

MERIT SHOP

CONTRACTOR

WISCONSIN

WHAT HAPPENED ON NOVEMBER 6?

ELECTION & POLITICS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
WITH STEVE KLESSIG

NEW YEAR, NEW ROLES, SAME GOALS
REP. MARY FELZKOWSKI

VIEW FROM AN ASSEMBLY
FRESHMAN DEMOCRAT
REP. JODI EMERSON

FOCUSED ON
SOLVING PROBLEMS
REP. BRYAN STEIL

ALSO INSIDE:

**BUILDING WISCONSIN
ABC'S AWARD WINNERS**
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ABC NEW MEMBERS
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MERIT SHOP

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FROM OUR PRESIDENT

What we know



“THERE ARE KNOWN KNOWNS – THINGS WE KNOW WE KNOW. WE ALSO KNOW THERE ARE KNOWN UNKNOWNNS – WE KNOW THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE DO NOT KNOW. BUT THERE ARE ALSO UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS – THE ONES WE DON'T KNOW WE DON'T KNOW.”

– *Former Secretary of Defense
Donald Rumsfeld, 2002.*

We enter 2019 with some Chapter successes. First, we hit an all-time-high 881 members in December. In addition, we are at 92 percent retention, the gold standard for trade associations. As in past years, this issue of the *Merit Shop Contractor* focuses on elections and politics. Unlike previous years, the 2018 elections and the 2019 legislative session is expected to be more of a mixed bag. Here is a quick status report:

Known Knowns (knowledge):

On the macro level, Wisconsin taxpayers' overall tax burden is at its lowest point in nearly 50 years, and the state will finish the 2018-19 fiscal year with a \$622 budget surplus. Specifically, at the state Capitol, both houses of the Wisconsin legislature are filled with ABC champions in leadership, chairing key committees, and in the rank-and file. They

will serve as an important firewall to any attempt to repeal right-to-work, project labor agreement neutrality, new apprenticeship ratios or attempt to restore prevailing wage.

Known Unknowns (unidentified impact):

Simply put, the Gov. Evers administration will not be as pro-merit and committed to free enterprise in construction as the Walker administration. So far, we are taking a wait-and-see approach with the Evers administration to learn their priorities and what issues they are likely to fight for. Outside of politics, the continued record low employment and Foxconn's potential as an employee vacuum will affect our members' ability to hire and retain quality skilled workers.

Unknown Unknowns (future circumstances that are impossible to predict):

Our Chapter government relations team is ever vigilant in identifying state and federal legislative, regulatory and political risks and opportunities, and leading an appropriate response. In addition, we are revamping our “Free Legal Advice Call,” with new attorneys and new procedures in place to maintain quality and customer service. Look for a formal roll-out before summer.

— *John Mielke*

**“
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MATT ROTH

Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes (left) with Gov. Tony Evers (right).

WHAT HAPPENED ON **NOVEMBER 6?**

HOW AND WHY
THE MID-TERMS
SAW
REPUBLICANS
LOSE HIGH-
PROFILE RACES

By John Schulze — ABC of Wisconsin Director of Legal and Government Relations

It was not a good year for Republicans in Wisconsin or nationwide.

Democratic Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers denied Republican Gov. Scott Walker a third term by a 49 percent to 48 percent vote. Democratic Attorney Josh Kaul defeated GOP Attorney General Brad Schimel by the same margin. Incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin defeated GOP state Sen. Leah Vumkir's challenge for the U.S. Senate seat 55 percent to 44 percent.

GOP small business executive Bryan Steil defeated Randy "Iron Stache" Bryce 55 percent to 42 percent to replace House Speaker Paul Ryan, who chose not to seek re-election. The rest of the Wisconsin Congressional delegation remained unchanged, including ABC Merit Eagle award recipient Glenn Grothman, who was significantly outspent, but never outworked, and defeated former Democratic U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl's nephew, Dan Kohl, 55-45. In the Wisconsin Legislature, Republicans continue to hold large margins in both houses, with Republicans losing only one Assembly seat (63 of 99) and gaining a state Senate seat (19 of 33).

Nationally, the Democrats picked up 41 seats in the House of Representatives and now have a 20-plus seat majority. Republicans picked up two seats in the U.S. Senate to maintain their majority. For perspective, since World War II, the president's party has lost an average of 26 House seats and four U.S. Senate seats during the midterm elections.

