**spring\_election\_prep\_20250320.mp3**

[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Shortly.

[00:00:59] **Speaker 2** Thank you all for attending. And we'll start in a couple of minutes here. Just going to give one or two more minutes to let more people file in. All right, let's let's get things started. I just want to thank everyone for attending and for all the journalists as well. And also thanks to this great panel for taking the time to speak with everyone today. Just some housekeeping things. We are taking questions. So feel free anytime to type in the chat and we will also be having a about a 15 minute Q&A session at the end of this briefing so feel free again to ask any questions in the chat and I will be monitoring those. Just really briefly I see a lot of familiar faces and names but also some new ones so just really quickly about Keep Our Republic. We were founded in the spring of 2020 to address challenges posed by the pandemic to voting ahead of November of 2020 and we were engaged well before January 6 and all the information misinformation that took place after election day in 2020. Key Bar Republic, we're a nonpartisan nonprofit, and we're dedicated to safeguarding the pillars of American democracy, primarily making sure that every eligible voter can vote. We're committed to upholding the integrity of our electoral system and also educating citizens on the threats to our democracy. We try to, and we successfully serve as a beacon of truth with transparency in an era of miscommunication. Thanks for watching! And primarily and specifically in the swing states that we work in of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, we work to demystify the election process. Specifically in Wisconsin, and we do this in our other states as well, but we go on the ground working with election officials like the ones that are in this call, as well as advisory council members who are also in this call, and going to areas, meeting community members, and educating them, and the media, national, state, local. on the election process on the all the administration parts of the election and really going into the nuts and bolts of it. We've been in person to Northwoods, Waukesha, West Bend, La Crosse, Swamico, Chippewa Valley, ahead of the November election. And so that's been great and we continue to do great work in Wisconsin. And then similar to this briefing ahead of 2024 we hosted a briefing like this about a week before the November election and it was extremely helpful. I'm so glad we're able to do that and planning to do the same here. So I am going to introduce our great panelists and we'll start off with Reed.

[00:04:50] **Speaker 3** Well, good afternoon, everybody. My name is Reed Ribble. I'm a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, represented Wisconsin's eighth Congressional district, primarily Appleton and Green Bay and parts north of there. And I retired in 2017 from that position. I've been involved with Keep Our Republic now for two years as one of their advisory council members and working with the clerks in the state Wisconsin in preparation. for current elections, including the one upcoming here in a few days. And so it's very good to be with you. and I'll pass it on to John.

[00:05:32] **Speaker 1** Good afternoon, everybody. I'm John Boudry. I was a federal prosecutor here in Western Wisconsin for 38 years. The last seven and a half of those years, I was the United States attorney appointed by President Obama. During that time, among my other work, criminal work, criminal cases, the voting issues we focused on were protecting the right to vote, especially in the face of laws that we saw that were disenfranchising certain groups of people. I resigned in March of 2017 after the first election of President Trump when it was his time to appoint U.S. attorneys. Like Reid, I've been a member of the Advisory Council for the last couple of years, since 2023, primarily hoping to address trust in the election process. From 2008 to now, I just keep thinking how we've seen politicians of all sides use lies about voting fraud. as a political weapon. Just weaponizing, suppose at fraud, things like non-citizens are voting or absentee ballots in the mail or the machines are rigged. All of these, we all know, are not true. And it was my hope by going out to communities, speaking with the media. to just try and tell people, as I think Rita said so well, persuade people who want to be persuaded, who are willing to be persuaded about the truth in our election process. But just yesterday, as we'll talk about, Judge Schimel, one of the candidates, was speaking to the media, raised again the lies about fraud in Milwaukee in the and see process ballot. So it is not something that ended, it is something that continues. Thank you, glad you're all here.

[00:07:25] **Speaker 2** Thank you, John. And then we'll pass it on to Lisa Thompson.

[00:07:28] **Speaker 4** Hi, I'm Lisa Tollefson. I am the Rock County clerk for Rock County, Wisconsin. I started in election administration in 2010 as a town clerk for the town of Harmony in Rock County. I was appointed county clerk in 2015 and been doing this ever since then.

[00:07:47] **Speaker 2** Excellent, and then the other listener.

[00:07:50] **Speaker 5** Hi, I'm Lisa Freyberg, Fond du Lac County Clerk. I started in the office of the County Clerk in 1998, pre-2000, when everyone was worried about back then if computers were gonna work in 2000. And I was elected as Fond du Lac County Clerk in 2008 and took office January of 2009 and going on my 17th year of being Fond du Lac County Clerk.

[00:08:21] **Speaker 2** Excellent. Thank you all. And so we'll start off talking about the April election and just kind of the landscape of Wisconsin right now.

