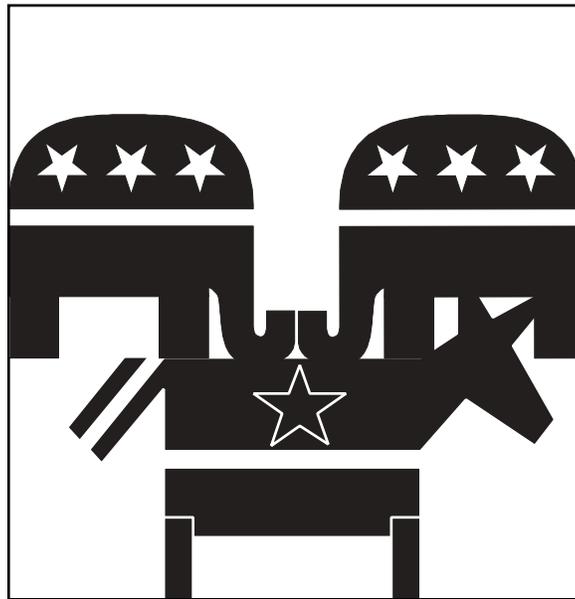


“CO-GOVERNORS” VIE FOR REPUBLICANS’ HEARTS AND MINDS

JEFF MAYERS

Not since 1986 have Republicans had this kind of choice when it comes to the governor’s race. All those years of Republican incumbents took a lot of fun away from Republican primary voters and convention-going activists. After Tommy Thompson beat three others (remember Jonathan Barry, George Watts, Albert Lee Wiley and Joseph Ortiz, Jr.), he went on to defeat first-term Democratic Governor Tony Earl and then secure a record four gubernatorial election wins. Scott McCallum, his successor, faced only token opposition in his primary during his election attempt in 2002, before falling to Democrat Jim Doyle in a race that included Tommy’s brother, Ed, the Libertarian.

In 2006, activists, who will pick between Green Bay-area Congressman Mark Green and Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker, are relishing the choice. A handful of activists even think somebody else—like 2004 U.S. Senate candidate Tim Michels, a millionaire businessman—could jump into the race. But for now, insiders are focused on the Walker vs. Green contest.



To some Republican activists, the governor’s primary in September ’06 to decide Doyle’s general election opponent, along with the primary to decide an opponent to Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager, is a way to keep the troops activated by the Bush re-election effort fresh and engaged.

To other GOP-ers, it’s a real, nationally important shot at taking back a governor’s office that has been in Republican hands for most of the previous quarter century. Republicans will be trying to take back an office they have held for 22 of the previous 26 years. The last time a Democratic governor was RE-elected was back in 1974, when Pat Lucey did it. Then came Democrat Martin Schreiber (completing Lucey’s second term), Republican Lee Sherman Dreyfus (one term), Democrat Earl (one term), Republican Thompson (four terms), McCallum (completing Thompson’s last term), and now Doyle, in his first term that began in 2003.

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To those in the Republican trenches, it's a tough but inviting choice. "Party members want co-governors, one this week, the other the next," remarked Kim Babler, the chair of the Republican 2nd Congressional District caucus that, like a lot of other Republicans, hosted a joint appearance by Green and Walker. "Rarely do you have evenly matched candidates. Refreshing."

But the winner will have to take out a disciplined and well-known incumbent, who has proven to be a formidable fundraiser. Doyle got to the governor's office after serving three terms as the state's attorney general, and has never lost a statewide election. In addition, they'll have to overcome historical trends and the negatives of their respective offices to move from regional politician to the office of governor.

Twentieth century Wisconsin elections for governor have not been kind to sitting congressmen or politicians closely identified with Milwaukee.

According to the Legislative Reference Bureau, the last person elected governor who had previously served in Congress was Robert M. La Follette, Sr., who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1885-1891, and was governor from 1901-1906. Previous to La Follette, Jeremiah Rusk and Cadwallader Washburn also were elected governor after serving in Congress.

