

## Guide to the Primary Field for Wisconsin Supreme Court Election



The race for a pivotal seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court has captured national attention. With a conservative justice retiring, the balance of the court is at stake, and the primary election's outcome could have significant implications for issues such as abortion rights and future presidential elections.

Tuesday's primary election will see four candidates – two conservatives and two liberals – competing for the two spots that will advance to the general election on April 4. The conservatives are former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Dan Kelly and Waukesha County Circuit Judge Jennifer Dorow. At the same time, the liberals are Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Janet Protasiewicz and Dane County Circuit Judge Everett Mitchell.

The stakes are high in this election, as the court's decisions could have far-reaching consequences. The next court will likely make key rulings on Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban law, legislative maps, union rights, and challenges to election results. Republicans are concerned that laws they have enacted over the past decade, such as a ban on absentee ballot drop boxes, a voter ID law, and a law that effectively ended collective bargaining for most public employees, could be in jeopardy under a liberal court.

On the other hand, the liberal candidates are running on platforms that support abortion rights and have criticized the GOP-drawn legislative maps as being rigged. Mitchell, who would be the first Black justice elected to the court, has also expressed support for abortion rights and has spoken out against unfair maps. Anti-abortion groups in the state support conservative candidates, and Dorow has been active in local Republican Party politics.

The campaign has attracted significant spending from outside groups, with over \$7 million being spent as of a week before the primary, split evenly between the two sides. The race is expected to shatter national spending records, and both conservative candidates have been speaking to GOP groups across the state during the primary campaign.

The court's decisions will have implications beyond Wisconsin, as the state has been a critical battleground in recent presidential elections. The court came within one vote of overturning President Joe Biden's win in the state in 2020. With four of the past six contests in Wisconsin decided by less than a percentage point, both sides are preparing for another close presidential race in 2024.

Conservatives have controlled the Wisconsin Supreme Court since 2008 and have issued rulings that have favored Republicans on issues such as voting restrictions and gerrymandered legislative districts. With a conservative justice retiring, the balance of power is up for grabs, and voters can tip the scales toward the left.

This election is a reminder of the importance of local elections and their impact on national issues. As the primary approaches, voters in Wisconsin will have to weigh the candidates' platforms and decide which direction they want the state's highest court to take.

### REFERENCES:

**Primary to set field for Wisconsin Supreme Court election**