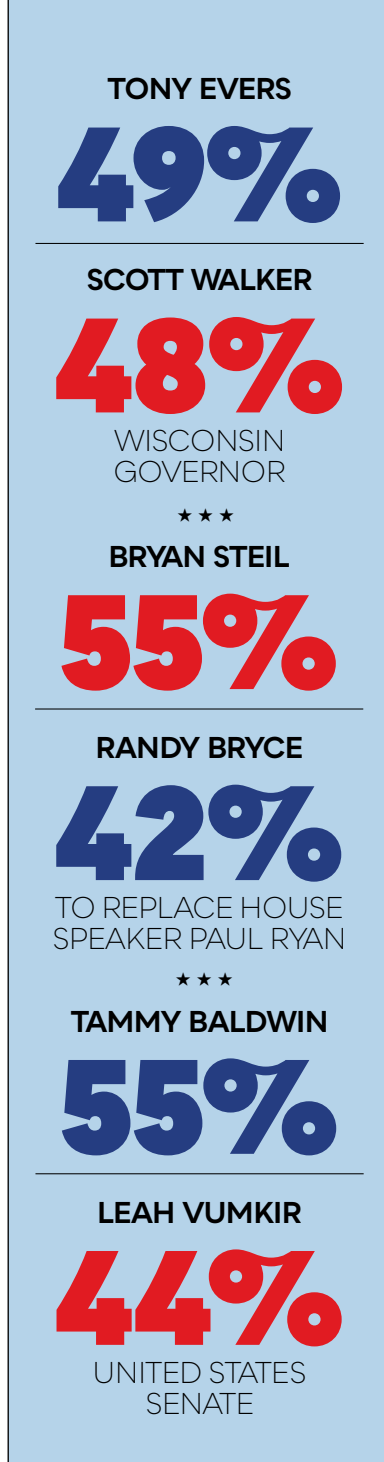
Democrats picked up seven governorships and 250 state legislative seats throughout the nation, beginning to make up for the 13 governorships and 816 state legislative seats they lost during President Barack Obama's two terms. State Democratic trifectas (control of both chambers and the governorship) increased from seven to 14, while GOP trifectas decreased from 26 to 23. The GOP now controls 62 of 99 chambers, having lost five. The 2018 midterm election set a record for the number of single-party-controlled legislatures, with only Minnesota now divided. The last time the United States had only one divided state legislature was in 1914.

Locally, voters approved a near-record \$1.3 billion in school referendums. Advisory referendums regarding decriminalizing marijuana passed in all 16 counties where they were held. Twenty three Wisconsin municipalities approved advisory "dark store loophole" referendums.

How it Happened in Wisconsin

Turnout was the highest in a Wisconsin midterm since the 1940s. While Walker received 30,000 more votes than in his previous elections, he underperformed in Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington (the "WOW") counties, the same areas where President Donald Trump underperformed in 2016. Four years ago, Walker took 72 percent in Waukesha County, 76 percent in Washington County and 70 percent in Ozaukee County. This year, Walker hit 66 percent in Waukesha County, 72 percent in Washington County and 63 percent in Ozaukee County.

Evers consistently outperformed 2014 Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mary



Burke. Evers won 19 of the state's 72 counties, three more (Richland, Grant and Kenosha) than Burke. He took 76 percent of Dane County – which went to Burke with 70 percent – and won Milwaukee County with 67 percent after Burke hit 63. Evers' 151,000-vote margin in Dane County or 134,000-vote margin in Milwaukee County each was more than Walker's WOW County vote advantage. While Walker came out of the Fox River Valley/Green Bay area with a 76,000-vote margin, it wasn't enough.

Why it Happened

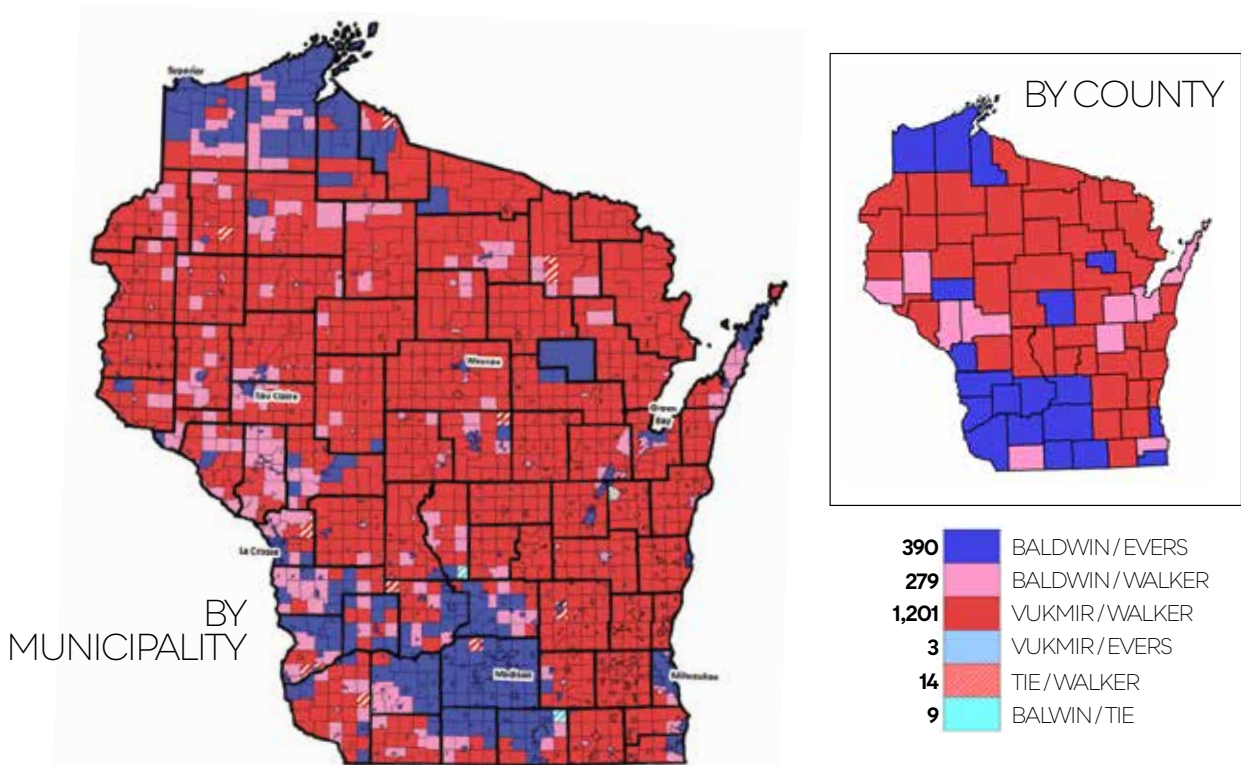
Gov. Walker presided over near-record low unemployment and very low property tax increases. He could also be divisive, championing civil service reform, right to work, public school choice and taking a hard line against tax increases. As a result, his election victories were always very narrow, reaching 53 percent only once.