Several governors served in Congress *after* leaving the governor's office. They include Robert M. La Follette, Sr. (Senate), John Blaine (Senate), Vern Thomson (House), and Gaylord Nelson (Senate).

The last person from Milwaukee who was elected as governor was Julius Heil, a German-born Republican who served from 1939-1943. This does not include Schreiber, who was acting governor from 1977-1979. Several other persons from Milwaukee served as governor prior to Heil, including Fred Zimmerman, Francis McGovern, George Peck, and Harrison Ludington.

It should be noted that Lee Dreyfus, who served from 1979-1983, was a native of Milwaukee, but was a resident of Stevens Point when elected governor.

In addition to the historical hurdles, Green and Walker have modern political issues to contend with.

Democrats have attempted to tie Green to the difficulties of embattled conservative House leader Tom DeLay. Green also will have to answer to a broader electorate on politically touchy votes, ranging from Social Security to tax cuts to Iraq.

Milwaukee Democrats are doing their best to monkey-wrench Walker's bid, highlighting county budget problems, his failed bonding solution, and a park system said to be in decline. The county board is increasingly at odds with Walker, and local media appear to be more critical of the county executive since his 2004 re-election victory. While Walker is trying to use his short tenure as county executive to show he's ready to run state government, opponents are throwing mud at the record he aims to promote.

The candidates

The Colorado-born Walker, who turns 38 on November 2, was elected to the state Assembly in a June 1993 special election before vaulting onto the statewide scene by winning an open race for Milwaukee County executive on April 30, 2002, in the midst of a pension scandal—becoming the first Republican elected to that position. He filled out Tom Ament's term and was re-elected to a full four-year term in spring 2004.

The Boston-born Green, who turns 45 on June 1, is an attorney who was elected to the Assembly in 1992, serving through 1998. He won his '98 congressional bid, unseating a one-term Democratic incumbent, and has been re-elected since.

Both have similar philosophies. Because of the similar issue stances, activists are looking a lot at the personalities of the two candidates

and their campaigns. Green often comes off as a softer sell; Walker comes off as more ambitious.

Walker declared early, in January, signaling the need to raise his statewide profile and the money necessary for a statewide run. Green was more traditional, waiting until the spring to formally declare a race he has been running in many ways for many years (just look at his Lincoln Day speaking circuit calendar and his campaign war chest of some \$1.3 million). In the May 2003 WisPolitics.com straw poll at the state GOP convention, Green outpaced Walker and Assembly Speaker John Gard. Green had been the most upfront about his gubernatorial ambitions at that point, but he laughed off the importance of this early straw poll. "If a straw poll meant something, my good friend Tom Barrett would be governor," joked Green at the time, referring to the former Democratic congressman's victory in the 2001 and 2002 Democratic Convention WisPolitics.com straw polls.

This year's convention gave both campaigns an opportunity to show their stuff to activists who may not have seen them at the various Lincoln Day events around the state. It was a prelude to next year's convention endorsement process—something brought back by party leaders in part to hype attendance at the conventions.

The straw poll, reports on the convention, and the first-half-of-the-year money reports will give insiders an indication of how the race is going. The year-end reports will be even more telling.

But until the convention, it looked to be an even match. "Organizationally, they're a draw. On the stump, they're a draw," said one strategist, who gives the ultimate edge to Walker because of the metro Milwaukee presence.

That goes to a central analysis of this race: both Walker and Green still are largely regional candidates. With one coming from metro Milwaukee and one from Green Bay, Walker and Green would seem to have a handle on support in their respective eastern Wisconsin's population centers. But outstate they're still getting known.

One GOP district chair told WisPolitics.com before the state convention,

I don't feel either has a base established in western Wisconsin," "Obviously when I talk to the Milwaukee County people they are very much behind Walker and point out that we need a candidate who will do well in Milwaukee. Similarly Green's 8th District people are very much behind him.

Both candidates are looking to nail down broad grassroots support away from their home turf.

In western Wisconsin, the competitors will have to work the grassroots and legislative representatives from Districts 3 and 7, which both send Democrats to Washington.