[00:08:32] **Speaker 3** Okay, the April election and the election that is coming up is a really fascinating election. Historically, these April elections were relatively low turnout events, but that's no longer the case in Wisconsin. The turnouts are really quite large and quite frankly, I'm anticipating a large turnout on April 1st here. This race has garnered a lot of attention. It's one of the most, if not the most expensive Supreme Court. race and U.S. history. And so it's going to drive a lot of voters to the polls, I believe. And significantly, it is very important because the potential of the court flipping in Wisconsin from more progressive control to more conservative control, there's a lot of dynamics that are going on in this race. And so... And part of the issue you have for candidates, quite frankly, there's so much outside money coming in from political action committees, mostly from outside of the state, that it creates a real dilemma for a candidate to control their message, because there really is no legal mechanism for coordination behind the messaging from so whatever Governor Pritzker's or Elon Musback on the right do, or Pritzker's on the left does. they can say things that may or may not be fully true. And the candidate oftentimes has to respond to things that people trying to help them are saying that they need now to defend. And they've lost complete control over the messaging of these campaigns because the amount of money they can spend directly from contribution directly to their campaigns is now so small as a total percent. And there's just this. kind of annoying in my view, increase of partisanship in these state Supreme Court races. It's supposed to be a nonpartisan position, but as everyone's aware, I think that's a little bit of a falsehood, but at the end of the day, these things have become very, very partisan. And unfortunately, we now have partisanship kind of masquerading as the principle itself. And so it makes it difficult. when individual candidates don't have enough money to offset the outside noise to actually diminish some of that partisan talking points, and maybe in some cases nonsense, and come forward with what their views are on this or that as it relates to the Supreme Court and its makeup. I think this is an incredibly important race to watch, but I'm also very concerned that national media is going to view this and try to posture it as some type of bellwether. I'm not 100% convinced that this is a bellwether race at all. I think the country is pretty closely divided. Anybody who watches Wisconsin's schizophrenic election nature on statewide races, this is a very candidate-centric race. And I believe that the candidate that is August is most likely to win. uh, without regard to all these millions and millions of dollars being spent. And I would also say without regard to the partisan talking points, I'm with Trump or I'm a pro choice or whatever the case may be pro education, however it may be, um, and I'm not as convinced at all that this is going to be some type of bellwether race. Um, it's, it's kind of a, um, inside the family Wisconsin race. And I think people are more concerned about either overturning Act 10 or not overturning Act 10 than they would be about whether Trump is doing something in the White House that they don't like in this particular moment. And so, John, what are your thoughts?

[00:12:41] **Speaker 1** Thanks, Reed. Just to add a few things to what Reed said, it strikes me, and I never ran for elected office, but it strikes me that with all the outside spending and the ads, and we're going to talk about the misinformation a couple slides downstream, for the candidate, whether you're Judge Schimmel or Judge Crawford, it becomes whack-a-mole. Rather than getting out your message, who I am. what I stand for, my positions as best you can in a judicial race, you just end up trying to respond to things. And when I say whack-a-mole, we're all familiar with that game. And it's troubling, of course, because even with increased turnout, what we see in a couple of recent polls is a large percentage of voters in my state, our state, saying, well, I just don't know the And you're thinking. Gee, people are spending $75 million, throwing out really negative ads, and none of them have achieved one key goal of who are these people. And you can't perhaps get your message out, as Reid said, because you're too busy. as I said, whack-a-mole, hitting this issue, hitting that issue. Yesterday is a good example. As I said, when Judge Schimel is in Milwaukee and he's talking and he says that this is all about ballot dumping and they don't count the ballots till late and what's going on in Milwaukee. So the Crawford campaign is responding to that. Neither one of these things tells us more, perhaps it does at some level, about each of them, but it doesn't allow them to say, here's who I am, here's where I come from, here's what I do. So that huge spending. The other thing, we are seeing the increased turnouts, as you see in the screen, usually an April election, a judicial election, they were historically low. But one thing that I always think is when we hear these claims of fraud and the election is, you know, the non-citizens are flipping the election and so on and so forth, the ballot boxes, I would pose this question as I often do, if only 40% or 50% of voters are voting, which is just a tragedy, frankly, with the issues that are so significant in this race. Thanks for watching! that fewer that that low number which is still historically high that that low number of voters vote it strikes me how can we seriously think that the 40 percent who are voting or the 50 who vote that is also made up of huge numbers of fraudulent votes which is simply not possible not been proven so it feeds into this my my concern that the public thinks well this is fixed and the races are. clerks don't run good elections and so on. And our hope is to keep our republic to beat that message back. And I think the spending in this, the inability for voters to actually know the candidates in this supposedly non-partisan race is troubling. And I certainly agree with Reed that it, hopefully it is pretty much state. state-centric to our state in terms of the issues themselves. But then again, Judge Schimel made the comment, well, I'm here to support President Trump. I don't know where that comes from. You're a Supreme Court justice. But then Judge Crawford, they try to respond to that and we go down the rabbit hole. So it's a difficult time and hopefully people will see through the smoke.