As noted above, the president's party almost always loses state and federal elections during the midterms. Third terms are difficult in Wisconsin, with only Gov. Tommy Thompson earning one. Tommy is also the last Wisconsin governor candidate to win while their party held the presidency (in 1990). This year, visceral liberal dislike of President Trump resulted in historic turnout in Democratic strongholds Dane County and the city of Milwaukee. Walker also was facing some fatigue from his ill-fated presidential run and still hadn't met his 2010 pledge to create 250,000 new jobs. Foxconn should have been a winning issue, but voters were split on its merits.

The Walker campaign failed to connect "Teflon" Tony Evers to releasing dangerous criminals, tax increases or protecting teachers viewing porn. Apparently, voters trusted the candidate who says "jeepers" and "holy mackerel" unironically. The undecided voters were concerned about pre-existing conditions, and voters under 30 years old went for Evers by a 23-point margin, significantly better than Burke's four-point margin in 2014.

As for Vukmir and Schimel, the overall state environment put them both at a disadvantage. Specifically, for Vukmir, she had to survive a bruising, expensive and long primary battle against an opponent who was a great contrast to her: seasoned female conservative lawmaker versus a young male political newcomer and Marine, Kevin Nicholson. After the primary, incumbent Baldwin consistently outtraised Vukmir 2-to-1, and outspent her 3-to-1. That money advantage allowed Baldwin to focus on political "feel good" issues like protecting the state's artisanal cheese industry from

WISCONSIN 2018 PARTISIAN LOYALTY



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federal overregulation, and extending more Packer broadcasts to Northwestern Wisconsin.

Schimmel did virtually everything right during his one term in office and ran a great campaign. Although the attorney general is very important, it is not a high-profile race, and the political wave washed him out.

Baldwin/Merit Voters?

The Midwest is generally purple. While Indiana and Missouri are becoming more Republican, Illinois and Minnesota are becoming more Democrat. Wisconsin, like Iowa and Ohio, seem to remain purple. There has been a great deal of discussion about the “fairness” of the Wisconsin legislative maps. While the issue will eventually be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court, the fact is that ticket splitters exist in Wisconsin. Otherwise, how did Baldwin win by 11 percent and Evers by 1 percent? Digging a little deeper, Baldwin won 19

Assembly seats that were won by Republican legislators, including several held by ABC Champions (Kitchens, Steffen, Hutton, Sanfelippo, Rodriguez, Ott, Knodl, Stafsholt, Zimmerman, Rohrkaste, and Macco). More striking, the 14th Assembly District seat – made up of Wauwatosa and Brookfield – voted against two of its former representatives (Walker and Vukmir), but helped elect its current GOP State Rep. (and ABC Champion) Dale Kooyenga to the state Senate.

Merit Matters

For the longest time, politicians were told that prevailing wage repeal, PLA neutrality and other pro-free enterprise construction policies were political suicide. Turns out the concern was false. In 2016, every legislator who supported prevailing wage reform was re-elected. In 2018, every legislator who supported the end of prevailing wage, PLA neutrality, and 1:1 apprenticeship ratios was

re-elected. These were not flukes, especially considering how pro-merit forces are routinely and overwhelmingly outspent by unions and their signatory construction companies.

For a case study, look at state Sen. André Jacque. In 2017, he lost his committee chairmanship for disobeying his own party’s leadership and pushing for the repeal of prevailing wage. In his run for the open 1st state Senate seat early this year, he again took on the leadership of his own party and the deep pockets of construction unions and union contractors to win a difficult primary, then barely lost the special election to Democrat Caleb Frostman. Then in the fall election rematch, Jacque beat Frostman by double digits.

What Does This Mean for ABC?

It is not good that construction merit-champion Scott Walker lost, but as an association, we made hay when the sun shone. Over the last four years, we were

"THE FACT IS THAT TICKET SPLITTERS EXIST IN WISCONSIN. OTHERWISE, HOW DID BALDWIN WIN BY 11 PERCENT AND EVERS BY 1 PERCENT?"

able to first reform and then eliminate prevailing wage. Project Labor Agreement neutrality is also the law, and we were able to fix the apprentice-skilled worker ratio. It is easier to protect gains than to change policy, and we have a very good firewall.

As noted above, EVERY ABC "Building Wisconsin" award winner who ran for re-election was re-elected, and three state representative award winners have been elected to the state Senate. Half of the Assembly GOP leadership is made up of our champions. Even better is the state Senate GOP front row, where four of six are ABC champions, including Legislator of the Year Sen. Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald.


Nine of the 16 members of the joint budget committee are ABC Building Wisconsin champions.

Going Forward

Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin is not and will not become a Republican trade association. We have and will continue to support any candidate regardless of party affiliation who advocates for open competition and free enterprise in construction and skills training. We also do not get involved in "GOP/conservative" issues that do not affect our members, like minimum markup laws and moving election dates.

