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*The Capitol Report for the Week of Aug. 16, 2018*

**Wisconsin gubernatorial ad war begins in earnest after primary**

Let the gubernatorial campaign games begin!

The day after the Aug. 14 primary, the two top candidates, their campaigns and their allies wasted no time in moving onto the general election campaign. Candidates toured the state, ads hit the airwaves and pundits revised their handicapping.

Along the way, issue differences between the candidates became clearer.

The gubernatorial ad wars started in earnest with new spots from Gov. Scott Walker and the Democratic Governors Association.

Walker's first TV ad of the general election tells viewers "we're just getting started." Meanwhile, the Democratic Governors Association started with spots praising Democratic nominee Tony Evers.

In Walker's 30-second statewide ad, the governor pushes to implement several tax cuts, including one for $5,000 over five years for college graduates who live and work in Wisconsin.

But Evers, at an Aug. 15 news conference outside Mickey's Dairy Bar in Madison, said Walker's plan isn't enough.

"Whatever he's proposing right now pales as compared to the destruction he's done to the people of Wisconsin," Evers said.

Evers continued his criticism, arguing Walker and Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch have "shredded" Wisconsin values.

The state schools superintendent also told reporters he'd "fight back" against negative ads, such as a new GOP ad knocking the state superintendent for not revoking the license of a teacher who allegedly viewed porn on a school computer.

Evers defended himself against the ad, which he called "ridiculous." He argued he was abiding by state law and later worked to close the loophole preventing him from revoking the teacher's license.

"Simple as that, I was following state law as a constitutional officer," he said. "That's what the people of Wisconsin expected of me as state superintendent."

Walker suggested Evers would raise the gas tax by a dollar to increase transportation funding, a measure the state superintendent today didn't rule out.

"If Tony Evers wants to talk about jacking up the tax on gas a buck, I think people deserve to know that," Walker told conservative Milwaukee radio host Jay Weber.

Evers said he'd "support looking at anything." Among the proposals he named were eliminating some tax credits, reducing the size of state government or increasing the gas tax.

"Everything is on the table. All's I know is what [Walker]'s done has failed," Evers said.

Evers said tolling is also something he's not ruling out, although he added several studies have "discredited" it.

Evers' campaign manager Maggie Gau later said he "will do what it takes to fix the roads that Scott Walker has allowed to crumble. But [Evers] has never said he would quadruple the gas tax."

Walker defended his handling of transportation, arguing he's invested more money in transportation than former Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle. He also criticized the idea of raising the gas tax, arguing it's among the highest in the nation.

The Democratic Governors Association, via a group called A Stronger Wisconsin, is launching a new TV ad touting Evers' career in education.

The 30-second ad opens with videos of Walker as the narrator says, "You know who they are, the politicians who only care about politics."

The spot then switches to a series of images of a younger Evers, as the narrator says, "But then there's this teacher."

The narrator outlines Evers' career as a teacher in Baraboo, a principal in Tomah and then state superintendent.

"His life's mission is to make their lives better," the narrator said as the camera panned to video of Evers laughing with a child. "So you can forget the lobbyists and the politicians, they'll never change. But Tony Evers won't play their game."

The narrator closes the spot by saying Evers will prioritize making the state's roads, health care and schools "work for you and families like yours."

The ad is part of a $1.8 million statewide buy, according to the DGA.

The spot comes on the heels of the state GOP announcing what it said was a $500,000 buy targeting Evers over a Middleton teacher who kept his license after viewing porn at school.

What’s it all mean? Pundits are predicting a close race.

Larry Sabato's "Crystal Ball" is moving the Wisconsin governor’s race from "leans Republican" to a toss-up.

Kyle Kondik, the managing editor, tweeted about the move: "Been evident for a while that Walker is in trouble but we wanted to wait until the primary. Tony Evers seems like the most credible Dem, and he will face Walker."

*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.*

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