



Written by [Billy J. Stephen](#) on April 9, 2026

Wisconsin Spring Election Sends Mixed Signals in Conservative Strongholds

Wisconsin's April 7 spring election delivered a mixed verdict for conservatives, especially in the state's Republican-dominated southeastern counties. Although they suffered a major setback in the Wisconsin Supreme Court race, they also scored several meaningful wins in lower-court and municipal contests, particularly in southeastern Wisconsin.

The election results showed once again that local and judicial races matter greatly. While leftists expanded their [hold on the Wisconsin Supreme Court](#), conservatives notched important victories in the Court of Appeals, flipped a Washington County circuit-court seat, held Brookfield's mayor's office, won Oconomowoc's mayoral race, and defeated a Milwaukee County Board candidate tied to a controversial legal-defense donation involving a suspected terrorist. Voters in Port Washington also approved a referendum requiring public approval for large "tax incremental districts," signaling growing resistance to government-backed sweetheart deals and top-down development schemes.



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Election Highlights

The most significant statewide loss came in the Wisconsin Supreme Court race, where leftist Judge Chris Taylor defeated conservative Judge Maria Lazar by a margin of [60.1 percent to 39.8 percent](#). That result expands the court's leftist majority from 4-3 to 5-2, giving the Left a stronger grip on one of the most politically consequential institutions in Wisconsin's government. With the court already having intervened in [redistricting](#) and [abortion-related](#) disputes, the outcome could have far-reaching [implications](#) for election administration, legislative maps, and future court-driven policymaking.

Conservatives received better news in the state's intermediate appellate courts. [Attorney Anthony LoCoco](#) won election to the District II Court of Appeals after his leftist opponent was kicked off the ballot in January for submitting impermissible paperwork, ensuring that all four seats in that district are [now held by conservatives](#). District II covers key southeastern Wisconsin counties, and its solid conservative majority provides an important check against the judicial activism that has increasingly shaped Wisconsin politics. [District III](#) also remains conservative, while leftist majorities continue to



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dominate [District I](#), which covers Milwaukee County, and [District IV](#), which includes Madison and Dane County.

A broader county-by-county look at the statewide results was sobering for conservatives. According to a comparison of the 2026 Supreme Court race with the 2024 presidential election published by *The New York Times*, all but one Wisconsin county [shifted to the left](#). Strikingly, the lone exception was Menominee County, the state's smallest county in terms of population, which reportedly shifted 18 percentage points to the right despite being home to the Menominee Indian Reservation and long ranking among the most Democratic counties in the state. That unusual movement makes the broader statewide trend even more troubling for conservatives — or maybe it's an outlier.

Even smaller local races reflected the growing ideological attention being paid to municipal government. The national-level Libertarian Party, for example, [congratulated](#) Brian Defferding on X after he won election to the Neenah Common Council.

Washington County Court Flip

One of the most notable local victories for conservatives came in Washington County, one of the most Republican counties in Wisconsin and part of the historic [WOW counties](#). Despite the county's deep-red voting patterns, every seat on its four-branch circuit-court bench had been filled by appointments from Governor Tony Evers — a situation that had become a point of frustration for local conservatives, who viewed the bench as increasingly disconnected from the county's electorate.

That changed on April 7, when conservative challenger [Grant Scaife defeated incumbent Judge Gordon Leech](#) by a commanding margin of 60.5 percent to 39.1 percent. The race drew heightened attention precisely because it gave voters a chance to begin reversing Evers' influence over a county bench in one of the state's strongest Republican areas.

Scaife, an assistant district attorney in Washington County, campaigned as a judicial conservative committed to the Constitution, the rule of law, and public safety. His [endorsements](#) reflected broad backing from conservative and law-enforcement circles, including former Governor Scott Walker, the Milwaukee Police Association, Wisconsin Supreme Court Justices Rebecca Bradley and Annette Ziegler, and Court of Appeals Judges Maria Lazar, Shelley Grogan, and Mark Gundrum.