Conversely, ABC has opposed some

"conservative issues" like eliminating licenses and apprenticeship testing requirements introduced by Gov. Walker. In the last legislative session, we made changes to the 1:1 ratio bill and apprenticeship tax deduction legislation at the request of the Operating Engineers and Democrats. ABC also joined the carpenters and pipe trades unions in supporting changes to unemployment insurance. Many of the bills we supported passed with overwhelmingly bipartisan support.

During the next session, ABC of Wisconsin will continue to work with members of both parties and find common ground with construction unions to get legislation passed or defeated. 



2019-2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION THE EVERS AGENDA

The Wisconsin governor's office is one of the most powerful in the nation. In addition, Gov. Evers appointed his successor as Department of Public Instruction superintendent. Nearly half of Evers' campaign contributions came from construction unions, outspending the usual Democratic funding frontrunner – teachers' unions – and that is not even counting the independent "Scott-Hole" campaign run by the Operating Engineers. As a result, it will not be surprising for Evers to champion the reinstatement of prevailing wage and the repeal of project labor agreement neutrality. His various transition taskforces include IBEW and AFL-CIO representatives. However, the governor's priorities seem to be elsewhere, as do those of his allies in the state legislature:

- **Education:** Evers has called for \$1.4 billion more for K-12 education spending, and \$250 million more for higher education to maintain the current UW tuition freeze. His longer-term goal is free tuition to students attending two-year colleges and phasing out school vouchers.
- **Criminal Justice:** Evers says he's open to toughening Wisconsin's concealed carry law. Evers has called for

eliminating mandatory minimum sentences and to stop revoking convicts' parole and extended supervision unless they commit a new crime. Also, he will push for additional money for private attorneys who take public defender cases, who haven't gotten a raise since the early 1990s.

- **Health Care:** Evers is committed to taking the federal funds to expand Medicaid and will work to require insurance companies to cover pre-existing conditions.

- **Taxes:** It is unclear how Evers will fund his nearly \$2 billion in new education funding without raising taxes. Evers has committed to not raising the income tax. In addition, he would like to address the "dark store" issue that proponents argue shifts property taxes from some commercial buildings to homeowners.

- **Transportation:** Evers does seem committed to funding a long-term transportation solution so long as it includes more money for mass transit, ports and airports.

- **Environment:** Development of wetlands and large farms' ability to withdraw large amounts of groundwater and spread gallons of manure that may affect water quality will be scrutinized more under Evers than Walker.

BUILDING WISCONSIN

Every ABC of Wisconsin state legislative “Building Wisconsin” award winner (pictured below) that ran for re-election was re-elected. In addition, three more award winners were elected to the Wisconsin Senate, including André Jacque, who lost his committee chair for fighting to repeal prevailing wage. As a result, Republicans still control both houses of the Legislature by wide margins.



Sen. Chris Kapenga
District 33 – Delafield



Sen. Devin LeMahieu
District 9 – Oostburg



Sen. Howard Marklein
District 17 – Spring Green



Sen. Stephen Nass
District 11 – Whitewater



Sen. Luther Olsen
District 14 – Ripon



Sen. Van Wangaard
District 21 – Racine



Rep. Scott Allen
District 97 – Waukesha



Promoted to the State Senate

Rep. Kathleen Bernier
District 68 – Lake Hallie



Rep. Mark Born
District 39 – Beaver Dam



Rep. Janel Brandtjen
District 22 – Menomonee Falls



Rep. Robert Brooks
District 60 – Saukville



Rep. Cindi Duchow
District 99 – Town of Delafield



Rep. Mary Felzkowski
District 35 – Irma



Rep. Cody Horlacher
District 33 – Mukwonago



Rep. Rob Hutton
District 13 – Brookfield



Promoted to the State Senate

Rep. André Jacque
District 2 – De Pere



Rep. John Jagler
District 37 – Watertown



Rep. Terry Katsma
District 26 – Oostburg



Rep. Joel Kitchens
District 1 – Sturgeon Bay



Rep. Daniel Knodl
District 24 – Germantown



Promoted to the State Senate

Rep. Dale Kooyenga
District 14 – Brookfield



Rep. Scott Krug
District 72 – Nekoosa



Rep. Mike Kuglitsch
District 84 – New Berlin



Rep. Bob Kulp
District 69 – Stratford



Rep. John Macco
District 88 – Ledgeview



Rep. David Murphy
District 56 – Greenville



Rep. Adam Neylon
District 98 – Pewaukee



Rep. Jim Ott
District 23 – Mequon



Rep. Kevin Petersen
District 40 – Waupaca



Rep. Romaine Quinn
District 75 – Barron



Rep. Jessie Rodriguez
District 21 – Oak Creek



Rep. Mike Rohraste
District 55 – Neenah



Rep. Joe Sanfelippo
District 15 – New Berlin



Rep. Michael Schraa
District 53 – Oshkosh



Rep. Ken Skowronski
District 82 – Franklin



Rep. John Spiros
District 86 – Marshfield



Rep. Rob Stafsholt
District 29 – New Richmond



Rep. David Steffen
District 4 – Green Bay



Rep. Rob Swearingen
District 34 – Rhinelander



Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt
District 52 – Fond du Lac



Rep. Paul Tittl
District 25 – Manitowoc



Rep. Ron Tusler
District 3 – Harrison



Rep. Tyler Vorpapel
District 27 – Plymouth



Rep. Chuck Wichgers
District 83 – Muskego



Rep. Shannon Zimmerman
District 30 – River Falls



Steve and Faye Klessig during the holidays.