[00:16:30] **Speaker 2** Thank you, John. Thank you, Reed. We are going to now hand it over to both Lisa's to talk about kind of what clerks have been seeing on the ground what they are doing to prepare and just some of the overall trends that they are seeing as well.

[00:16:48] **Speaker 4** Whoever wants to start. Prepping for elections, we are, first of all, it takes a tremendous amount of work for our municipal clerks and our county clerks. We have to come right off February, get those cert, the primary certified and we're prepping for ballots to make sure everything is ready to go and everything goes out. Early voting in person started on Tuesday and our clerks are seeing numbers that they've not used to seeing and some of my clerks are already requesting. new absentee extra ballots for election day. If someone wants to vote absentee, the deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail is next week, Thursday. recommend you don't wait that long because you're you're waiting you're depending on the mail to get it to you. So if you're gonna request an EPSTE ballot I recommend you're if you're gonna want it by mail I would request it today. We are looking for record turnout again, making sure that everything is prepped. Pole worker training we are doing. There's so many little pieces throughout this entire part of what we're doing. Talking about I have 146 different ballot styles just from my county. There's 72 counties, some have more, some have less. Pole worker training, making sure we're giving supplies and supports to all of our municipal clerks. There's there's so many pieces to put together to make this work. It's amazing. And the fact that there's only six weeks between the February primary and the April 1st election. Lisa, I'm sure you can cover this a lot more detail than I can.

[00:18:40] **Speaker 5** You're doing a great job, but one of the things that we are seeing, obviously, too, is the amount of absentee requests and people looking for in-person absentee voting. That is always frustrating when people call it early voting in Wisconsin, in my area, at least, because people truly believe that it is early voting and they're looking for the machine. Because when the media puts it on the TV, early voting began and they have a picture of the machine. That's when I wish they would hold up absentee ballots and explain to the two. everyone that this is actually going in the envelope, and it's going to some that's what we trust our election officials to put that ballot on your behalf into the machine. Preparing communicating communications is so key right now with our municipal clerks with the borders. I have four referendums big referendums in my county besides So it's, you know, everybody is worried about the top of the ballot, but yet our April elections truly are what is on your tax bill, county, municipal, and then onto our schools. So it's getting everyone to understand that, yes, the top of the ballot is very, very important, but our local races are just as important, especially when there is opposition and our candidates work so hard. They don't have that kind of money. to spend like the top of the ballot does. Getting right now the testing, letting the public know that machines are being tested, that the public can come and witness the testing of the machines in the next two weeks. Most counties, I can't speak for all of them, but in our county, we are also testing the transmission of those unofficial results on election night, making sure all of that all works and that we don't have any. problems out in the field with that. Lisa, some more to add to that.

[00:20:50] **Speaker 4** Um, just some more things for voters to consider is that if you're looking to request an absentee ballot or where's your polling location going to be election day, checking your voter registration, the best place to go is myvote.wi.gov. You can, you can search all of that and look at your sample ballot. It's, it has the information that you need to know for election day and it lists all the deadlines, absentees, everything is there and you can track your absentee ballot there also.

[00:21:18] **Speaker 5** That is a great point, especially when you said how many different ballot styles, uh, obviously a little bit smaller County, but I have almost 90 different ballot styles. One of my smallest towns has four different school districts. Uh, their next door neighbor may have maybe in the different school district. So when you're talking across the fence, say, Oh yeah, you got to remember so-and-so is on the ballot. That doesn't sound familiar. That's different school districts. So going on to the my vote website to make sure. what is on your respective ballot and knowing who you're going to vote for prior to going into the polling place. But our election officials cannot answer who somebody is, or even though this is a nonpartisan election, I get phone calls. So which one leans towards this party and which one leans on that party? We can't answer that with the statewide referendum also being on this ballot? I have never had so many people in many years call and ask what does the question really mean. I've had to get the type C notice it's called out to our municipalities as soon as we were able to get it from the state to give it to the voters. We have that for in-person absentee voting. I instructed all of the election or all of my municipal clerks, please have that available for our voters. In the past, we worried about making sure it was there on election day. Now we actually have to start thinking about what we have there on election day is going to now back up those two weeks prior to that because 2026 we are going to see even more absentee voting. I strongly believe that I've let my municipalities know at the town's association meeting budget for that but getting the word out there for people as soon as we have our sample ballots. I request that the municipalities get them hung in their town halls, their village halls, so when they have meetings or they rent out their hall for 4-H or whatever, that those sample ballots are already hanging up for people to view.

