up about issues that other people aren't talking about like the LGBT community. Like when health care, like gun reform, like immigration. I am we have not talked about these things for for many, many years. And we need to talk about them now. I'm a mom. I am the only mom on this stage. And the future is about education, health care, reproductive rights, and everyone feeling safe in their communities. And finally, I have been fighting for this country all my life. I have 25 years of working together with people across the aisle to make sure that we have mission accomplishment in the places of our heart, of our hardest crisis moments. And I, I was promoted nine times in 18 months, and I was awarded our nation's career commendation for courage and mission accomplishment. I can work across the aisle to get things done in Washington, and I am going to work tirelessly for Wisconsin.

[00:14:17] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Redpath.

[00:14:19] **Speaker 5** I can win. I'm the only candidate on this stage that has defeated a Republican. I defeated a two term state senator, Danka Pankey, that represented western Wisconsin in the Wisconsin state Senate from 2003 to 2011, when he tried to make a comeback in 2020 with the help of the people here in western Wisconsin. We won. I have stood up for family farmers and rural residents in western Wisconsin. My entire career I have served at senior levels at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. I've traveled this state. I have stood in Dairy Park, dairy barns, cheese plants. I've been in diners. I've sat at kitchen tables. I've heard firsthand what's happening out here. We need to have someone that's representing this district in the United States House of Representatives that knows this district that's been there through time and time again. I know the people and I know the communities of this area. I know that we have to work hard in order to lower health care costs. I know we need to make sure that we fight this inflation. I know we need to rebuild our manufacturing sector. I know there's work that needs to be done with our supply chain. I know that we need to make sure that we keep our schools public education strong. I'm the candidate, and I thank you for the opportunity to be here.

[00:15:42] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:15:44] **Speaker 3** I'll pose this question back to voters. Does Washington represent you and who on the stage best represents you? I am a working class candidate. I grew up working class. I'm still running a small business and a nonprofit and a 19 county congressional campaign all at the same time. And I think we need less career politicians and less political elites representing us in D.C. and more everyday folks stepping off the same sidelines to fight for working families. I have the most organized labor endorsements of anybody in this race, and I'm proud of that because I think those folks know that I'm really going to stand up and and fight for working families.

[00:16:19] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Mark Neumann.

[00:16:21] **Speaker 1** You know, I'm a progressive voice when it comes to talking about issues that are before us in the community. And what I mean by that is I like to approach problems from the perspective of the weak. And I recognize that there's also conservative voices in our community, and I can even recognize them speaking in myself as well and libertarian voice. But in the course of this campaign, over the last five or six months, I have come to realize that the preoccupying concern for everyone in the Democratic Party is who will be able to prevail in the general election. And that's what we're really sort of focusing on. And I think that when I reflect on that, I realize that I have the competence, the compassion and the collegiality to do that job both during the race and once it gets to serving in Congress. And part of that comes from the maturity of my age. Part of it comes from my experience of working as a physician. Part of it comes from even being introduced to the legislative process in the city. And I think that's what makes me stand out.

[00:17:29] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Thank you so much. Our next round of questioning will kick off with Brad Path. A question coming from Scott Robertshaw of AM Radio. Thank you. These are tough times for teachers. Yeah, they've had to expand their role because of the pandemic shifting between teaching in-person and remotely. There are protests, at least in La Crosse, over what they consider low pay. They're under attack from parents, upset with what's being taught in school and things like that. The former U.S. education secretary recently said she doesn't believe there should be a Department of Education as a member of Congress. What would you do to support our teachers?

[00:18:04] **Speaker 5** Well, thank you for that question. Education is the bedrock of our democracy. Education is the great equalizer for all of us within our economy. As a Wisconsin state senator, I fought hard to make sure that we continue to provide the resources for our schools. They may be rural or urban. It isn't easy right now. It has been very, very difficult for our educators. It's also been very difficult for our schoolchildren. We need to make sure that we keep our schools safe and keep them secure. We need to make sure that we have school dollars, school aid dollars that are available regardless of the zip code that has to be available. We need to make sure that we value our educators as well to provide tools for them to succeed. May that be providing assistance when it comes to tuition reimbursements at universities or student debt? May it be more recruitment tools that we could provide our educators? All of those are our tools that are needed in order to succeed and help our schools continue to stay strong.