Leech, by contrast, had been [appointed by Evers](#) in July 2025. Although he emphasized impartiality and experience, his prior [political donations to leftist causes](#) and support from figures aligned with left-leaning legal circles made the race's ideological stakes difficult to ignore. The contest became a referendum not only on Leech, but also on whether Washington County voters would continue to accept a bench entirely shaped by a Democratic governor. They clearly answered no.

This race — and all judicial elections — highlights a deeper structural problem. In a constitutional republic, [judges should not be chosen by low-turnout popularity contests](#) in which only a small minority of the electorate effectively decides who interprets the law for everyone else. Wisconsin would be better served if judges were appointed by the governor and then confirmed by the Legislature, rather than selected through politicized elections that encourage fundraising, campaigning, and judicial posturing — or via gubernatorial appointment without legislative oversight. Courts are supposed to apply the law, not function as miniature political arenas.



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Mixed Mayoral Results in Waukesha County

Municipal races in Waukesha County produced a more mixed picture for conservatives. In the City of Waukesha, Republican state Representative Scott Allen narrowly [lost the mayoral race](#) to Alicia Halvensleben, who won 51.2 percent of the vote to Allen's 48.8 percent. The race was significant because Waukesha is one of the flagship cities in one of the most Republican counties in the state. Allen's defeat raises questions about whether conservatives are losing ground in local nonpartisan races even in longtime suburban strongholds.

Allen brought a strong conservative record into the race, including a respectable [78-percent lifetime](#) score on *The New American's* [state Legislative Scorecard](#). Yet Halvensleben, [backed by](#) Democrats and outgoing Mayor Shawn Reilly, was able to edge out a victory in a contest that many conservatives viewed as a warning sign for the future of suburban politics in Wisconsin.

Conservatives also raised alarms about the growing role of out-of-state money in local Wisconsin races. The [State + Local Election Alliance \(SLEA\)](#), a Washington, D.C.-based group headquartered on Pennsylvania Avenue, reportedly poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into Wisconsin's traditionally low-spending, officially nonpartisan municipal contests this spring. Framing its mission as protecting the "democratic rule of law" and serving as a "last line of defense against Trump," the group reportedly [spent roughly \\$740,000 statewide](#) on independent expenditures — such as mailers, digital ads, texting, phone banking, and consulting — often benefiting left-leaning or Democratic-aligned candidates in Republican-leaning suburbs and other local races.

The Waukesha mayoral contest was one of the clearest examples. Reports [indicated](#) that SLEA spent roughly \$172,774 in the race, including approximately \$121,007 supporting Halvensleben and another \$51,767 in express advocacy opposing Allen. Such spending would have been almost unthinkable in many Wisconsin municipal races just a few years ago. Critics have rightly argued that this amounts to nationalizing local elections and using outside money to reshape communities whose values often do not align with those of Washington political operatives.

Conservatives fared better elsewhere in Waukesha County. In Brookfield, incumbent Mayor Steve Ponto [won reelection decisively](#), defeating challenger Mike Hallquist by a margin of 56.2 percent to 43.8 percent. Ponto's victory preserved a key Republican-aligned suburban office and signaled that Brookfield voters still prefer steady, fiscally responsible leadership over a leftward shift supported by Democratic activists and outside money.

That Brookfield race also drew heavy outside spending. Reports indicated that SLEA spent more than [\\$111,000 backing Hallquist](#), an alderman widely viewed as aligned with Democratic interests. Yet despite that major infusion of outside cash, Brookfield voters rejected the effort to move their city leftward.

In Oconomowoc, Matt Rosek also [prevailed in the mayor's race](#), defeating Karen Spiegelberg by 56 percent to 44 percent. That result gave conservatives an important municipal win in Lake Country and helped offset the disappointment in nearby Waukesha. Together, the Brookfield and Oconomowoc results suggest that, although some suburban races are becoming more competitive, constitutional conservatives can still win when they remain engaged and organized.



