

## Liberal Judge Gains Momentum in Wisconsin High Court Race



The primary elections for the Wisconsin Supreme Court saw Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Janet Protasiewicz and former Justice Dan Kelly emerge as the top two vote-getters, moving on to the general elections scheduled for April 4. The race is pivotal, with the majority control of the Supreme Court and significant issues, including abortion access, gerrymandering, and voting rights, at stake heading into the 2024 presidential election. Conservatives currently hold a 4-3 majority on the court, but the open seat this year provides liberals with an opportunity to take the majority.

Protasiewicz won the primary with 46% of the vote, while Kelly came in second with 24%. The two liberal candidates combined for nearly 54%, compared to 46% for the two conservative candidates, indicating potential trouble for the conservatives. Protasiewicz campaigned as a supporter of abortion rights and criticized the legislative maps drawn by Republicans and approved by the current Supreme Court as "rigged." On the other hand, both conservative candidates received support from groups in Wisconsin and spoke to GOP groups across the state during the primary campaign.

The court came within one vote of overturning President Joe Biden's win in the state in 2020, and both major parties are preparing for another close margin in 2024. With so much at stake, spending on Wisconsin's state Supreme Court race has shattered national records for such contests. Outside groups have already spent around \$9.2 million on the Supreme Court race, almost evenly split between the two sides, according to AdImpact Politics, which tracks advertising.

The next court is expected to issue key rulings on Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban law, legislative maps, union rights, and challenges to election results. Republicans also fear that laws they enacted over the past decade could be overturned, such as a 2011 law that ended collective bargaining for most public employees, a voter ID law, a ban on absentee ballot drop boxes, and others.

Democrats coalesced around Protasiewicz over Dane County Circuit Judge Everett Mitchell, allowing her to break fundraising records and secure hundreds of endorsements. All three of the court's current liberal justices endorsed her, while four current conservative justices endorsed Kelly. The state Democratic Party also endorsed Protasiewicz after her win on Tuesday.

Outside groups and political parties are investing in this race, and the spending is expected to increase as the election draws near. The stakes are high for both sides, with a potential shift in the balance of power on the Supreme Court, such as abortion access and voting rights on the line.

The upcoming Wisconsin Supreme Court election is crucial, as it will determine the balance of power on the court and could significantly impact critical issues such as abortion access, gerrymandering, and voting rights heading into the 2024 presidential election. With Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Janet Protasiewicz and former Justice Dan Kelly set to face off in the April 4 general election, both sides are gearing up for what is expected to be a fiercely contested race. As outside groups pour millions of dollars into the campaign, it remains to be seen which candidate will come out on top and ultimately shape the future of the court and the state of Wisconsin.

### REFERENCES:

Liberal judge advances in race for Wisconsin high court