[00:19:11] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:19:14] **Speaker 3** I'll start by saying that I am a proud product of public schools and want to do everything I can to ensure that our public schools have adequate resources and funding. That includes mental health resources both for our students and educators. It's been tough with the pandemic and doing a lot of the virtual education that, you know, our teachers have had to pivot to do, you know? I think that also comes with supporting teachers unions and having, you know, an in-depth line into what it is. Folks that are looking for a lot of our funding from the education perspective here in Wisconsin comes from the state. So having a good line and two state legislators that I'm advocating in particular for rural communities that are often underfunded and are often going through a teacher shortage crisis and working to incentivize, I think, teachers on the national and federal level, you know, how can we help them to pay back student loans more quickly? So there's a pipeline of educators with the teacher shortage crisis that we're about to have.

[00:20:07] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Mark Neumann.

[00:20:09] **Speaker 1** So I mentioned already that I tend to look at problems from a progressive perspective, and I think this one with education is particularly salient. It really illustrates the problem that we're facing in our community right now, which is going to be more important. Me, myself and I, getting ahead for myself or are we going to do this together and take care of all of our children as a communal effort? I think that our education starts right at birth with giving longer periods of time for parents to be home with their child during those first formative months that are so important. Also, preschool K through K through eight and then college. All of this should be a communal responsibility and it should not be shared simply as an individual obligation that you can reward yourself for. So I would like to approach education from that perspective, and that way we can really respect our teachers and our care providers and our professors at all levels for the great contribution they make to the development of our children.

[00:21:15] **Speaker 2** Thanks for the shout out, Mr. Newman. McGrath.

[00:21:18] **Speaker 1** I get extra time for saying your name.

[00:21:24] **Speaker 4** Well, public schools made me who I am, and my mom was a teacher. And in our family we said the best crop is kids. We need to incentivize this profession because we need the best teachers. They are the backbone of our community and schools are our safe haven. This is where kids grow up and learn to be future citizens and that they are part of a community that works. We need to make sure we fund pre-K. We need to make sure that idea is fully funded so that schools or local areas don't have to make decisions about this important resource for people with disabilities because those people are good are making great strides for our community. I don't support school vouchers. I think we need to fully fund our public schools. And I want to make sure that we have that that every student has full opportunity for work, study for through trade school for college, and that won't be saddled with huge loans. So I think it's not just about teachers, but it's it's the kids in those communities they support.

[00:22:31] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Our next round of questioning begins with Rebecca Cook, and this question comes from Chris Hardy of Seven Rivers Alliance. I'd like to ask about supply chain challenges more than two years after the start of the pandemic. Businesses from nearly every economic sector continue to have challenges with the availability of products. What can be done to ease these bottlenecks and prevent them from occurring in the future?

[00:23:00] **Speaker 3** Thanks for your question. As a small business owner, I understand those challenges very much and have had those same challenges myself. You know, I think. One. The thing that comes to mind first is that, you know, we need to make more in America. We need to manufacture more in America. I'm someone that is a supporter of of union jobs and making more here. You know, I also think that it's important to hold corporations accountable. You know, where some of the supply chain issues are, but also with a lot of the price gouging issues and the inflation that we've seen and the rise of everyday goods and the cost of everyday goods from gas at the pump to the cost of things at the grocery store. And we need people that are going to hold folks accountable for, you know, for those for those rising costs.

[00:23:48] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Mark Newman.

[00:23:50] **Speaker 1** So it points again to a problem of making profit, the sort of god of everything we're going to do in our industry. And I remember many years ago, my brother, after getting his business master's degree, he pointed out to me the benefits of just in time, ordering that we don't have lost assets, just laying on a on a floor or warehouse somewhere. And our industry today has pushed that theory of taking out every little bit of slack in this complex network, because Slack could reduce that half penny profit that you can get. And then you end up with stress not being able to be managed in a very complex system. And we have had a great deal of stress in the last three or four years, so I'm not sure what the right answer is, but that's my perspective on it to encourage industry to be more allowance of buffers in the system.

[00:24:51] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Deb McGrath.