[00:23:25] **Speaker 2** Perfect, thank you. And Lisa Tolson, I know you mentioned about early voting and do you have any statistics from what you've seen from this year versus others?

[00:23:34] **Speaker 4** So I did go on to the election commission website. Um, so elections.wi.gov tons of information on there, especially if you like to geek out on lots of stuff. Um, if you look under statistics, you can actually look back at previous elections. Um, so I did pull up what they have from the 17th and that's. There's over 400,000 ballots that were issued, absentee ballots that are already been sent. And a third of those are already back. That is already beating the numbers that we had from last year. And last year we had the presidential preference. I'm expecting that number to keep climbing as more people are taking advantage of that in-person absentee voting. So we're expecting record turnouts for this election.

[00:24:19] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And then we'll move on to election day and if both of you can kind of talk briefly about what what the state does what you do and what your municipal clerks do as well come election day disabled.

[00:24:33] **Speaker 5** Go ahead, Lisa.

[00:24:34] **Speaker 4** Okay, well I'll start with the state and the county. So on election day, the biggest thing for the election commission and the county clerks is we are a source of information. We have voters call us every on election day we have all of our, our, our systems up so we can check polling locations for people. If they have questions on photo ID. um we are making sure if you know anybody needs extra ballots like just election day something happened we are we are their support That is our main goal on election day, support our municipal clerks. They are in charge on election day. So they are the ones that make sure everything happens in the field. We are just their backups. And the election commission works the same way. They are their support on election day. Lisa, do you want to take over what the municipal clerks do?

[00:25:23] **Speaker 5** The municipal clerks are actually not in charge on election day. There is, well, they are the chief inspector is actually in charge. And that is, uh, you know, you see that a lot more. I know most municipal clerks are at their town or village halls, but in a city, uh, I have 22 words in the city of Fond du Lac. I know Lisa has a lot more in Janesville and everything, but um the city clerk obviously can't be in 22 different places so these uh chief inspectors are trained that they are in charge they are going to uh answer questions for voters they're going to keep everything running very smoothly they do a phenomenal job they are kind of that uh secret person that is on the ground running on election day and they have a huge a lot responsibilities. They're going to take care of observers coming in and making sure they're all uh satisfied with what they're seeing or where they need to go uh to sit a view all of that um just when they're running short on ballots they're the ones that are going to be calling me on the county level that we're running short uh in our county we have check-ins during the day to let me know where they are i have a little formula i use that if i think they're going to have enough ballots. uh we will not run out of ballots on election day. We run um our ballots in-house so we're able to get more run to them. Whether it's myself getting it to the polls, uh somebody from the municipality or I work hand in hand with the sheriff and law enforcement all day long. Uh back in November I had two deputies assigned to me personally that would do any running or if I needed anything. We work hand in hand with law simply because uh, we want the voters to feel safe in the environment on election day. And yes, we've had to go down that route, but it is appreciated by our election officials and by the voters. But that is, um, we want that. We want that feeling for people that they're not intimidated and that they can vote that ballot, that this, uh, the machine is secure. and that their ballot is going to count on election day. That is all of our goal, I believe, out there.

[00:27:43] **Speaker 4** And one thing we didn't really touch on from the last slide is that the chief inspectors and the poll workers go through a lot of training. Lisa and I do a ton of training in our counties. I know most counties do as just as much as we do, just to make sure that they understand any changes in the law or just to remind them of all the steps. There's a ton of training that goes ahead of this election, so that they're comfortable and have the knowledge and the resources to make sure those election days run smoothly.

[00:28:13] **Speaker 5** Absolutely. We got to remember this only happens a couple times a year. So we, even though Lisa and I and other county clerks and our municipal clerks are working elections year-round, which 20 years ago I never thought would come to that, but you know, we're not going to see, except for special elections or anything, elections till next year. So it's continuously keeping our election officials. uh, knowing what is going on as far as laws, any changes, what is on the ballot? I, I stress, I'm sure others stress my, I stress that my election officials do know what is on their ballot. There's nothing worse when the voter says, Oh, why am I here? What is on my ballot? And the election official looks at the ballot and to see what's on there. So those are things I even instruct so that they can have the confidence when the voter does come in and has that unusual question.

[00:29:09] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And then briefly, if you both can talk about kind of what goes on on election night as well.

