

Republican Primaries Grow Bitter as Factions Clash

Written by WisDems Press

Monday, 11 September 2023 10:52 - Last Updated Wednesday, 13 September 2023 11:04

<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/david-clarke1-s5.jpg>



MAGA faithful square off with wealthy establishment as they jockey behind the scenes.

MADISON, Wis. — As Republicans continue to jockey behind the scenes to decide who will lose to Tammy Baldwin, the [leading](#) GOP grassroots recruit, former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke is attacking Eric Hovde and Mitch McConnell's strategy of recruiting wealthy candidates like Hovde.

The race for Republicans to out-MAGA each other is just getting underway...

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[**Newsweek: Republican Primaries Grow Bitter as MAGA Clashes With Wealthy Self-Funders**](#)

By: Alex Rouhandeh

The divide between candidates favored by the Republican establishment and those favored by former President Donald Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) base continues to grow as the MAGA faithful go after wealthy Republican candidates with the ability to self-fund their campaigns.

This clash threatens to further tear at the fabric of the GOP's identity going into the 2024 election season.

On one side, the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) has "placed an emphasis" on recruiting candidates who can finance their races, as reported by Politico in March. In 2020, then-NRSC Executive Director Kevin McLaughlin said his party could mitigate

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its underperformance among small-dollar donors by "recruiting strong candidates who can both self-fund and win general elections."

But former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, a Trump ally and potential GOP candidate for the 2024 Senate race in Wisconsin, blasted this strategy in an April episode of his podcast, elaborating further on the issue in a statement to Newsweek.

"My initial reaction to that statement is that it is tone deaf," Clarke said. "The Republican Party has an image problem. The Democrats have painted them as the Party of the rich and a good old boy club of white males. Say what you want but there is some truth to that visually."

"The GOP needs a face lift," he added, "and that won't happen when GOP Party officials make statements to that effect that basically eliminates minority and women candidates."

This strategy follows the NRSC's underperformance during the 2022 election cycle when Trump-endorsed candidates lost in three critical swing states. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, who Trump has called a "pawn for the Democrats" and Clarke has said is "full of s***," attributed the defeats to "candidate quality" problems." The NRSC declined to comment for this piece.

In response, the NRSC has successfully recruited two candidates who are wealthy enough to potentially fund their own campaigns. Governor Jim Justice, a coal magnate, will look to flip the West Virginia seat held by Democratic Senator Joe Manchin, and Tim Sheehy, an aerospace company founder, will challenge Montana's Democratic Senator Jon Tester. In Wisconsin, Eric Hovde, a real estate executive, is weighing a bid to challenge Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin. Hovde could face Clarke in a primary.

"This approach excludes me," Clarke told Newsweek. "I am not filthy rich, although I have significant support from grass roots voters. Even if that is not their intention, and I don't think it is, it is a bad look. It is time to prune away the dead wood of the Republican establishment and make way for the growth of a new Republican Party."

Clarke, who originally ran for sheriff as a Democrat and held the position from 2002 to 2017, became a conservative commentator and vocal supporter of Trump over the course of the latter's presidency. Trump considered Clarke for a senior position at the Department of Homeland Security.

As the appointment faced delays, Clarke ultimately chose to rescind his acceptance of the offer, with an adviser of his saying the former sheriff wanted to be in a position where he could "promote the president's agenda in a more aggressive role." Clarke has gone on to defend attendees of January 6 and has promoted Trump's claims of a stolen election. A national GOP strategist voiced serious concerns about a Clarke primary victory.

"National Republicans believe David Clarke would be a disastrous candidate who would completely take Wisconsin off the 2024 map not just at the Senate level, but the

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presidential as well," the strategist, who provided the comment on the condition of anonymity, told Newsweek.

[...]

"As the Republicans continue to stay with radically unpopular ideas, like anti-wokeness and opposing women's reproductive rights," he added, "I think the ability to find candidates that can pay for themselves is going to help be an equalizer for them."