[00:24:53] **Speaker 4** Thank you. The supply chain issue certainly has hit us in Wisconsin because we feed and equip the world. But this is also a worldwide program problem and it has been exacerbated by COVID and absolutely by our global instability. And that the last administration made this work by stepping out of many of our alliances. We need to work in partnership to make sure that our product gets to market. And we need to increase attention to our infrastructure so that our roads and bridges and even our waterways are can support this return of product to market. The supply chain is so important right here in this district and I will work to get it done.

[00:25:40] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:25:41] **Speaker 5** Redpath Well, thank you very much for the question. It is one of the leading issues without a doubt take place out here today. We need to rebuild our manufacturing in this district, in this state, in the upper Midwest. We've lost it. And it's really, really unfortunate. We need to take a good look at what we can do for workforce development as well. We need to continue to invest in our workforce to make sure that our workforce is prepared and trained for changing technologies that are taking place to make sure that we can continue to compete and succeed in a world economy. But without a doubt, we need to continue to invest in our infrastructure. That's roads and bridges. That's also the lock and dam system. What we can do to make sure that we can get our products to market. As a Wisconsin state senator, I've invested in supply chain initiatives. May it be when it comes to investing in our infrastructure, may it be on broadband and Internet technology as well as workforce development. All of these tools are extremely important, but we need to make sure that we recognize the fact the loss of our manufacturing sector in the upper Midwest, particularly in Wisconsin and here in western Wisconsin, has harmed our overall quality of life. And we need to do better and I will do better.

[00:26:55] **Speaker 2** Thank you. This next round of questioning starts off with Mark Neumann. We go to Emily Patrick of the La Crosse Tribune.

[00:27:03] **Speaker 3** Do you anticipate supporting President Biden for reelection? And if not, what do you think a alternate candidate could bring that he hasn't?

[00:27:10] **Speaker 1** Oh, my gosh. You know, it's bad enough to be first. You know, I don't have any opinions on President Biden's position or likelihood of running or what my attitude is going to be about that right now. And in terms of who could be an alternative, Emily, I'm blank on that also. My my perspective really has been focused over the last six months on what's important to us here in our part of the world, in western Wisconsin, and meeting people and listening to them. And I honestly don't feel that I'm able to expound on an opinion like a talking head in the political commentators have to pass.

[00:27:59] **Speaker 2** You can leave that to me. The talking head mark. Yeah.

[00:28:02] **Speaker 1** Nice comeback.

[00:28:04] **Speaker 2** All right, Democrat.

[00:28:06] **Speaker 4** I'm fighting for the people of Wisconsin. I've already shown that I don't have allegiances and I am not seconded to anybody. I am standing up for the people of Wisconsin and I am listening to them. So when I look at the political future, it is really about what we can accomplish to make sure that we have a better health care, better economy, we have better security education, that we lower drug prices. We have got to get this done for people. And I can work across the aisle. I will. I pledged my endorsements have all been because of my leadership and the work that I have done and the acknowledgment that I can do it in the future. I am beholden and I will only endorsement. I care about is the people of Wisconsin.

[00:28:54] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:28:55] **Speaker 5** Redpath Yeah, that's exactly right. It's the only endorsement I care about as well as the people here of of Wisconsin. And I have my entire career and worked on behalf of the people here of Wisconsin. But to answer your question, uh, I compliment the President for the work that he's done to put shots in the arm on COVID. I recognize the fact that he led the Western world standing up to a brutal dictator and Putin. I think getting an infrastructure bill passed through Congress is no easy thing. And I think we recognize the fact how important roads and bridges are. So I think those are good things. But do I think more work needs to be done? Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We need to get to work when it comes to fighting inflation. We need to get to work when it comes to lowering these drug costs and holding these pharmaceutical companies accountable. We need to get get to work to make sure that we can continue to keep our communities strong and keep our community safe. This is work that needs to be done. I'm ready to get to work. Thank you.

[00:29:55] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:29:58] **Speaker 3** I'll start by saying, like my colleagues, I'm focused on this district, but I will say that I think that we need more folks running for office that are representative representative of our actual populations. So I think I'd like to see more folks running for office that, you know, have working class backgrounds that come from all different age groups that come from all different perfections professions. I'd like to see term limits be something that is not an idea, but something that actually happens to limit to limit how long people stay in office and are beholden to special interests. I think that we'd find an electorate in a democracy this more reflective of who we are.