[00:29:16] **Speaker 5** On election night, they on the municipal level, they are going through those ballot once everybody has voted. And once again, we have to remember if you're online at eight o'clock at night, and there is still our long line, everybody gets the vote. We instruct our election or our municipal clerks election officials that somebody should stand at the end of the line at eight o'clock to make sure that somebody doesn't come in at eight or one. Once everything has been done, they are going to verify the number on the machine and the poll book. And then they will close the poll and various everything is the same around the state, but everybody has different state steps on doing this. But basically what it comes down to is they get that unofficial or that official total, I'm sorry, official total from the machine. And once they get all that through in our colony that is transmitted. to the county clerk's office. It is unofficial results from the county clerk simply because everything is official from the machine on the municipal level and that's why we call unofficial because I have not seen those tapes from the voting machines until the next day so that is why we are very we strongly say it is an unofficial result plus there has been no canvassing at when it comes to state and county. Lisa, you want to continue?

[00:30:44] **Speaker 4** Sir, the municipalities are also reviewing all those ballots for voter intent. We're a high voter intent state. So we're going to look to see the machines just basically read the filled in ovals. So they're looking to see if a voter decided to circle the name instead of filling in the oval, or if there's any write-ins because we do have races where the write-ins will actually win a race. There are some that don't have any candidates on them. And that does happen usually at the, at the municipal levels, uh, and some of the smaller offices. going to be reviewing all of that and they might actually be determining the results of some of those races so if it's a town board with one polling location they may be actually doing that canvas and determining the winner that night. We're also making sure we're logging any provisional ballots those people that didn't have their ID with them when they came to vote there's different reasons there's very few but we do log all that to make sure that they have the chance to come back and make sure their ballot can get counted later. Again, those results are transmitted or somehow gotten in the county. And once we have them, every municipal, every county is required to post those on their website, um, on election night, they are definitely unofficial because we're going to review everything after the election, uh, the towns and the village and the cities will certify their portion of the ballot. The school districts have certified the school district referendums and the school board members. then the counties will meet a week after the election and they are going to actually review all of the county and above races and that gets sent to the state once we certify and the state does it again and recertifies everything there. I jumped there didn't I?

[00:32:28] **Speaker 2** Anymore

[00:32:29] **Speaker 5** one thing on the can I just add one thing for the media to note when it comes to the school districts make sure you're aware of what lines or what counties those school districts go into I had a situation a couple of years ago that the local media announced somebody was the winner which you know it was unofficial they had missed one county and that person wasn't the winner so as media on election night, always making sure the different counties that the school district goes into. You might not realize that there might just be that one little town that has 40 voters that in a different county. So that's really, really important with this spring election. There is just so many variables in our spring elections.

[00:33:20] **Speaker 2** Thank you both. So we will now, we can start off with the read and talk about kind of some of the advertisement and mis and disinformation we are seeing around this election and in the state.

[00:33:31] **Speaker 3** Yeah, thanks a lot, Anthony. And I don't know if the audience can see me or just see their slides. What is the reality there, Anthony?

[00:33:41] **Speaker 2** can see you.

