

From: Hoven Consulting
Date: May/June 2024
RE: Spring Forecast – 2024 State Legislative Election Cycle – Top Tier Races

Political Landscape

The purpose of this memo is to outline the likely most competitive races for both the state Assembly and state Senate during the 2024 election cycle. Now that the Legislature has adjourned their legislative session, the 2024 election cycle is in full campaign mode. Wisconsin's state legislative and congressional district maps were finalized earlier this spring, which will create a number of very competitive races for control of the Wisconsin legislature. This, coupled with Milwaukee hosting the Republican National Convention in July and Wisconsin's status as one of the foremost battleground states this year for control of the Presidency and the U.S. Senate, will make for a very interesting 2024 election year.

Our intention is to provide you with an initial analysis of the 2024 election cycle so that you are able to make informed policy decisions with the 2025-2026 state legislative session in mind. As the year progresses, we will provide you with a pre-primary election report, a post-primary election report, a post-general election report on the various races, including those at the federal level, as well as polling data.

As 2024 is a presidential election year, this will very likely increase voter turnout throughout Wisconsin. One could argue that this presidential election is not only a referendum on the term of the incumbent president, Democrat Joe Biden, but also on his predecessor, former president Donald Trump, which will have an impact the various down-ballot races in Wisconsin.

In addition to the presidential race, Wisconsin is also facing a U.S. Senate race with incumbent two-term Democratic U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin of Madison. She is facing Republican businessman Eric Hovde of the Madison area, who appears to not be facing any significant primary challengers. Hovde also unsuccessfully ran in the 2012 U.S. Senate primary election, losing to former long-time Republican Governor Tommy Thompson – who ultimately lost to then-U.S. Representative Tammy Baldwin. This race could be quite close, but Tammy Baldwin has proven to be a tough competitor in her past two statewide elections, as she has expanded her support beyond the traditional Democratic areas of Milwaukee and Dane (which includes Madison) counties. This is already a closely watched race, as it could determine which party controls the U.S. Senate.

Farther down the ballot, all of Wisconsin's eight U.S. House members are up for election. The two most contentious races among the eight are the seats held by Republican U.S. Representative Derrick Van Orden – who represents a seat that includes much of western Wisconsin and some of central Wisconsin (Platteville, La Crosse, Eau Claire, and Stevens Point) and Republican U.S. Representative Bryan Steil – whose district includes southeast Wisconsin and portions of southcentral Wisconsin (Kenosha, Racine, Beloit, Janesville, and some southern Milwaukee suburbs). Van Orden likely holds the seat that is most at danger of flipping to a Democratic candidate. He is facing the following Democrats: small business owner Rebecca Cooke of Eau Claire – who ran for this seat in 2022 – state Representative Katrina Shankland of Stevens Point, and activist Eric Wilson from Eau Claire. Steil holds a somewhat safer seat, although he recently gained a top-tier Democratic opponent – Peter Barca of Kenosha. Barca actually held this seat in 1993-1994, represented Kenosha in the state Assembly for a number of years (including as minority leader) and, most recently, as the secretary of the state Department of Revenue.

The following is a list of key campaign and election dates:

- **May 24, 2024:** Deadline for incumbents not running for re-election to file notice of non-candidacy.
- **June 3, 2024:** Candidates submit nomination papers to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.
- **August 13, 2024:** Partisan primaries for state legislative races.
- **November 5, 2023:** General election
- **January 6, 2025:** State legislative inauguration

State Government Elections

■ Overview

Both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature currently have Republican majorities (Assembly – 64-35; Senate 22 to 10 with 1 vacancy in a heavily Democratic district in Milwaukee). All 99 Assembly seats are up for election. In the Senate, 16 of 33 seats are up – eight of these seats feature GOP incumbents and four of them are open seats.