Q&A

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH

STEVE KLESSIG

NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL
ABC SECRETARY SETS HIS AGENDA

ABC of Wisconsin member Steve Klessig of Keller, Inc. was elected National ABC secretary in November, marking only the second time a Wisconsin Chapter member (Steve Westra) has been elected to this position. ABC of Wisconsin spent a few minutes chatting with Steve recently to get his perspective on a few things, including his election.

ABC of Wisconsin: How did it feel when you were elected National ABC secretary?

Steve Klessig: It felt a little surreal because everybody had me for losing. When I wasn't chosen by the committee; when I had to get 50 seconds; when people were giving me bad information; I had a sense it was not meant to be. But I've always told my kids that hard work always trumps talent. Whether they were playing basketball or studying to get a good grade on a test; there's true intelligence that makes it easier for some people to get good grades, but in the end, hard work always trumps that. So, I just decided to work hard. When you work hard at something and it pays off, there's an immense feeling of satisfaction. So, there was an immense feeling of satisfaction.

ABC of Wisconsin: There must have been a sense of euphoria ...

Steve Klessig: Yeah. You do have that "pinch yourself" moment when you say, "How did this happen?" and "Why did this happen?" For me, I went right into thinking of all the people and things that happened to help me get there. Whether it was my wife convincing me to try or my kids telling me, "Go for it," or you [ABC of Wisconsin staff] filming me and putting those [video] packages together that we emailed out [to National Board members] or John Mielke's [ABC of Wisconsin president] encouragement ... It was things like that, which I personally immediately started to give thanks for.

ABC of Wisconsin: Talk a little about your background and involvement in ABC that led to this:

Steve Klessig: I've worked for Keller, Inc. for 30 years and in that entire time I've been a member of ABC. I knew right away I wanted to be involved in the organization. That involvement started very small as a member of a committee, then a chair of a committee, then being a proxy for a board member, then getting on the board, and then be-

ing asked to seek leadership on the board. It just seemed like a natural progression of things. There wasn't a jump to the top. That was to my benefit because I learned the organization, I paid my dues in the organization, and I worked my way up. I wasn't handed anything, and I think that paid off when I wasn't handed the secretary job.

ABC of Wisconsin: You've explained why you personally wanted to join ABC, but what about Keller, Inc. joining ABC?

Steve Klessig: It improved our company. I think sometimes we don't emphasize that enough when we're doing membership. Of all the great things ABC can do for you, it also improves your company and it improves the people within your company.

ABC of Wisconsin: Why are you passionate about ABC and where does that come from?

Steve Klessig: We all can spend our free time anywhere we want, so it's a conscious decision we all make with what we're going to do with all the time we're not going to give to our families or to our work or to our God. People all the time say they want to give back to their communities almost to the extent of it sounding cliché. To me, what does giving back mean? ABC was a way for me to recognize that this industry had given me a livelihood and that industry is fragile and it may not always be there giving me a livelihood. ABC helped me recognize that it's just not a given that we have the right and obligations that we have in a free society. I couldn't find any other organization that was standing up for those principles of freedom and free enterprise and working hard and getting ahead based upon your merits. I didn't see any other organization in my industry doing that. I'm a passionate guy to begin with, so if I find something that really aligns with my own thinking, I'm going to grab onto that, and that's what I did with ABC.

ABC of Wisconsin: What do you like to do in your spare time?

Steve Klessig: My wife is going to laugh at this one [chuckle] because she knows the answer. The answer is, I like to work. That may not be the best answer and it may not be a healthy answer, but it's a true answer. I like to work; maybe to a fault. I know a lot of people use this quote, but the person I like to credit with it is Ronald Reagan. I remember him saying, "If you want something to get done, ask a busy person." I belong to a lot of organizations and I'm involved in a lot of things and whenever I see something that needs to get done, I usually see it getting done by someone who has no time to do it, but they know how to get it done.

ABC of Wisconsin: Tell me some things that people don't know about Steve Klessig:

Steve Klessig: My hair is real [laugh]. Number two, I met my wife through 4-H at the county fair. And, John Mielke and I ran the [ABC of Wisconsin] Legislative Committee for years together.

ABC of Wisconsin: This is only the second time the Wisconsin Chapter has had one of its own members elected to national secretary. What does that mean to you?

Steve Klessig: ABC is our voice. It gives us credibility. Otherwise, there would be no reason to have members. Members give us clout and give the organization a voice and makes us important when being asked about issues that are critical to our industry. Then, when we can tout that Wisconsin is the largest chapter, by far, with 870

members, nobody else can say that. When you come from a chapter that has accomplished so much, it helps me as ABC secretary to be able to say that, "I grew up in that environment. I grew up building that membership. I grew up passing those laws. I grew up working on the Legislative Committee and the Commercial Building Code Council." We stopped a lot of bad legislation and we passed a lot of good legislation and we prevented a lot of bad building codes from being implemented. All that together gives us a common purpose, and that common purpose gives us strength.

ABC of Wisconsin: What do you see as priorities for ABC moving forward in this national role?