Milwaukee County Board Race

Another closely watched race took place for the Milwaukee County Board, where incumbent Patti Logsdon, one of the only conservatives on the board, [defeated](#) Maqsood Khan by a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent. The contest drew added scrutiny after reports surfaced that Khan had donated \$100 to the “Salah Sarsour Justice Fund.” Sarsour, according to federal officials, was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and accused of lying on immigration paperwork after failing to disclose a past conviction involving Molotov cocktails thrown at the homes of Israeli soldiers. [The U.S. Department of Homeland Security repeatedly referred to Sarsour as a terrorist.](#)

Khan’s donation to the defense fund became a major liability, especially given the public message attached to it praising Sarsour for having served the Milwaukee community for decades. Logsdon’s win amounted to more than a routine reelection — it also represented a rebuke to a candidate who had aligned himself, however indirectly, with a cause tied to a man facing terror-related accusations. Somehow, even after all of that, he still received 41 percent of the vote.

School Referendums Show Taxpayer Unease

The state’s biggest school referendums produced mixed but revealing results. Howard-Suamico [voters approved a \\$147 million facilities referendum](#) — the largest school-capital question on the April 7 ballot — while [Whitefish Bay voters rejected](#) a \$135.6 million bond referendum and Baraboo voters likewise [rejected a \\$74 million capital proposal](#).

These three districts represented the largest school-borrowing questions on the statewide ballot by total dollar amount. Howard-Suamico’s referendum was [aimed at](#) expansions and renovations across multiple schools, including Bay Port High School and several elementary and intermediate buildings. Whitefish Bay’s proposal [would have](#) financed a new middle school along with major upgrades at other district facilities. Baraboo’s defeated measure would have paid for additions, renovations, and capital maintenance at several elementary schools, as well as improvements to the high school’s agricultural department.

The results suggest that although some communities remain willing to approve large public-school spending packages, voters in other districts are showing greater skepticism toward taking on more debt and increasing the burden on taxpayers. That skepticism is especially understandable at a time when many families are struggling with inflation, high property taxes, and [declining trust in government-run education](#).

Port Washington Revolts Against TIDs

Meanwhile, in Ozaukee County, [voters in Port Washington approved a major referendum](#) that would require voter approval for tax incremental districts (TIDs) involving more than \$10 million in base value or project costs. The measure passed by a margin of 66 percent to 34 percent.

The referendum emerged from [public backlash to the proposed Lighthouse AI data-center campus](#) and the large public incentives tied to it. Although the vote does not undo the current project, it sends a clear message that voters do not want local officials to hand out major development subsidies without direct public consent. In that sense, the result was a win — [since the margin was so significant](#) — for local self-government and a rejection of the increasingly common practice of using taxpayer-backed tools to benefit politically connected corporate projects.



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Residents in Port Washington did not vote against technology as such. Rather, they insisted that large-scale developments with major tax and infrastructure implications should not be imposed from the top down. That principle is sound. Government should not function as a broker for [corporate favoritism](#), nor should local communities be expected to absorb transformative projects.

A Tale of Two Wisconsin

Taken together, Wisconsin's April 7 election results reveal a state still sharply divided — not only between left and right, but also between different layers of government. Leftists are consolidating power at the statewide judicial level, while conservatives remain competitive and, in many places, successful in local courts and municipal offices. That split is especially visible in southeastern Wisconsin, where Republican counties continue to produce conservative victories — but not without warning signs.

The Washington County court race is perhaps the clearest example of why these elections matter. A county that votes overwhelmingly Republican had, until April 7, a circuit-court bench fully shaped by appointments from Evers. Scaife's victory begins to correct that mismatch. It also shows that when voters pay attention to judicial races, they can push back against the quiet but powerful influence governors exert through court appointments.

The broader lesson is that conservatives cannot afford to ignore local races, spring elections, or judicial contests simply because they receive less attention than presidential and gubernatorial elections. Courts, mayor's offices, county boards, school referendums, and local ballot questions all shape the political and cultural direction of a community. If constitutional government is to be preserved, citizens must remain vigilant at every level.

For Wisconsinites concerned about the future of their state, the answer is not despair, but involvement. These races show both the dangers of judicial activism, executive appointment power, and outside political spending, and the [opportunities that still exist to restore local accountability](#).



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