The current political wisdom is that Assembly Republicans are in position to maintain control following the 2024 election due to the number of Republican seats that are viewed as safe or strong for the GOP, in addition to the high number of GOP incumbents. However, due to 2024 redistricting, the number of highly competitive seats has increased under the new district maps. As such, it is possible that Assembly Republicans may lose a small number of seats, but not enough to lose the majority. Under the newly created state legislative maps, 45 Assembly districts lean Democratic, 46 Assembly districts lean Republican, and 8 Districts are “Toss Up” districts.

Likewise, it is expected Senate Republicans will also maintain control of that body in 2024. However, the GOP may also lose seats in this chamber due to the increase of competitive seats because of 2024 redistricting. In order to take control of this chamber, 13 Democratic candidates would have to win Senate seats in November, which is unlikely. However, it is significant that each Senate seat up for election this year features a Democratic candidate, which has not occurred in more than two decades. Under the newly enacted state legislative maps, 14 Senate districts lean Democratic, 15 Senate districts lean Republican, and 4 Senate districts are “Toss Up” districts.

■ State Assembly

The following is a summary of the most competitive state Assembly races in 2024:

Assembly District 21 – Southeast Milwaukee County

- Incumbent is Rep. Jessie Rodriguez (R-Oak Creek), who is a member of the Joint Finance Committee.
- The new district includes Oak Creek, portions of the city of Milwaukee, and a portion of Greenfield. The City of South Milwaukee is no longer in her district.
 - The new district shifts 4% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 53% Democratic district.
- As this is written, she has not yet announced whether she is running for re-election.
- The only announced candidate is David Marsteller (D-Milwaukee).

Assembly District 26 – Sheboygan Area

- No incumbent was drawn into this district, but Rep. Amy Binsfeld (R-Sheboygan) will move into this district from just north of this district.
- The new district includes all of the City of Sheboygan. Oostburg is no longer included in this district.
 - The new district shifts 12% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, this is a 52% Democratic district.
- The only other announced candidate is Joe Sheehan (D-Sheboygan).

Assembly District 30 – Twin Cities Suburbs (River Falls, Hudson)

- Incumbent is Rep. Shannon Zimmerman (R-River Falls), who is a member of the Joint Finance Committee.
- The new district now includes all of the City of River Falls but loses a large rural area north of Hudson.
 - The new district shifts 5% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 51% Republican district.
- Rep. Zimmerman has announced his re-election bid and Alison Page (D-River Falls) has also announced her candidacy.

Assembly District 51 – Southwestern Wisconsin

- Incumbent is Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville).
- The new district now includes a portion of Dane County (Mount Horeb), in addition to Mineral Point, Dodgeville, and Darlington. His district loses the communities of Spring Green and Monroe.
 - The new district shifts 5% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 54% Democratic district.
- Rep. Novak, Robert Harlow (D-Barneveld), and Elizabeth Grabe (D-Mount Horeb) have announced their candidacies.

Assembly District 53 – Fox Valley (Neenah, Menasha)

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district is just comprised of Neenah and Menasha. Prior to the 2024 redistricting, both communities were included in separate Assembly districts.
 - The new district shifts 15% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 52% Democratic district.
- The only announced candidate is Don Merkes (D-Menasha).

Assembly District 61 – Southwest Milwaukee County

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district is comprised of several Milwaukee suburbs (Hales Corners, Greendale, Greenfield), as well as a portion of the City of Milwaukee.
 - The new district shifts 13% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 51% Democratic district.
- Rep. Bob Donovan (R-Greenfield) has announced that he will move into this district to run for re-election. LuAnn Bird (D-Hales Corners) is also running for this seat.

85th Assembly District – Wausau Area

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district is comprised of the Wausau and the suburban community of Weston. It no longer includes the suburbs of Schofield and Rothschild and a large swath of rural area east of Wausau.
 - The new district shifts 2% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 51% Republican district.
- Rep. Pat Snyder (R-Schofield) has announced that he is running and will move into the district. Yee Ziong (D-Weston) is the other announced candidate.

88th Assembly District – Eastern Green Bay Suburbs

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district is comprised of the eastern Green Bay suburbs of De Pere (all), Allouez, and Bellevue. Previously, it included a portion of Green Bay, a portion of De Pere, and a large rural area south of Green Bay, but not Allouez.
 - This new district shifts 5% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 50.5% Republican district.