Steve Klessig: I think we have to, on a national level, make sure that our chapters feel and operate within the structure of ABC. We have a lot of rules in ABC but we also have a lot of freedom. One of things that we really need is an attitude of cooperation. One of the things I will be as secretary is liaison of CPEC, the presidents' organization. It's my desire to build bridges to those people. I want to listen to them. These presidents are running our chapters. We're volunteers. Those presidents are operating those chapters. I want to see more cooperation. I want to see the national organization grow and I think Wisconsin has a lot to teach our national organization about membership and how to grow membership. We have all kinds of things we want to accomplish in ABC ... but we have to do it in the context of people wanting to be members and seeing value in being members and being able to afford to be members. 🇺🇸



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VIEW FROM AN ASSEMBLY FRESHMAN DEMOCRAT

By Rep. Jodi Emerson – Assembly District 91

For me, the decision to run for Wisconsin Assembly wasn't a decision about my career; it was a decision about my community. I viewed running for office as the next step in a long line of community service. As an elected official, I believe we are public servants and it is our duty to listen to and reflect the needs of the community that we are hired to represent.

My path to office is not like others. I have never served as an elected official before. However, before I ran for office, I was the director of public policy and community relations for a small, non-profit organization that fights human trafficking. While I was with the organization, we focused on raising awareness about this crime in West Central Wisconsin. One of the problems I quickly found was that laws were not in place in Wisconsin to protect victims and catch perpetrators, so I went to work trying to fix that problem. In five years, I was able to get seven laws passed in Wisconsin that help address this issue. We did this by bringing people together; all of the bills that I was part of were passed with the support of both parties.



Some people look at my legislative record and say that fighting against human trafficking is easy. After all, who wants to see that happening in our communities? That's true, but the process of getting people to work together for social justice issues is the same process we need to pass any other policy. Looking at human trafficking, the victims are often treated as criminals. How do we fight the problem? Is it better to lock people up who have victimized other people, or is it better to get them into treatment programs and back out into society as functional adults? How do we prevent this from happening in the first place?

Do we look at the root cause of a problem, or do we put a Band-Aid on the problem and move onto the next issue?

Learning about human trafficking taught me that there were many issues that can cause someone to become a victim. In working to solve those problems, we create strong and vibrant communities we all want to be a part of.

These issues are what I would like to focus on in my first year in Madison:



WE ARE TURNING INTO A WORLD OF HAVE AND HAVE-NOTS. WITHOUT OUR MIDDLE CLASS, WE LOSE THE AMERICAN DREAM.”

Education

A strong education system is critical to growing our state. Raising children who are prepared for jobs in the 21st century and are able to adapt to changes in the job environment is vital to growing our economy. A quality education is the great equalizer in our world. Not everyone starts in the same place in life, but with a good education, most can be productive members of society.

Jobs

Having family-sustaining job opportunities in a community is imperative. My father worked for years at Uniroyal in Eau Claire. These were good jobs, family-sustaining jobs, jobs that built the middle class in Eau Claire. Our family wasn't rich, but we were able to take vacations, build a house, buy new cars every few years, go out to eat on a Friday night, and other basic life experiences that not everyone has anymore. We are turning into a world of have and have-nots. Without our middle class, we lose the American dream.

Health Care

We cannot have a healthy, functioning society without quality, accessible and affordable health care. People can't show up for work if they are sick or in pain. Health care is a right, not a privilege. Our system is broken and needs repair. It won't be an easy fix or a quick fix, but one that must happen.

Criminal Justice Reform


I recently read a report that said that in Wisconsin, we have more than 100,000 people in the criminal justice system. Some of these people have committed terrible crimes and deserve to be incarcerated, but more often than not, we use our criminal justice system as a way to treat people who have serious addiction or mental health issues. Eau Claire County has several treatment courts that work with offenders to get them the help they need and get them back into society. Not only is this the humane thing to do, but it also saves money. For every dollar we spend in treatment courts, it saves three dollars.

Environmental Protection

Wisconsin is a beautiful state. We all appreciate the diverse wildlife and picturesque

views that make this a great state. People come from all over the country to enjoy Wisconsin. Our beautiful environment has helped build our tourism industry. However, we have seen our environmental protections rolled back, and that puts Wisconsin at risk. The air we breathe, the water we drink, and our safety are at risk. As I look at the impact of legislation I will be a part of in the coming years, legislation that impacts our environment is what concerns me the most. If we get this kind of legislation wrong, we risk problems that will take generations to fix. We need to move slowly with any relaxing of environmental standards. We need to have assurances that the choices we are making will not be destroying this state that we love.

Being in touch with all of the people of the area I represent is important to me. As an elected official, we can't know everything that is going on in our districts or how that would impact all people. I believe that it is the duty of both the elected official and the people of the district to have open lines of communication to understand how the policies we are passing impact people's lives.

I encourage each and every one of you to be in contact with your representatives. Talk to them, show up at listening sessions, email them when a bill you are concerned about is being debated and voted on. If you don't have a representative who is responsive to you, vote them out. After all, they work for you. 

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FOCUSED

STEIL ON SOLVING PROBLEMS AND PREPARING TODAY'S WORKFORCE FOR TOMORROW'S JOBS

By Rep. Bryan Steil – 1st Congressional District



U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil met with the ABC of Wisconsin Board last summer after announcing his candidacy for the seat held by retiring House Speaker Paul Ryan. Steil (center) defeated union ironworker Randy Bryce in November.

With a background in the manufacturing sector, and a firm commitment to solving real world problems, I looked forward to being sworn into office on Jan. 3 as Wisconsin's newest member of Congress. There is much work to be done.

