**MCROSS2414.mp3**

[00:00:31] **Speaker 1** Looking ahead to the 2026 midterm elections, Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Call announced this week he's running for reelection to that office, not for governor. Where does this put the crowded race on the Democrat side and the not so crowded field of Republican candidates? We check in with our political analyst, Republican Bill McCaushan and Democrat Scott Ross, and thanks for being here.

[00:00:55] **Speaker 2** Thanks for having us.

[00:00:56] **Speaker 1** So Scott, first to you, would it be fair to say that Josh Call would have been considered the front runner?

[00:01:01] **Speaker 3** Oh, absolutely. He's a statewide elected, you know, statewide elected official who's won twice in tough environments. So, yeah, he would have been he would've been a great candidate. He'll be a great attorney general candidate again. And I believe that if some changes are made in terms of the environment, that he'll win again. But, you, know, Democrats have an embarrassment of riches. They have some really, really good candidates. They have some candidates who are still talking and thinking about it. But, you know to run against, you know, what I would argue is the front runner in Tom Tiffany, who is, You know. Basically an extension of Donald Trump and everything that you dislike and fear about Donald Trump is embodying Tom Tiffany. So, but again, it's about the environment and I think Democrats have to do some things to change that.

[00:01:42] **Speaker 1** What is the reaction on the Republicans' part to Josh Call not running?

[00:01:46] **Speaker 2** I agree with Scott. I think he would have been the front runner the day he got in. He's running one statewide twice before he's got a record. He's got to base a statewide base. So it's big news for us that one of the top tier candidates got out of the way. So that leaves Democrats. I think their bench is a little bit short right now. The top tier is David Crowley, Milwaukee County executive, Sarah Rodriguez, Lieutenant Governor. And they're waiting to see whether or not former Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes gets in. That would be their top tier. And I feel pretty good about our chances against that.

[00:02:17] **Speaker 1** So this leaves Tom Tiffany, you think, who has announced his run in good shape.

[00:02:23] **Speaker 2** Yeah, there's no question. Tom Tiffany is the front runner. I mean, he's a sitting congressman. Congressmen all have districts with 760,000 people. He's got a base, and it's a very red base. Where he's less known is southeastern Wisconsin. And as I pointed out, the last time Scott and I were on his show, the deficit for Tom has always been fundraising. He wasn't very good at it. He's already raised more than a million dollars in the first two weeks in the race, including 250,000 at a single event last week. So... He's going to be our front runner, but I think Josh Holman's going to stay in the race. Josh is a, you know, he's got a couple of advantages. Josh is just a younger man. He's 24 years younger than Tiffany, and he's geography on his side. All of the votes in a GOP primary come within 100 miles of where Josh lives.

[00:03:06] **Speaker 1** I just want to stay with you a minute, Bill, and ask you your reaction to your former boss, Governor Tommy Thompson, once again saying he's seriously considering a run.

[00:03:14] **Speaker 2** I think he's misunderstood on that. I love Tommy Thompson. I wouldn't be where I am without him. I think what he really was saying was if these guys don't get out of the blocks, I'll be available. I'll in the bullpen warming up and that would be next spring. I don't expect that to happen, but I hope I have half the energy he has when I get to be 83 years old and I don't expect him to be a candidate.

[00:03:35] **Speaker 3** He'll be ready there to wish youngster Joe Biden a happy birthday, right? I think they, do you know that they're born on the, basically on the same day, right, yeah, right. But the former governor is a year older. I mean, I think the great news about Tom Tiffany being the front runner, and he is the front-runner, and I expect that he will be their nominee, is that that nationalizes this race because he is so tied to Trump. And you know, the definition of fascism is an authoritarian political ideology defined by a dictatorial leader, centralized governor and suppression of opposition. That is part and parcel of everything that has happened in these, you know, what seems like 10 years, but is really nine months of Trump being in office. They have control of everything, they have control the Supreme Court, they have the control of Congress, they have controlled the executive, and they are running the fascist playbook. Up into and including, I watched something on Friday where they were calling the March plan for October 18th, a peaceful march, saying no kings, as a terrorist outfit. This is this is not what America is about and I would say to my Democratic friends If you don't start treating fascism like fascism and calling it out You can't expect people to see that America is in crisis and that we need to step up and and do something about this So that we can stop it restore the Constitution restore civil liberties and stop things like marauding ice Gestapo disappearing kids in the middle of the night

[00:04:55] **Speaker 2** Nobody on the Dem side has Tiffany's record. He was elected to local office, to state office, state assembly, and state senate, and now congress. So he's eminently qualified. He is a strong, consistent conservative. So is Josh Shulman. I think we have an embarrassment of riches on our side, and it's gonna play out pretty well.

