Editor’s note: This column is provided to Wisconsin Newspaper Association members by WisPolitics.com. Proper attribution to WisPolitics.com is appreciated. Also, please publish the tagline that is included at the end of the column.

---------------------------------

June 26, 2018

For Immediate Release

The Capitol Report

Timing is right for Milwaukee Democratic National Convention

The Democrats’ loss of Wisconsin in the 2016 presidential election could be prove to be a winner for the state come 2020.

The prize could be the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee.

Wisconsin has never hosted a national political convention, despite a rich political history and a list of influential politicos — from Bob La Follette to Tommy Thompson.

But the timing could be right this time around.

The effort is led by Alex Lasry. The Lasry family is a major owner of the Milwaukee Bucks and donates to Democratic causes. Lasry, chair of the Milwaukee bid committee, said the city has everything the party needs, including the new Milwaukee Bucks arena, which is in the final stages of construction.

"Milwaukee knows how to handle big events and we know how to put on a great party," Lasry said. "There is no place that will be more affordable for delegates and has better weather in July than Milwaukee."

Milwaukee has never hosted a national convention, but its rivals have. Houston hosted the RNC convention in 1988 and the Dem convention in 1928; Miami Beach hosted both party conventions in 1972 and the GOP meeting in 1968.

Wisconsin is a perennial presidential swing state, though Democrats dominated until Donald Trump won the state in 2016. That was the first time Republicans had won the state’s electoral votes since Ronald Reagan’s re-election in 1984.

Wisconsin and the upper Great Lakes states are key for any Democratic comeback after Hillary Clinton’s loss in 2016.

It’s said that political success is often about good timing.

And this could be good timing for Wisconsin to get its first convention.

National Democrats are still smarting from the Clinton loss of the "firewall" states of Michigan and Wisconsin. While Florida is a huge swing state, and Texas could be getting there, national Democrats may want to make a point by going to the heart of the upper Midwest to appeal to working class voters who have strayed from the party.

Already, national Democratic forces are active in Wisconsin, hoping to make a statement this fall. One such group helped Rebecca Dallet win the state Supreme Court race in April over a GOP-endorsed candidate. Democratic allies are hoping to upset Gov. Scott Walker, bring back U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and win the state Senate.

A top D.C. journalist recently hinted at this thinking. James Hohmann, of the Washington Post, spoke at a WisPolitics.com breakfast in Washington on June 20.

Hohmann called Milwaukee’s chances "good."

"All the political scientists have looked at this and said, ‘Look, the convention doesn’t move votes,’" he said. "But it does send an important message. And national Democrats get it that they’re serious about competing again in Wisconsin. And the fact is that Hillary Clinton took Wisconsin for granted. … For Democrats who are trying to decide what to do in 2020 it sends a powerful message" if they hold their convention in Milwaukee.

*The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at WisPolitics.com, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.*

*Copyright © WisPolitics.com*