[00:33:42] **Speaker 3** and the slides so perfect thank you but I would often tell people when I was in office or going to town halls I would hold up a ruler like this you can see that with the background and I might put my finger over here in one part and say this ruler contains all the truth about a particular topic or candidate but someone decides to tell you just this piece of the truth over here They can then go to bed at night and say, well, I said something that was true. But they know full well that if they told you all this other truth over here, you might come to a conclusion that you otherwise wouldn't come to if you had truthfulness, if you just had part of the truth or part of the story. And that's disinformation. And that's predominantly what you see. And people can put something out there, but without giving you all the background information, It looks like they're telling you something that's true, but it's totally misleading and it's intended to be misleading. They do it on purpose to be particularly deceptive. And you see this in almost any type of political campaign and now we're seeing it in these Supreme Court races where this sentence once wasn't right or this person let off this child sex offender or this or that. You have no idea. the true background or information on any of these cases. And it can be very, very misleading. The data itself can be true. Yes, this sentence was imposed or this occurred, but without more information, it falls into that category of disinformation. And with the widespread use of social media, people who believe it and believe this information, they spread it out through all of their social media networks, whether it's on Facebook or what I affectionately call Zitter or Instagram or whatever, and it begins to spread. Now, they don't really have any bad intent there. They just read this information, they believe it to be true, and then they spread it. And so then they're spreading misinformation, and it takes on a life of its own. And it's very, very difficult to combat. And it's particularly difficult to combat when you have so much outside money and you have no control over the messaging as a candidate, as I mentioned earlier. And so you've got ads that just take you to all different kinds of places. And you begin to wonder at what point do regular voters they just tune this all out. At some point they just stop hearing the noise of it all and then more and more and more money comes in. But every time a candidate wins based on using these tactics, it encourages the use of those tactics even further in the next election. And so there's this escalation up of this environment of, and listen, there's always been disinformation and misinformation. I mean, the... The John Adams, Thomas Jefferson presidential race was one of the ugliest in U.S. history, and that dates way back to the very, very late 1700s and early 1800s, and it was filled with disinformation. And so this is a proud heritage that American elections have that has been put in kind of a supercharged mode. with the speed and ability at very low cost to spread it. And so it gets to be very difficult to combat it. And I'm not an advocate of stopping it. I'm an advocate of having more free speech with more accurate speech. And this really imposes a burden on the candidates to get out there and get in the public. where people can read their eyes, see their body language, see how authentic they are and make a judgment on their own. And it does become more and more incumbent on the candidates to work especially harder. And I would say on the political advertisement side, there's very little that you can believe on it as far as being truthful. And I would just say that given the very tight nature of political races in Wisconsin, in Wisconsin in particular, this plays, I mean, you're only talking about moving 10,000 votes in some cases for a statewide race. And this is in a state that on the same ballot elected Senator Ron Johnson, one of most conservative kind of America first. senators out there on the same belt that they reelected Governor Evers. Or they elected Ron Johnson in one election and two years later reelected Senator Tammy Baldwin, who's one of the most progressive members. And so these races are so tight in Wisconsin that misinformation, disinformation can swing an election. And so part of the reason we talk with folks like you is to to try to combat some of this information and fact check and truth check things that something doesn't sound right, it's probably not right. But we're also hearing about the misinformation about how elections are rigged in Wisconsin and how you can't trust them, that there's going to be ballot dumps or that illegal immigrants are voting and false claims like that. It kind of, again, gets gets put on a supercharger as these rumors float through the internet. I can't even tell you how much of that I've seen on on Facebook and and and on X lately. And it's kind of shocking that with all the discussion since twenty twenty, that this is still even a topic of discussion. And even after the twenty twenty three election, where Wisconsin put in their constitution that illegals can't vote, that you have to be a citizen. Even though they never really were voting in Wisconsin, there's always illegal there, it just continues to go on. And so it really plays and there's a lot of money behind it and pushing it. And so, John.

[00:40:31] **Speaker 1** Just, again, I'll just briefly follow up what Reid said. This particularly sticks in my craw, but Reid said it so well. There's a little bit of truth. Yes, somebody did give a short sentence or somebody did give a plea agreement to somebody when they were a prosecutor, but there's so much behind those decisions that we never know, especially the ones where they attacked. since I'm an old prosecutor, they attacked either of these two candidates who did have some prosecutorial experience, they attacked decisions they made. And you just, you don't know anything and they don't take the time to explain it. And I go back to the election between our now Attorney General Josh Call and then Attorney General Schimmel, and they ran these ads that Josh Call. Assistant U.S. Attorney, which I was, in Baltimore, he gave a plea agreement. A guy got almost no time and called Josh Call, tell him he's not tough on crime. Well, I knew that case and I knew what had happened. It had been a big cartel. They had 30 people convicted. They finally got somebody to cooperate. He got a reduction from the judge clearly under our sentencing guidelines, just what should have happened to bust up a big cartel. None of that was part of the attack act. It's the Willie, if this is a verb, I'll make it one. It's the Willie Hortonizing of our campaigns. And we all remember it's this man went free and something horrible happened and Dukakis is to blame. It's unfortunate because even as I speak to the media, you don't have the time to dig out every. sentencing transcript, every sentencing record. Why did Judge Schimel or Judge Crawford give a shorter sentence? Perhaps there was something in the family that perhaps there was a, who knows? But nobody has, it's whack-a-mole. Nobody has the ability to do that and the people, the public, doesn't do it either. One other thing I would just follow up, and I know it's one of our bullet points in the slides. And I don't think the voters are sensitized to this. So many of the decisions that are being highlighted, whether it's sentencing a sex offender, whether it's making a decision in a criminal case as a prosecutor, or not seeking a charge or so on, those decisions simply are nothing like the decisions that a Supreme Court justice makes. Supreme Court justices are at least two levels removed from the trial. They have no charging decisions. They have no sentencing decisions. They just see whether the law was correctly applied. It is these two judges, these two people, Schimel and Crawford are not running to be a Dane County or Milwaukee County or Final Act County Circuit Court Judge. They're running to be on our Supreme Court. What are their legal skills? How deeply did they think? How clearly did they speak and write? Can they understand law complicated issue? All these things are not even part of the attack ads. So I, it is unfortunate. and reads the truth ruler, I wrote it down, is so perfect. A little bit of it is true, it's yet the sentence was imposed or yes, a criminal decision was made. But what was everything that led to that? And if it wasn't right, then why wasn't the case appealed and why didn't an appellate court reverse them? None of that comes out and that's unfortunate.