Green's campaign feels he has an edge because he has worked on constituent issues that will have an appeal in those districts where farming, forestry, and tourism are staple industries. "Mark really will have a great advantage in those areas based on what he's been able to do in Congress," says one Green spokesman.

Green has toured the western part of the state often over the years, and his campaign is promising more of the same over the next year and a half.

Walker used the April 15 tax-filing day to highlight his penny-pinching ways with stops in Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and La Crosse. Critics called it a belated

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attempt to make up for the lack of a traditional cross-state announcement tour; Walker supporters were quick to point out their “rolling announcement tour” has taken the county executive and former legislator from Wauwatosa to much of the state in more productive settings, visiting nearly 60 counties by mid-April.

On one April weekend, for example, Walker was the keynote speaker at the Polk County Lincoln Day Dinner on the same night Karl Rove was in Waukesha. “Scott was honored to fulfill a commitment he made months ago to the great people in this northwest Wisconsin county,” a campaign report said. “Fortunately for the campaign, we were still well represented in Waukesha. Scott’s father, the Reverend Llew Walker filled in for him at dinner. . . (and) gave the prayer instead.”

“Votes are important in every part of the state, and that’s why Scott is traveling around the state and in every county,” a Walker campaign spokesman added.

We’re running a deliberate, smart, and lean race right now. And focusing like a laser on Doyle. On Voter ID, the freeze, TABOR, school choice, Health Savings Accounts, seniors issues. . . . Scott has been on him. And using the Taxes and Truth tour as an example, he is getting to him.

One Walker supporter claims that if Green took the north and Walker the south, Walker would win the race easily because the state’s population is concentrated in the south. Word from some party insiders is that Green has done well in motivating the grassroots (stemming from strategist Mark Graul’s stint as the state Bush campaign coordinator and Green’s many state travels), one GOP insider points out. But Walker has a strong base in the most populous counties.

“Green has a good start in winding up out-state activists, and having Mark Graul on board . . . is really an asset,” said the insider. “But when you talk to folks in the north, the more they hear Scott the more they really like him, and they’d never thought about him before.”

“If the vote were held today, I’d say Green, but Walker’s so strong in southeast Wisconsin, I’d say it’s a horse race,” one party insider concluded.

One district chair in mid-April put the race at 20% Walker, 20% Green, and 60% undecided.

The one thing all agree on is taking down the Democratic incumbent.

“It’s too early to be joining one or the other campaign; we just need to focus on beating Jim Doyle,” said one district chair.

Funny, that’s what Rove suggested. “Keep it clean, keep it positive, and keep it focused on the big thing—the election of a Republican governor and the election of a Republican attorney general,” Rove told Waukesha County Republicans. Rove avoided leaning one way or the other in the primary contest between Green and Walker, joking at one point “‘W’ stands for Walker” and saying of Green: “He’s a great young leader in our party. A lot is going to be seen and heard from Mark in years to come.”

To insiders, Rove’s April speaking swing into the state was an indicator that the White House and GOP-leaning PACs and interest groups will be involved in gubernatorial race 2006.

Spin zone

While Walker and Green have appeared friendly in their frequent joint appearances, even seated together at some events, their operatives have been ratcheting up the spin factor as they search out donors and endorsements. To some insiders, the race is shaping up as a contest between two top Republican strategists—Green’s Mark Graul, who was the director of the Wisconsin Bush campaign and Walker’s Jim Villa, a founder of the Markesan Group that includes Brian Fraley and John Hiller.

Walker’s pitch

“I’m essentially the CEO of the largest government in the state of Wisconsin besides the state government.”—Walker

Walker and his campaign are focusing on the property tax freeze message, his executive experience, and his ability to garner Democratic votes in Milwaukee. Erode Doyle support in Milwaukee, and you will win, the thinking goes.

Asked “what makes your guy different and what makes him the best choice” to go against Doyle, a Walker campaign operative provided this list, which has been edited for this analysis.