[00:30:41] **Speaker 2** Thank you. I've actually got the next question. It was submitted to me by the League of Women Voters of the La Crosse area demographic. I'll start us off. I love this question because I view the urban rural divide as one of the defining features of politics around the country, but perhaps especially here in Wisconsin. And the question submitted to me by the league was this What are the values and issues that unite both rural and urban voters in the third district? And what are you doing to connect with and serve those voters demographic?

[00:31:11] **Speaker 4** Thank you, Anthony. This is one of the most important questions in this whole district, because for too long our rural districts have been forgotten and there's resentment. And we've seen this. This needs immediate attention. And I'm going to make sure that Wisconsin gets its fair share. That is why I'm in this race. Our urban areas have been models for public health and education. We need to make sure that our rural areas have got that same attention so that people, when they grow up, that they know that their kids can go to great schools, that they can get great health care, that they can have a great job and that they don't have to work two jobs, and that they can also have a super retirement where they are and that they can have Internet. Those are some building blocks so that there supply that their small business at their farm so they can be sustainable and innovative. Just last week I was at Farm Tech Days. I spoke with someone from the federal government there that said that this district was one that of all the grants that were available for innovation and sustainable agriculture had not even been tapped because they didn't know about them. Believe me, I'm going to have the best constituent services from day one. And what should I be elected to Congress? Because it it's all about every single constituent and I've been listening to them. It is about being treated fairly.

[00:32:42] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Brad Barth.

[00:32:44] **Speaker 5** Well, I'm from the country and I represent a rural and an urban state, a state Senate district. It's about listening. It's about respecting. It's about showing up. It's about making sure that you're really hearing what people are seeking, what they're asking for, what they want to be able to accomplish. I've done that. I know that what we need to be able to do is this is we got to tone turn down the volume a little bit. We got to turn up our listening skills. We need to put ourselves in other people's shoes. We need to recognize the fact that we all want something similar. We want our children to succeed. We want to make sure that we have something to continue to be proud of with our work and our way of life. We want to make sure that we're all making a difference. I have always stood in rural areas as well as urban areas, and I have. I reach out my hand and I want to partner and I will continue to do that as a member of Congress.

[00:33:50] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:33:53] **Speaker 3** As the daughter of dairy farmers, I speak the language of rural Wisconsin. As a part of my campaign, I took a 19 county district tour to far corners of this district, not just the urban places like Eau Claire, La Crosse and Stevens Point, but small communities like Hosler and Platteville to listen to people. Jun I think lots of us spent time at dairy breakfast and when I was introducing myself, I then introduced myself as, Hi, I'm Rebecca and I'm a Democrat. I said, Hi, I'm Rebecca. I grew up on a dairy farm and these are the values that I care about. And I think that that's what we need, somebody that's able to speak about these issues in a value centered way, that's able to bring people from both sides of the aisle together. I think primarily, though, folks feel forgotten by their elected officials, and part of that is showing up and running a constituent centered office with multiple district offices and having a chief of staff that's based in district to really solve a lot of these issues that rural communities are facing.

[00:34:46] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Mark Neumann.

[00:34:48] **Speaker 1** Well, I Anthony Lake, you have spent a lot of time trying to understand what we call the urban rural divide. And I've given it a lot of thought, and it comes down for me to this large economic reality that we're all living under, and that is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Because in this economy and in the market as it is, if you have a little advantage, you can get a lot more advantage a lot quicker than someone else. And that's what's happened in our rural areas, is that the life, the rich, lovely life of rural life has been evaporated. It's been decimated by mega-corporations on the on the supply side, squeezing mega-corporations on the processing side, squeezing so that the people in the middle, the processors in the middle are being squeezed out of existence. And we are having a community that is drying up. And unfortunately, the same experience is going on in urban areas as well.

[00:35:49] **Speaker 2** Thank you for our next round of questions. We began with Brad and then we go to Mike. Beer Meister of Soda. News 19 So fast contamination continues in western Wisconsin. Many of our communities have been impacted by this. Families are forced to drink out of jugs of water. If elected, how do you see your role in continuing to secure federal dollars? We've seen federal dollars already, but how do you continue how would you continue to secure more funding?