[00:43:56] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Really quickly, also, John and others, if you have just very brief input because we're running out of time and want to get to questions, just talk about what updates on what's happening in Madison and also some information on the constitutional amendment.

[00:44:13] **Speaker 1** Look, let me hit that real quickly, because you may all know this. It refers to about 200 uncounted absentee ballots from our prior election. It is under investigation, as it shows on the screen there by the WEC. On March 12th, the Madison City Clerk was suspended, placed on administrative leave pending the investigation to Thanks for watching! This didn't affect the election. I think that's what's really important. It's clear that it had no effect on the outcome, but the effect it had is what we're talking about at Keep Our Republic. It feeds distrust. Oh my gosh, in Madison, they're throwing away ballots and they only threw away perhaps conservative votes. How that would ever be, I don't know, but something happened, but the WEC is gonna sort it out. And in the interim... to bring some faith to our local election. I happen to be in Madison. The city attorney, Mike Haas, he's a former legal counsel at WEC. As a sideline, he was also one of my law students at UW. Bright guy, honest guy, and he's gonna run the election. It just can't be a reason to attack our election. As to the voter ID amendment. Reed alluded to this, I believe, or somebody did, on the amendment so non-citizens couldn't vote. Well, it's the same thing here. We're being asked to decide if it should be in the state constitution. It is the law in this state. If you go to vote, there are several types of photo ID you've got to have. So one might ask the question, why are we changing the constitution? These hallowed foundational documents in our constitutional law usually aren't to be subject to, well, let's just change it like we vote a law or don't vote a law. Clearly, who's ever behind it wants to, it appears simply to handcuff future legislative bodies from changing or tweaking or adding to or. So it is there. Yeah, I'm sure it's... seemingly clear to people about what people don't understand is, and they should, it is already our law.

[00:46:28] **Speaker 2** Excellent. And then before we get to questions, John and others, have you seen any new election laws or anything coming up ahead of this April?

[00:46:39] **Speaker 1** I'm not aware of any significant changes. Most of the, I mean, the issue on the one near and dear to my heart, the drop boxes, was ruled out by the Supreme Court. That does not stand there anymore. But Reed mentioned this earlier. The big issues that this court is going to decide are public sector unions, Act 10 litigation, workers' rights, put it that way. Clearly voting rights. Thanks for watching! maps became huge, drop boxes, I just mentioned that. And we have to say it, it is certainly reproductive rights. And how will the court view these three key areas, which are very, very significant to everybody, whichever way you view these things, for the future of our state, these will be before the court. The issues are huge. We can only hope that with all the smoke floating around. the election that the public is educated and knows what their votes mean.

[00:47:44] **Speaker 2** Excellent. Thank you all. And then we are now going to open it for questions. So if you can type in the chat or you can also raise your hand and you can ask it verbally as well for any of those are our first question is from Amy Sherman. I'm from PolitiFact and she is wondering with discussions of Procedures and processes in uh in Wisconsin specifically on ballot dumping um you know how is there an impact on voters or officials ahead of April and also if you could talk about how these claims in the past have had affected you as well.

[00:48:27] **Speaker 1** Could I suggest that Lisa, or Lisa, explain really quickly how absentee ballots are handled, specifically since Judge Schimel raised it with the central count in Milwaukee, where there's all the numbers you're talking about and how that just simply slows the process down because we can't process them. We don't, under our law, process them ahead of time.

[00:48:50] **Speaker 4** So Rock County also has two central count locations. So instead of the absentee ballots going to the polls and be processed with all the other ballots on election day, there's between 30 and 40 municipalities that use central count. So all their absentees go to one location. In Wisconsin, we cannot start processing any absentee ballots until 7 a.m. on election day. And you can only do so many at a time. There's a limit as to how fast you can go. We can't start till seven. So we have to keep going until they are done. We can't stop. There's nothing that allows us to stop and start up the next day. We keep going till we're done. So thinking there's a ballot dump is it's a little off-putting because unless you understand how the whole system works, they're using high-speed tabulators at Milwaukee and they have to wait until every single ballot is processed until they can actually pull that data. So if they're still going They are taking all the data that all of the ballots they started processing from 7 a.m. in the morning until they are done. And then they can send that to the county. That is a huge number of ballots considering what Milwaukee is running through. It's not a dump, it's just how the system works and how the processing works in our state. If we could start earlier than Monday, or earlier than, I'm sorry, I'd love to have a Monday bill. If we could start earlier than 7 a.m. on election day, you would get your results faster. And that's the piece that's disheartening to some of us who work so hard to be so accurate and so checking everything that they're saying there's a ballot dump when it's really not a ballot dump. It's how the process actually works.