As counsel at Regal Beloit Corporation, a leading electric motor manufacturer with more than \$3 billion in revenue, I led business development projects, making decisive choices that served the interests of our customers, while expanding the company's workforce and investments. As you know, in business, there are no political parties; you must work together to meet deadlines on time

and within budget. This private sector discipline is the mindset I will have in Washington.

I also served as an executive at Charter NEX, an independent plastics producer in Milton. Far too often, I saw firsthand how over-reaching federal regulations and red tape hinder economic growth and limit job opportunities. Giving job creators the resources to increase wages, invest in our community, and hire more workers will drive others to do the same.

In Wisconsin, the private sector consistently demonstrates the work ethic and problem-solving skills needed in Washington today. Private industry, including those in manufacturing, construction



THESE DAYS,
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SEEM MORE
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ON CABLE TV
THAN FINDING
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and agriculture, all face challenges day in and day out – meeting their budgets, making their payrolls, and staying ahead of their competition. Growing up in Janesville and spending 10 years in the manufacturing industry, I will bring this private sector can-do attitude with me to Washington.

These days, politicians seem more concerned about being on cable TV than finding ways to address the issues Americans face every day – having access to

affordable education, access to affordable health care and access to good paying jobs.

Affordable Education Aligned with Private Sector Needs

As a member of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, I heard from students, parents, and employers about the financial burdens placed upon individuals and families, and the barriers that must be navigated to ensure students are prepared to enter the workforce. One of the best things the federal government can do in this area is to get out of the way. Giving states the flexibility to serve their students is something we must address during this Congress.

Far too often, we see policies come out of D.C. that provide a top-down approach, increasing costs instead of improving the system. Education should be in the hands of the states and local technical colleges and universities, not bureaucrats in Washington. Workers need skills to thrive in today's economy, and we must do a better job of meeting the needs of workers, families, students and employers.

No matter one's background, everyone should have the ability to obtain a quality job. With new opportunities and industries coming to the state, it's important our citizens are ready to take advantage of these opportunities. Supplementing the work already being done in Wisconsin and around the country, the federal government can help create even more success by reducing burdensome regulations that prohibit universities and employers from collaborating. The federal government can also work to amplify what is currently working for students in our technical colleges and vocational training programs, while keeping costs low for students.


Fixing Our Broken Health Care System

Our health care system is failing patients and families across the country. Health care costs continue to rise and hardworking families are struggling to pay off their medical bills. Congress must act to alleviate the pain and stress too many face each day. A system that is focused on putting patients and doctors at the forefront of the decision-making process will help drive down the costs, improve quality and provide more accessible and affordable options for families.

Businesses also have to deal with the rising costs of health care – I saw this every day in the manufacturing sector and I know you are dealing with it in the construction sector. Unaffordable health care results in fewer jobs and less investment in our area. Lowering these costs will ensure workers have affordable, accessible health care plans and empower businesses to grow. We can't afford to have Washington bureaucrats and the federal government dictating individual health care needs.

Keeping Our Economy Strong

Current economic conditions provide entrepreneurs like you the opportunity to build their businesses and we are starting to see the beginning of higher wages by letting the principles of the free market work. We must continue this momentum by keeping federal taxes low for small businesses and families, and cutting federal red tape. These regulations stifle growth, hamper innovation, and hinder competition within industries. Here in Wisconsin, we have a diverse economy and protecting our good paying jobs by implementing policies that unleash economic potential and keep the federal government's hands off of small businesses will grow our local economy and create more jobs. Tax and regulatory relief at the federal and state level have helped spark this growth, and we must continue this progress, not allow it to be reversed.

As I take office in January, it is clear there is much work to be done. But, I am optimistic that by focusing on solving real world problems, and by bringing a private sector approach, we can make a difference. 

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



New Asst. Assembly Majority Leader Mary Felzkowski (red jacket) receives ABC's Building Wisconsin award from the Jerome Filbrandt Plumbing & Heating staff in Antigo.

NEW YEAR, NEW ROLES, SAME GOALS

“INNOVATION DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN A LEADER AND A FOLLOWER.”
- STEVE JOBS

By Rep. Mary Felzkowski – Assembly Asst. Majority Leader

For the past eight years, Wisconsin has been blessed with a governor who excelled at finding innovative solutions to move our state forward, even when our nation stood stagnant. It is now imperative that we protect these reforms, continue to implement them and continue down this successful path that encourages free enterprise, and gives small businesses the ongoing ability to drive our economy.

This past November, the people of Wisconsin sent a strong message. Despite eight successful years with Gov. Scott Walker, Dane and Milwaukee counties are ready to see what else is out there. At the same time, the voters also made it very clear that they're very happy with our legislative reforms and aren't ready to return to big burdensome government regulation. Conservative reforms are working for our state!



TWO
SUCCESSFUL
REFORMS
REALLY STICK
OUT WHEN
IT COMES TO
PROTECTING
OUR BUILDERS
AND
CONTRACTORS —
THE CONTINUED
REPEAL OF
PREVAILING
WAGE AND PLA
NEUTRALITY.

our successful conservative measures, looking forward to future reforms, and rekindling the proud relationship our party has with conservative suburban women, reminding them how our initiatives align with their views.

Protecting Successful Reforms

While there are a multitude of successful reforms from the past eight years we can delve into, two really stick out when it comes to protecting our builders and contractors – the continued repeal of prevailing wage and project labor agreement (PLA) neutrality.