[00:36:17] **Speaker 5** Well, thank you for that question. First of all, we know well the seriousness of efforts, especially here in western Wisconsin. Just today, Governor Tony Evers, as well as the attorney general, Josh Kaul, was in French Island to, you know, have to meet with residents and to talk about the fact that they're filing a lawsuit against the manufacturer of this forever chemical. A couple of things need to happen. Number one, at the federal level, we need to set a standard of what is an acceptable standard for for this forever chemical. We cannot have this hodgepodge situation we have right now where Minnesota has an acceptable standard that Wisconsin doesn't. That is not fair. That is not right. That is impacting people in a harmful way. The second thing that we need to do is we need to make sure that we provide the tools for our homeowners as well as for our small businesses through no fault of their own, have been impacted with this forever chemical in their water system. So we need to find the input that that money available through an infrastructure package for that. I will fight hard for infrastructure money for Pete Foss. I've done it in the State Senate. I'll continue to do it if I get the opportunity to represent you in Congress.

[00:37:35] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Rebecca Cook.

[00:37:37] **Speaker 3** I like to think about the environment, like I think about politics and that it's all local. I think water quality is one of the biggest issues in this district. Obviously, with the PFAs in the waters here in La Crosse on French Island, but also on the city walls in Eau Claire and other communities throughout the district. And I think we all deserve the right to safe drinking water. I have been I've had I feel like there's a lot of promise in the Clear Act, which is a state bill that Wisconsin conservation voters have worked on that cause that calls for more testing in general some communities don't even know it to. This within their wall waters or in their city walls. That calls for more research into people in general and also calls for remediation. So the cleanup of what already exists and I'd like to see something similar to that brought to the federal level so that there's a standard nationwide.

[00:38:24] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Mark Newman.

[00:38:26] **Speaker 1** You know, one of the things we need to do with people is certainly get a lot more scientific evidence about the health risk. It is real and it has been obscured by the producers. So that don't make it into a problem that will have to do something about. But ultimately, water is life. And that's one of the fundamental rights that we all have as human beings is and our government needs to take responsibility for all of these rights. It's not a government to serve the producers and the corporations, but it's a government to serve we the people. And whatever it takes for people to have the resources to be able to drink safe water is ultimately our obligation together as a governance of the people, by the people, and for the people, even if it means very expensive processes to clear the fires out of the water, which can be done, but it's going to take some investment.

[00:39:21] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:39:21] **Speaker 4** MCGRATH Water is a human right, and people will fight for water. And everyone in America should be able to drink out of their taps. CAN believe me, I think it's the most beautiful taste of all. When I look at my efforts and what it's done, not just to our families, our businesses, to our wildlife and our fowl, our fish, it is creating a problem that is going to take decades, perhaps centuries to to solve, and that this has been a federal problem that now takes federal response and an integrated response. This is not just about the EPA. This is about the Department of Transportation. This is about the Army Corps of Engineers. This is about a federal problem that needs to have federal response. We look at osmosis that even the filters are still going to be poisonous. So we have got to be able to look at this from the beginning until the end. And we're going to have to use federal response in this. Thank you.

[00:40:23] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Rebecca Cook leads us off. In this next round, we go to Hope Kerwin of Wisconsin Public Radio.

[00:40:30] **Speaker 3** Medical providers in Wisconsin say there is confusion around what reproductive care is legal in our state. After the US Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade and a 173 year.

[00:40:41] **Speaker 4** Old ban on abortion.

[00:40:42] **Speaker 3** Went back into effect here.

[00:40:44] **Speaker 4** I'm wondering.

[00:40:45] **Speaker 3** How do you think Congress can help provide clarity on the issue of reproductive care? Thank you for your question. It's very timely. Never in 2022 did I think that this is what we would be fighting for. But here we are. I think Congress is role is working to codify Roe v Wade into federal law. You know, I don't know what Republicans are looking for, but we're back into the 1800s and the law that we have here in Wisconsin. And I think Republicans are calling for government mandated pregnancies. And I, as a congressperson, don't want to be in the room with someone and their partner and their doctor. I think it's an invasion of privacy, and I respect women and LGBTQ folks to be making those decisions for themselves.

