



NATIONAL JOURNAL

SPOTLIGHT

Wisconsin's Trickle-Down Ballot Effect

Gov. Tony Evers' decision against reelection could hand
Republicans more control



FILE - Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers shakes hands with Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez at an inauguration ceremony at the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison, Wis., Jan. 3, 2023. (AP Photo/Morry Gash, File)

Amelia Monroe

🕒 Aug. 1, 2025, 11:44 a.m.

s Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers (D) forgoes a reelection bid, the seat that Democrats speculated would be a slam-dunk in 2026 could now hand Republicans an avenue to advance their hold in the Badger State.

“It would be hard for [Democrats] to take credit or piggyback off the governor’s eight years,” Brandon Scholz, a Wisconsin political lobbyist at The Capitol Group, told *Hotline*.

“Republicans will be ready to pounce on those that try to take credit on things, like on property taxes or income tax cuts, the governor signed but he vetoed the first time through.”

Evers has a track record of pushing progressive policy points like securing more than [\\$4 billion](#)

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of bills passed by the Republican-
 controlled Legislature.

The open seat race is pulling in high-
 profile Democratic and Republican
 candidates that think they have a shot
 at the top position now that Evers, with
 an almost 50-50 [approval rating](#)

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, is out of the race.

On the Democratic side, notable names like Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez and state Attorney General Josh Kaul have already launched campaigns. But, their runs for governor could put their current positions on Republicans' radar of seats up for grabs—especially as Democrats battle for control of the state Senate, trying to narrow the 18-15 Republican majority.

Gubernatorial races tend to have an overwhelming downballot effect, which could put key congressional seats out of reach for Democrats if their pick for governor lacks a “wow factor.”

“Whoever has the better organization,
the better statewide campaign, the
better coordinated campaign
downballot, whether it be congressional
or legislative, will benefit from it,”
Scholz said. “If you’re downballot and
the top of the ticket isn’t worth a crap
that doesn’t help you at all.”

– *Amelia Monroe*

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