- The announced candidates are Phil Collins (R-De Pere), Ben Franklin (R-De Pere), and Christy Welch (D-De Pere).

89th Assembly District – City of Green Bay and Western Suburbs

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district is comprised of a significant portion of the City of Green Bay and the eastern suburb of Ashwaubenon.
 - This new district shifts 16% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 51% Democratic district.
- The announced candidates are Ryan Spaude (D-Green Bay) and Patrick Buckley (R-Green Bay).

92nd Assembly District – Northwest Wisconsin

- Rep. Clint Moses (R-Menomonie) is the incumbent and has announced that he is running for re-election.
 - Rep. Moses currently serves as chair of the Assembly Health Committee and is a practicing chiropractor.
- This district is comprised of Menomonie, Chippewa Falls, and rural areas in between both communities. The district has essentially shifted towards the east, as it did not include Chippewa Falls previously.
 - This new district shifts 8% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 52% Republican district.
- The following people have also announced their candidacy for this seat: Joseph Plouff (D-Menomonie) and Caden Berg (D-Chippewa Falls).

94th Assembly District – La Crosse Area

- Rep. Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) is the incumbent and has announced that he is running for re-election.
- This La Crosse-area district is comprised of suburb Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem, and rural areas north of La Crosse.
 - This new district makes no effective shift towards either Democrats or Republicans post-redistricting. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 50% Republican/50% Democratic district.
- Ryan Huebsch (R-Onalaska) is the only other announced candidate.

■ **State Senate**

The following is a summary of the most competitive state Senate races in 2024:

8th Senate District – Northern Milwaukee Suburbs

- Sen. Duey Stroebel (R-Saukville) is the incumbent and has announced that he is running for re-election.
- Sen. Stroebel’s northern Milwaukee suburban district has changed dramatically, as it now includes Port Washington, all of Cedarburg, Mequon, and portions of Milwaukee County (Brown Deer, Bayside, Fox Point, and Whitefish Bay).
 - This new district shifts 3% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 51% Republican district.
- Jodi Habush Sinykin (D-Whitefish Bay) is the only other announced candidate.

14th Senate District – Southcentral Wisconsin North of Madison (and a portion of Madison)

- Sen. Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) has announced that she will move into this district and run for re-election.
- This district includes Wisconsin Dells, Baraboo, Richland Center, Portage, the Madison suburbs of DeForest and Windsor, as well as a portion of Madison. Previously, this district was broken into three separate districts.

- This new district shifts 14% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 52% Democratic district.
- Sarah Keyeski (D-Lodi) and Christopher Unterberger (D-Wisconsin Dells) are the other two declared candidates.

18th Senate District – Fox Valley

- No incumbent lives within the boundaries of this new district.
- This district includes much of the Fox Valley, including Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha, and Appleton. This district no longer includes a great deal of rural area north and west of the prior Senate district.
 - This new district shifts 10% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 54% Democratic district.
- As this is written, the declared candidates are: Kristin Alfheim (D-Appleton), Joseph Carman (D-Appleton), Dr. Anthony Phillips (R-Appleton), Blong Yang (R-Appleton).

30th Senate District – Green Bay and Suburbs

- Three incumbent senators have been drawn into this district – Eric Wimberger (R-Green Bay), Andre Jacque (R-De Pere), and Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay), however, none of them are running in this district. [Wimberger is running for re-election in the 2nd Senate district northwest of Green Bay, Jacque is running for Congress, and Cowles opted not to run for re-election.]
- This district includes most of the City of Green Bay, as well as suburban Allouez, Ashwaubenon, De Pere, and Bellevue). This district was previously comprised of area included in three separate Senate districts.
 - This new district shifts 7% in favor of Democrats. Based on the last two statewide elections, it is a 52% Democratic district.
- As this is written, the only declared candidates are Jamie Wall (D-Green Bay) and Jim Rafter (R-Green Bay).