[00:41:31] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Mark Newman.

[00:41:32] **Speaker 1** This is the work of the of our Congress. It is the work of our legislative body for that for the whole country to establish in law these rights that are already ours and don't need to be described as being in the Constitution. And it's more than just the issue of abortion care, but it's our rights to everything about ourselves, the sovereignty of our bodies and the sovereignty of our identities, and for a third party to try to make me into something I'm not, that is an assault for a third party to approach a woman who's carrying a pregnancy and tell her she doesn't have the opportunity to care for that pregnancy the way she wants to interrupt it. That's an assault. And certainly whenever we talk about people being injured, that's an interest of our government. And so I believe the Congress has every responsibility to make solid laws and to become functional for that and do it.

[00:42:31] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Deb McGrath.

[00:42:33] **Speaker 4** I have a lot to say about this. I wish I could have had seated others minutes, so we'll get right to it. Reproductive rights are a human right and this is part of the radical right wing agenda. And this is not just the first right that they want to take away, but this is going to privacy and LGBTQ rights and make making have I am the one mom on this stage. And I can tell you that having a child is a life long commitment and it is a life changing decision. And it should be made by a person with the family and the doctor. And there is no, no. Points for legislation in this. And there are economic consequences. I myself found out unplanned pregnancy. By the time I got back to my to my unit, I had been stripped of my my command and I had resigned my commission. I know that families need to make these choices themselves, and this hits marginalized communities even worse. So we have LGBTQ black and brown people of color, so we need to codify Roe. And I am going to get this done.

[00:43:37] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Brad.

[00:43:39] **Speaker 5** I was the first Wisconsin state senator to call to ask Governor Evers to call us as the legislature back into special session to address this issue. Not only do we need to codify Roe v Wade at the federal level, it needs to be done at the state level as a result of the inaction of the Republican majority in the Wisconsin state legislature. We now have an 1849 law put in place in the state of Wisconsin, 12 years before the Civil War, 70 years before women had the right to vote. We've gone back 173 years. This is something that we cannot have. In 2002, my wife went into early pregnancy preeclampsia at 27 and a half weeks. Through science and through Madison, we were able to keep Little Lizzy going until she was born at 36 weeks. But the thing is this we wanted more children. And I'll never forget the OB. My wife and I in the eye. And you said, you know what? Don't take the risk. And you know what? There was no room in that doctor's office for politicians. That was a personal decision. We need to remember that the Supreme Court decision that came out in June is something that Congress must move forward with and codify Roe v Wade.

[00:44:56] **Speaker 2** Thank you. We start with Mark Newman for this next round of questioning. We go to Scott Roberts of ACM Radio. The third Congressional District has been leaning more and more Republican in recent elections, and whoever wins this primary election will face a Republican candidate who almost beat a 24 year incumbent in the last contest. What would you say specifically to Republican voters to convince them that you are a better choice than Republican Derek Van Orden?

[00:45:22] **Speaker 1** Well, that's kind of easy. It's not a high bar, but my approach to what you're referring to is to go straight to the voters and to find in their hearts our belief in these primitive, deep seated principles of being an American, which is our freedom and fairness. It goes right back to the origins of 250 years ago. And to appeal to those deep held values that we all share as Americans, and to bring that forward and to say, how can we best make that happen? Now, we've alluded to the fact that people have been hurt and that there's a lot of revenge that's rolling in the spirit of people. And I believe that what we need to do is to draw forward that hope and say, we can still do it. Let's do it. Let's don't just get caught up in tearing things down, but try one more time. And then if elected or when elected, I will go to Congress and keep that promise that I'm not going to forget how important that is to you.

[00:46:29] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Dad. McGrath.

[00:46:33] **Speaker 4** I grew up in a small town here in Wisconsin, and the beauty of that is that there was calm, not chaos. And that's what people want to return to. That's what they want in a leader. They want somebody who so steady, principled leadership, bold leadership, someone who will step up for them and who's listening to them. I have loved this state enough to defend it, and they know that I spent 25 years going to the toughest locations to make sure that they were safe. Believe me, when I come home, it's this that sustains me. I can work across the aisle because I always have. I'm putting my country above politics. When I walk in a parade, put my hand over my heart and say, I'm Deb McGrath, or I'm running for Congress to represent you. I don't talk about where which side of the aisle we are. And I said, I'm an American and I'm fighting for you.