[00:05:11] **Speaker 1** Scott, the one candidate that we've mentioned that has not yet entered the race on the Democratic side is former Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes. What's your take on his entry into the race?

[00:05:21] **Speaker 3** Well, his supporters tell me that he would be the most experienced, best campaigner to get in the race if he got in the race and that he spent, since he left office, working to restore democracy, protect democracy and lift the lives of others. And I think that all of the candidates in this race have some claim to that, whether it's David Crowley or Sarah Rodriguez or Kel DeRoy's. They all have that claim that they have stood up for democratic values. Again, the question for me is who is going to tell like it is and step up to this threat that America faces? Because I don't think we can win the race if we're defined by the feckless politics of Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries. What is going on is it's unprecedented in American history. And we have to look at it that way and we have to treat it that because the people want nothing less than to make sure that the Constitution's being upheld.

[00:06:14] **Speaker 1** So I mean, swinging back to the race, Bill, what do you think about how formidable barns might be?

[00:06:19] **Speaker 2** You got to remember 2022 was one of the best midterms for Democrats since Bill Clinton was in the White House in 1998. And Mandela Barnes lost. This was the first election statewide election post Dobbs. He's one of a few statewide Democrats to lose that night. So we're not afraid of Mandela Barns being their candidate. And if you think Tom Tiffany's too conservative, is he more conservative than Ron Johnson who beat Mandela barns? I don't think so.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 3** I mean, the thing is, is that Schumer left Mandela Barnes high and dry for three and a half weeks after the primary where there were no TV ads from D.C. Coming for Barnes. I don't want to re-litigate that campaign, but if you allow your opponent to define you, you're in a lot of trouble. No question. And that's what happened in that race. I think it was, again, it was a tough loss for sure, but it was one that's explainable.

[00:07:11] **Speaker 2** Beyond Mandela's. The last statewide candidate in Wisconsin that came back from a statewide loss and one statewide is Bob Caston in 1980. It's been a long, long time.

[00:07:21] **Speaker 1** Indeed.

[00:07:22] **Speaker 2** That's a deep cut.

[00:07:23] **Speaker 1** I wanted to ask you both about the government shutdown and which party you think goes down as being blamed for it and whether or not that has any kind of political legs.

[00:07:33] **Speaker 2** I mean, next week is payday for a lot of federal employees and it needs to get solved. If Republicans think they're not going to get blamed for this ultimately, they're in charge. And I understand the filibuster rule. Frankly, I would do away with the filabuster if I were John Thune, and I would pass the CR today. I think that's their best move. And I would be ready with a health care reform bill in the next two weeks.

[00:07:56] **Speaker 3** I mean, yeah, I think Bill's right. The Republicans are in charge of things and the Republicans own this. But again, let's see what's, again, back to my point two, centralization of government. On Friday, we started to see illegal firings of union and non-union employees in federal government. Those employees will be replaced by Trump partisans. Again, remember all this, a part of this is about, it's taken the ability of the House to vote to release the Epstein files. They're one vote short. You know, Johnson won't sit a congressperson who won a special election so that that deciding vote will make this happen. So again, it's all about this. It's about protecting dear leader and it's about consolidating power.

[00:08:37] **Speaker 1** We need to leave it there. Scott Ross, Bill McCaussian, thank you very much.

[00:08:48] **Speaker 3** No, no, no. I know I was. I knew I was...

[00:08:52] **Speaker 1** But dear Bill, you do that and then Bill says, well, I think Tom Tiffany would be very informative. I know, I know.

[00:08:58] **Speaker 3** I know, I know. I'm glad we didn't have to trash the poll, because I had to say, I was ready to say... I was really ready to... I didn't even reference it, did I? I don't think so. My thing was just, because Tony is a friend, I don't want to blast him.