1. The buck stops with him. He runs a cabinet-style government and wields a veto over the legislative branch, just like the governor. He runs a \$1.2 billion budget and oversees more than 6,000 employees. When selecting a governor, voters generally favor a mayor or chief executive over any federal officeholder.
2. Walker is already dealing with state issues and able to campaign while doing his job in Wisconsin.
3. Walker has more state-related experience than Green, between his eight years in the Legislature and his three in the executive’s office.
4. Republicans want to elect someone who can beat Doyle. Scott Walker has performed best in the areas of the state that represent Doyle’s geographic base. In fact, in 2002, Walker garnered 58% of the vote in Milwaukee County; whereas Doyle needed his 57% there just to get to 45% statewide.
5. Walker is known and liked in the area of the state where the greatest numbers of votes come from. (His image as a reformer

is central to this image.) This frees him up to spend more time in other areas.

6. Walker may be the only candidate in the history of the state who has actually delivered on freezing property taxes, an issue of some importance not only to Republicans but to seniors in particular. Polling shows that taxes are the No. 1 issue.
7. Walker is a prolific fundraiser. Even more so than Green, who has spent three terms in Congress building up that war chest he transferred. In just three years, between 2002 and 2004, the Walker campaign raised and spent \$1.4 million—for a local election.

What makes your guy different and what makes him the best choice to go against Doyle?

8. Walker has already beaten the Doyle team. Fearing the looming Walker-Doyle match-up, the governor handpicked David Reimer, his budget director, to challenge Scott. Bill Christofferson, Doyle’s right-hand political strategist, ran the race. Reimer was crushed.

9. Walker, the son of a minister, grew up in a smaller community (Delavan, which at the time had a population of 6,000) and politically has made a career in the largest population base in the state. He can relate to folks’ concerns in every corner of Wisconsin. While some may try to label Walker as the Milwaukee guy, it just won’t stick.

Green’s pitch

“If having served and worked hand in hand for this president in the last four years on such matters as fighting the war on terror, mobilizing this economy, bringing about the largest tax cut in the history of the country — if those are disadvantages, I’ll take those disadvantages.” —Green

Asked “what makes your guy different and what makes him the best choice” to go against Doyle, a Green campaign operative provided this narrative, which has been edited for this analysis.

1. Mark’s beaten an incumbent before; Walker has not. In fact, Mark was the only challenger in the country to beat an incumbent House Democrat in 1998. (Editor’s note: Tom Ament, the county executive, withdrew from office, creating a vacancy; Green beat Democrat Jay Johnson.)
2. Mark has received nearly twice as many raw votes in the last two elections than Scott (400,821 to 236,023). That’s a lot more people conditioned to vote for Green.
3. Mark’s had as much success, if not more, with Democrats and independents as Walker. Mark’s the only member of Congress from Wisconsin to get better than 70% of the vote in the last three elections. And, that’s without running a single TV or radio ad the past two cycles. We relied solely on a grassroots campaign and Mark’s work in Congress.
4. Mark starts this race with a huge financial advantage—\$1.3 million to \$100,000. That’s more than a head start—it’s an insurmountable advantage. We’ll have the funds we need to run a true statewide race—and buy the ad time we need in the Milwaukee media market to be very competitive.
5. Mark has been working the state for the past six years. He’s been on the “circuit” longer and has the friends to show for it.
6. Politicos on board with Green, according to the campaign, include: Ryan, former Lt. Governor Margaret Farrow, former Senate President Brian Rude, former Madison-area Congressman Scott Klug, and Thompson loyalists from around the state like San Orr, George Steil, Butch Johnson and Chuck Thompson.
7. Mark can match tax rhetoric with anyone. As a member of leadership in both the

state legislature and then Congress, he helped pass the largest tax cut (notice not freeze) in both state and national history. He’s eliminated the marriage penalty, cut income taxes across the board, killed the death tax, cut capital gains, allowed small businesses to deduct equipment investments, helped pass the largest property tax cut in state history, and increased the child tax credit just to name a few.