[00:47:45] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:47:45] **Speaker 5** Redpath For the last 42 years, this district has been represented by a Republican and a Democrat, Steve Gunderson on the Republican side, Ryan kind of the Democratic side. Those two individuals recognize the fact that the most important thing to do is not play partizan politics or just do ideological games. What they've done is they worked for the people of this district. I know this district. I know the people and the communities of this district. I will always put the interests of the people and the communities of this district first. I will always and I have always stood up for our family farmers, our rural residents, for the people that live in our neighborhoods here in the city, Blue Cross and elsewhere, to make sure that they have the resources and the tools that they need in order to succeed. I'm a Wisconsin state senator that has received bipartisan support in the past when I won an election in 2020. I've done my best to reach across the aisle and Madison to make sure that we have infrastructure funding in this district from broadband to roads and bridges. I will continue to find common ground because now more than ever, we need to find common ground in order to move our state and our nation forward.

[00:49:00] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:49:02] **Speaker 3** Derek Van Orden is part of the radical right, and he's not a part of a Republican Party that many of us grew up with. There's a lot of folks that are supporting my campaign. There are Republicans. There are John McCain style Republicans. Right. They know I'm not going to agree with them on everything and they're not going to agree with me in everything. But they know at the end of the day that I'm going to do the right thing. And I think that comes with running a value centered campaign and running a value centered office, which I've done throughout this time. I haven't just stayed in the urban parts of the district or the bright blue parts of this district. But I've made a point to go out into deep red parts of the district and hear from folks and hear why they're frustrated with their elected officials. And I think a big part of that is showing up and listening. So it's coming. It's coming together to talk about those values. But I think it's also about showing up and listening. Listening.

[00:49:52] **Speaker 2** So thank you. Our next round of questioning, we go to Chris Hardy of Seven Rivers Alliance. We will start with that. McGrath. The availability and affordability of child care continues to be a serious challenge for our region and quite frankly, for our country. Our surveys have revealed that many parents are not working or they're working part time simply because they cannot find childcare. What specific proposals are policies would you support to ease the childcare crisis?

[00:50:23] **Speaker 4** Thank you. I love this question because it is central to re to revitalizing our economy. I believe this is the number one thing that we need to get done for families. And the situation is that right now, for every hundred people who want childcare, there's 80 spots and that it's so expensive that people can't afford it, sometimes more than a college education. And again, this hits our families who are service oriented, who are families of color, are marginalized communities. Even worse, many women have to go back to work ten days after they've given birth. We need to incentivize this profession. We need to make sure that people can get paid a living wage to take on. These are those wonderful people in our lives to be able to hand to child care providers. That and we need to incentivize the workforce. And then we need to be able to subsidize or give tax. We need to have the tax credit. That needs to be the childcare tax credit needs to be codified again, make it permanent. So we need to have support families to get childcare. We need to incentivize the provision, the profession, because it has been marginalized and invisible.

[00:51:34] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:51:34] **Speaker 5** REDPATH Well, thank you. This is a very, very important issue. And I hear about it firsthand when I travel the state Senate district and I travel through up and down this congressional district. So we do we do need to incentivize the profession. We need to make sure that we get more childcare providers and workers within the system. We need to make sure that we incentivize small businesses as well. What can we do to help grow childcare providers? That's all very important, but we also need to make sure that we tackle the overall cost. What can we do at the federal and the state tax codes in order to make it more affordable for childcare? Because the thing is this if we do not tackle this problem, if we do not recognize the seriousness of this, it is going to continue to hold back our economy moving forward. And as a result of that, you know, we're going to continue to see, you know, struggles and frustrations with our families as well as our small businesses moving forward.

[00:52:36] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Rebecca Cook.