[00:50:33] **Speaker 1** It's not my job to ask questions, but let me follow Lisa. I know it's come before our legislature a couple of times to change the time so you could process earlier. Is that in fact, do other states do that? And it just isn't, it hasn't become our law here for whatever reason.

[00:50:52] **Speaker 4** Um, I believe it's, I think it's four or six states. I'm not sure exactly now. Others may have changed their laws. Um, everyone else process them before election day, they start processing them. We are, we're just one of few states that does not.

[00:51:06] **Speaker 2** stands alone.

[00:51:08] **Speaker 4** Almost.

[00:51:10] **Speaker 2** The next question we have is from Hope from the Journal Sentinel in Milwaukee. Every election there's hundreds or even thousands of absentee ballots that are sent to voters but not returned. Do you have any insight why that is? Do voters need more information about options for returning their ballots? How common is it for clerks to include instructions in this envelope?

[00:51:31] **Speaker 4** You want to take that one, Lisa?

[00:51:33] **Speaker 5** I think, yes, absolutely that they're not sent back is because the voter does not, they get the ballot and they look at it and they realize that it's not, they don't know who the candidate is, they don't know what the contest is. We don't always know. February, you see that a lot, especially with the primary we just had for public instruction, nursing homes. In Wisconsin we have the indefinitely confined list so people automatically get that ballot in our state and they I'll get the phone calls and say who are these people I didn't realize there was an election so I don't have the true answer on why people don't vote that ballot but it is costly to our municipalities that those ballots are sent out not even just the cost of the ballot but the postage and uh postage alone for the ballots and everything. Uh, instructions are sent to along with, um, just on what you should do with the absentee ballot, making sure you get a witness and everything. One thing people don't realize in Wisconsin that you can send back an unvoted ballot and it will be processed. Uh, nobody needs to know that you voted. Not nothing was voted on that ballot and it still shows in your, uh, voter. record that you did vote in the election. So that's any ballot. A lot of people think they have to vote every single contest on that ballot or it's going to be rejected. Whereas you can just vote county clerk and send the ballot back and nobody's going to know that you did not vote in the other contests on that ballot.

[00:53:16] **Speaker 2** Thank you. We have a question from Mitchell from Wisconsin State Journal. And this is talking about spending and elections and misinformation that stems from ads, specifically is asking if Keep Our Public has any position on the need for campaign finance reform in Wisconsin. And also we've come to expect in these elections also is there any changes that could help keep our public is not an advocacy organization and we don't necessarily have a stance on campaign finance reform. Um, but if you, uh, if any of the panelists want to talk about this more, please go ahead.

[00:53:51] **Speaker 3** Yeah, I would just offer one thing, just as additional information. We're seeing so much outside money because of post the Citizens United Supreme Court case where free speech is not limited to the amount of money that you spend. One thing that I think would help is if state law would allow candidates to raise more money directly from individuals as opposed to what I would say is often darker money, money that's harder to track where it comes from from outside sources. The more power that candidates have to speak in their own voice, to be seen by the public, and to address the public face to face or via the media where it's actually them talking, any type of reform that would be legal there would be helpful. But what Citizens United recognized, and I think in the correct way, even though it's been highly criticized, is that our media for the most part is for-profit. And these for-profit companies have political biases themselves. I mean, you can see it, I'll just pick on two, Fox News on the right and MSNBC on the left. They've got opinion people talking day in and day out all day long with all the free speech that they want, and yet a private entrepreneur in... Milwaukee or Green Bay, up by where I lived, didn't have any right to have any political say. And now the Supreme Court said, no, we're going to level the playing field if an individual wants to spend their own money to say what they think about an election, they should have the same right as a for-profit media person. And so it has certainly changed the dynamic. And in Wisconsin, where races are so closely contested in many cases. I would be very, very supportive of some type of campaign finance reform that would give candidates more ability to be direct with the public. I don't know how you do that. I don't know exactly the legal mechanisms now, the way the court has decided about speech. But it's definitely a challenge for sure. And I think it's a really important question, by the way.

[00:56:14] **Speaker 2** Um, thank you. That's all the questions we have currently. If there's any more, we have about five or more minutes until we'll bring this to an end. Also, if there's any media outlets are interested in speaking to anyone to keep our public or any of the panelists, they're available on background or for one on ones after this as well. So, I'm just, let me know and we can get you get you a communicated with them. Um, well, don't see any more questions now. So, I just will end things here and just want to thank all the media outlets for attending and for taking your time to listen to us and also to report on this Wisconsin election as well. And yeah, we are keep our public is here we're open for the media and for the public. So please feel free to reach out to us anytime. And yeah, we're always happy to help. So thank you all and enjoy the rest of your day.

[00:57:15] **Speaker 6** Wow.

[00:57:16] **Speaker 7** Record