8. Mark has a resume that will appeal to the broadest number of voters around the state and has something to show to farmers, hunters, forest product employees, snow-mobilers, veterans, and manufacturers.
9. In the post-September 11th world, voters (security Moms and Dads) like that members of Congress have worked on security/terrorism issues. Mark has played a prominent role in both the domestic and foreign response to terrorism, a quality that will appeal to GOP primary voters in particular. And, he’s worked on all of these issues with the most popular Republican of them all—President Bush.

Conclusion

Green and Walker can’t be “co-governors.” But they can be, in a sense, “co-candidates” who could weaken Doyle and help the September ’06 primary winner by avoiding a bloody fight. The model primary of recent memory, ironically, is the one Doyle won in 2002 over Barrett and Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk. The Democrats that year showed their differences without a messy, public tussle, giving Doyle a primary bounce that helped get him to the governor’s office.

Republicans are hoping for the same kind of race as they try to unseat Doyle next year.

Update

At the Wisconsin Republican Party convention (May 6-7, 2005), Mark Green and attorney general candidate J.B. Van Hollen won a straw poll of GOP activists. WisPolitics.com staged the straw poll.

Of the 317 ballots submitted for governor, U.S. Representative Green tallied 182 votes, or 57.4%, to Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker's 133 votes, or 42%. The race for attorney general wasn't as close. Of the 312 ballots submitted in that race, former U.S. Attorney Van Hollen received 261 votes, or 83.7%, to primary opponent Paul Bucher's 47 votes, or 15.1%. Bucher is the Waukesha County district attorney.

Paper balloting took place on May 6 and 7 at the state convention. Official attendance at this year's Republican convention was pegged at about 675, according to a state Republican Party official. That includes about 650 delegates and alternates and 25 registered guests. Straw poll ballots totaled 322, meaning there were votes from roughly half of those who officially attended. Only delegates, alternates and official guests were allowed to vote.

Previously, the May 2003 WisPolitics.com straw poll at the state GOP convention had

Green outpacing Walker and Assembly Speaker John Gard. Green had been the most upfront about his gubernatorial ambitions at that point, but this time Walker and Green are officially declared candidates.

In other ballot questions, newly declared lieutenant governor candidate Jean Hundertmark (a state representative and the only declared GOP candidate so far) was the favorite of activists, getting 204 votes of the 279 cast in that race.

In a question on who should be the Republican presidential nominee in 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was the winner, getting 110 votes out of 315 ballots cast.

The straw poll was not officially sanctioned by the Republican Party of Wisconsin and was run solely by WisPolitics.com. The results follow.

STRAW POLL RESULTS — MAY 6-7, 2005 — TOTAL BALLOTS: 322

Which politician would be your preferred GOP presidential nominee in 2008?

Total votes: 315

George Allen	22 votes (7%)
Jeb Bush	49 votes (15.6%)
Bill Frist	31 votes (9.8%)
Rudy Giuliani	74 votes (23.5%)
John McCain	15 votes (4.8%)
Condoleezza Rice	110 votes (34.9%)
Mitt Romney	7 votes (2.2%)

Write-ins:

—Tommy Thompson, 2 votes (0.6%)

—One vote each for Newt Gingrich, Norman Schwarzkopf, Alan Keyes, Sam Brownback, J.C. Watts

Which politician would be your preferred GOP gubernatorial nominee in 2006?

Total votes: 317

Mark Green	182 votes (57.4%)
Scott Walker	133 votes (42.0%)

Write-ins:

—One vote each for Mark Neumann, Tim Michels

Which politician would be your preferred GOP lieutenant governor nominee in 2006?

Total votes: 279

Jean Hundertmark	204 votes (73.1%)
Sheila Harsdorf	65 votes (23.3%)

Write-ins:

—John Sharpless, Chris Green, Van Mobley, Jim Villa, Margaret Farrow, Cate Zeuske, Scott Walker, Oscar Herrera, Scott Suder, Steve Freese

Which politician would be your preferred GOP attorney general nominee in 2006?

Total votes: 312

J.B. Van Hollen	261 votes (83.7%)
Paul Bucher	47 (15.1%)

Write-ins:

—Mark Gundrum: 3 votes (1.0%)

—One vote for Robert Lorg