In the 2015-17 biennial budget, we repealed Wisconsin’s prevailing wage law for local governments on any project that entered into contract after Jan. 1, 2017. What does this mean? It means that contractors and subcontractors who win local government bids have the right to pay their employees a wage that reflects the current construction market, instead of being required to pay the local average for a private project similar in nature.

Repealing prevailing wage has allowed for a competitive free

With a pretty young Assembly, many of our members have never experienced split government – the majority of us were not around for any part of the previous Democrat administration. As we move into this largely uncharted territory, my colleagues have honored me by selecting me to serve as the next assistant majority leader. As I take on this new role, I look forward to working with our dynamic and seasoned leadership team; protecting

market that in turn provides lower costs to local governments and greater opportunity for Wisconsin businesses.

In 2017, we became the 23rd state to pass legislation that prohibits government-mandated project labor agreements (PLAs) on state and local construction contracts. In other words, it prevents government officials from requiring workers on publicly-funded projects be represented by organized labor.

Much like the repeal of prevailing wage, PLA neutrality encourages competition while protecting contractors and their workers from over-burdensome government regulations. These are win-win policies that benefit both local governments and free-market business competition. Conservative reforms such as these are working, and we will continue to back them and search for approaches that will make it easier for businesses to thrive in Wisconsin.

Extraordinary Session

In early December, the legislature convened for an extraordinary session. A few of the impactful changes that were made were in regards to how we approach transportation. The following describes some of these pro-enterprise measures and how they will encourage economic growth, transparency, and accountability:

Limitations on Federal Funding for State Highway Projects: When federal dollars are spent on any project that falls under one of our three main state highway improvement programs, the state will be required to fund at least 70 percent of the total cost. This will minimize the extra burden of federal requirements and regulations put on projects, lower costs, and allow the people of Wisconsin to dictate how our state roads are constructed.

Federal Money on Local Projects: The Department of Transportation (DOT) will be required to notify local governments when their aid includes federal money, and whether that federal money must be spent on certain ear-marked project components. This will encourage transparency and will lead to stronger communication between local and state government.

DOT Design Standards: Currently, the Wisconsin DOT has a facilities development manual that consists of 27 cumbersome chapters. With this legislation, local government projects that aren’t spending any federal money and have been approved by a professional engineer or their county highway commissioner will only have to abide by the DOT design standards. This will allow locally-elected officials the ability to construct projects in a manner that their residents would like them done, and overall, provide more local control of both funding and process to local government.

Prohibit the Transfer of Highway Program Funds: This will repeal the DOT’s authority to transfer federal and state funds between the state and highway program components, bringing more

transparency to the department and enabling taxpayers to have more clarity on which money is spent where.

Looking Forward

My priorities for this coming session will reflect why I got into public service in the first place. I want to ensure that our rural constituencies get access to the health care, education and broadband that will enable every town and village in our state to provide Wisconsin's citizens with the foundation to reach their full potential.

I am already collaborating with a number of my Assembly Republican colleagues on legislation that will benefit our state's retirees, students, individuals re-entering the workforce, businesses and towns.

One of my top goals will be focused on expanding healthcare access and options to both our Medicaid population and Wisconsin as a whole. Late last session, I introduced a bill on dental therapy that I plan on reintroducing this session. The legislation creates a licensed dental therapist, or a mid-level dental provider, similar to a physician's assistant in the medical field.

Dental therapists would be hired by a dental office to work under a dentist. Their scope of practice would be up to the discretion of

their hiring authority, but under law could include everything that a dental hygienist does along with minor extractions and fillings. They would practice under general supervision; without a supervising dentist present. This will allow better access in hard-to-reach locations like schools, nursing homes and prisons.

As a mid-level provider, dentists will be able to hire dental therapists to do preventative care and fillings, and pay them at a level much more relative to Medicaid Assistance (MA) reimbursement rates.

While many states are considering similar legislation, three states have already passed it. One of those three is our neighboring state of Minnesota. For those who may be skeptical of the effectiveness of a dental therapist, recent estimates find that in 2017, Minnesota dental therapists provided treatment during more than 107,600 patient visits.

All in all, I'm excited and enthusiastic for the 2019-20 legislative session. I look forward to working with the new administration on issues where we can find common ground. I optimistically anticipate that both sides of the aisle will come together to pass legislation that will benefit all our districts and all our constituents. The past eight years have been a marked success, and the next two should be no different. 🇺🇸



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Transition to Trainer / Feb. 4 – Madison

Crane Operator Certification / Feb. 4 – Sun Prairie

Networking Lunch / Feb. 5 – Onalaska

SuperCon / Feb. 13-14 – Wisconsin Dells

Projects of Distinction Banquet / Feb. 14 – Wisconsin Dells

10-hour OSHA for Construction / Feb. 15 – Green Bay

First Aid/CPR / Feb. 18 – Fond du Lac

Qualified Rigger/Signalperson / Feb. 20 – Eau Claire

Meet the Generals / Mar. 6 – Cottage Grove

Networking Social / Apr. 4 – De Pere

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We all use the prefix “Super” to describe the ABC of WI annual convention for many reasons, one of them being the annual PAC auction on February 13. Not only is the auction fun, the money raised helps those legislators who have helped us pass Right to Work and Project Labor Agreement Neutrality, repeal prevailing wage, and eliminate the personal property tax on construction equipment. This money will be even more valuable this year as we deal with the uncertainty of the Governor Evers’ administration.

Please consider donating personal items. Tickets to sporting events, autographed memorabilia, alcohol, purses, and shooting-related experiences are the most popular.



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