[00:52:38] **Speaker 3** The solution to our childcare shortage is not one size fits all for every community. I had an opportunity on her 19 county district tour to connect with childcare providers in rural communities like Black River Falls, where they came up with an innovative solution of coming together at home providers to form a cooperative. Here in Lacrosse, I had an opportunity to talk with Mayor Mitch Reynolds, who had an idea about pulling folks together, smaller businesses, mid-sized businesses that. Can't provide a child care facility for their employees to form a cooperative, and each have shares within that. You know, I think it comes back down to the cost of childcare in general, both, you know, for families, but also providers in their ability to make a living. But what I, I think what I see from the conversations I've had is what solutions are communities figuring out on their own? And then how can I, as their representative, start to steer federal dollars in that way to replicate those efforts throughout the district?

[00:53:35] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Mark Newman.

[00:53:37] **Speaker 1** You know, over the last few decades, particularly, we have become more and more aware of the importance of those years, early years of development. And so I think that what's really happening is we are undervaluing and not recognizing the importance of child care is, as I said, in response to an earlier question, it is part of the educator process from birth all the way to young adulthood, and it's an issue of justice that children can grow up in our society and have fulfilling experiences and and qualified care providers are not, you know, people who are doing it on the side, but really need to be supported so that they can do an excellent job. I've cared for children who have died in the from injuries in the hands of their care providers. And that is shocking to even say today. It's something that we can solve because we can approach the importance of these early childhood year formative experiences as the charge of our whole community.

[00:54:40] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Candidates, we have reached the closing statement round of this debate. We have time for 45/2 closing statements for each candidate and brad path. We kick things off with you.

[00:54:53] **Speaker 5** Well, thank you very much. I want to thank everyone for being here. I want to thank the media panelists for asking the questions. Thank you very much. Derek Van Orden is a clear and present danger. He is a threat to our democracy. He cannot be serving in Congress. He was in a restricted area on January 6th. That shameful, awful, deadly day. We cannot have someone with that kind of character, temperament or judgment representing us in the United States House of Representatives. I have worked hard in order to make sure that I listen to all the people here in western and central Wisconsin to make sure that we move forward in a way that invest in our people and our communities, recognizes individual hopes and dreams, is taking place and working together to implement public policy, to provide people and families with the tools that they need to succeed. I'm Brad Path. I'm running for Congress. I ask for your vote on August 9th. Thank you.

[00:55:54] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Rebecca Cook.

[00:55:57] **Speaker 3** We are 20 days to go until election day. So basically it's tomorrow and folks are already voting. I'm our best shot at keeping the seat blue in November. I am the daughter of dairy farmers, the sister of union workers, and I'm a small business owner and I can speak the language of rural Wisconsin and talk with independent voters. I want to be your relentless fighter for our way of life and work to improve access to affordable, quality health care, protect Medicare and Social Security, and take on big corporations that are price gouging consumers and causing the rise in inflation. And I hope to earn your vote on August 9th.

[00:56:36] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Mark Newman.

[00:56:39] **Speaker 1** This this campaigning is actually a lot of fun. There's many great opportunities and you always know what you're going to be doing that day. But I also have to think about what comes next. You know, what we're really orienting toward is who is going to be the one who's going to do the work in Congress. And so that's the thing I've had to reflect upon. And as I was contemplating getting into this race, I consulted with friends and people I trust. And I was told, Mark, be careful, you're too honest to be a politician. Or the other one is you're really too nice. And that's kind of strange to me that those two qualities would be things that they would warn me against for being qualified to do the work. I said earlier, I believe that I am competent, I have compassion and I have had the experience of growing older some more years and and some of those experiences as a physician. And I think all of those will be qualified. Me Well to do the job.

[00:57:39] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:57:39] **Speaker 4** Deb McGrath I'm a realist, not an alarmist, and it's fair to say these are extraordinary times. Women's rights to choose have been revoked. We have sky high. Inflation in our democracy is at risk. Now is not the time for politics as usual, and now is not the time for typical politicians. Now is the time for bold. Effective leadership. Now is the time for someone to stand up to the radical right. And that someone is me. Because I have been fighting all my life for this country, for this state, and for you. Now is the time for someone to lead on day one for Wisconsin. Now is it time to go to the polls, vote for a better future? Deb McGrath on August 9th.

[00:58:38] **Speaker 2** And audience, how about a round of applause for our candidates?