

# Eau Claire County Democratic Party Coffee Klatch Notes

**Thursday, March 13, 2025**

Present: Kirk Anderson, Laura Benjamin, Nancy Brewster, Colleen Costa, Doug Crotty, Sharon Dillon, Jim Dunning, Bob Gaunley, Paul Gibson, Dave & Debby Gratz, Ann Heywood, Sharon Hildebrand, Lauren & Mike Hollars, Charlie Johnson, Tom Kristo, Bill Laman, Mike Lindsay, Beverly Litka, Ann McKinley, Dennis Myhre, Linda Norton, Connie Russell, Bob Shaw, Maureen Slauson, Liz Spencer, Charlie Warner, Eleanor Wolf, Jackie Young, Susie Zillmer

Guest: **Rebecca Cooke – 3<sup>rd</sup> CD**

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Next Coffee Klatch – Thursday, March 20, 10 a.m. – Noon**

**PLEASE** join virtually on Zoom: -- [Launch Meeting - Zoom](#)

We are ***meeting in-person*** at the Dem Resource Center, 440 Broadway St. but space is limited. Anyone not fully vaccinated must wear a mask. Please do not attend in person if you have any symptoms of COVID or flu.

Guest: **Jeremy Gragert – Citizen Action Northwest Co-op**

**Defend Democracy Rallies** – Wednesdays, 4 – 5:30 pm., Federal Building, 500 S. Barstow St, Eau Claire.

Protest the Trump administration's actions designed to destroy our country, our democracy, and the world order.

Make signs, raise your voices.

**Join the Movement** – Consumer groups are organizing national boycotts to protest corporate greed and corruption, and companies' rolling back of DEI initiatives.

March 21 – 28: Nestle Boycott

April 7 – 14: Walmart Boycott

April 18: Economic Blackout #2 – Buy nothing for 24 hours (limit spending to small local companies).

April 21 – 28: General Mills Boycott

**CV Citizens for Change** – This newly-formed local group discusses options for activism.

Tuesday, March 18, 6 p.m.; Bonds Social Club, 3732 Spooner Ave., Altoona. Nate Otto will present on "*From EC to DC: Winning back begins locally.*"

Tuesday, March 25, 6 p.m.; Brickhouse Pub & Grub (basement), Birch St. A facilitated peer-to-peer support gathering.

**Early Absentee Voting** – March 18 – 28.

**Hands Off Medicaid Town Hall** – Tuesday, March 25; 7 – 8:30 p.m.; Location TBD. Sponsored by Citizen Action.

Medicaid (BadgerCare) is under attack. Learn about Medicaid cuts, hear from our neighbors about what is at stake, and how we can get organized to fight back. Information about the event location will be sent later. Sign up now.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

**The Amazing Eau Claire Clean-up** – Saturday, April 19; 9 a.m. – Noon. The Eau Claire County Democrats will be cleaning up a nearby area around Chippewa and Niagara streets. Mark your calendar. Join friends in showing Dems care about our community. Look for the sign-up link in the E-Newsletter. Different shifts are available.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Tabling on Campus** – Our regional DPW organizer is looking for help with tabling at the UW Eau Claire and UW Stout campuses between now and the April election. If you can help, contact Dylan at 715-410-8116.

**Website** – Patti Horecki encouraged those who have written letters to the editor or opinion pieces to send them to her for posting on the Dems' website.

**Citizen Advisory Opportunities** – There are many ways citizens can contribute to the community through various appointed positions on boards, committees, commissions, and councils. All are encouraged to consider applying for vacant positions to get an inside look at how local government works.

[LINK](#) for City of Eau Claire Boards, Commissions and Committees.

[LINK](#) for Eau Claire County Boards, Commissions, and Councils. Currently, there are vacancies on the Aging & Disability Resource Center Board, the Airport Commission, the Conduct Inquiry Board, the County Housing Authority, and the Local Emergency Planning Committee.

## **RECOMMENDED READING, VIEWING**

Bernie Sanders - [VIDEO](#) of Sanders' "Stop the Oligarchy" tour rally in Altoona on March 8. Check out this [VIDEO](#) if you weren't able to attend this high energy event, or want to relive the magic. Also, see related [New Republic article](#). Unfortunately, the local media didn't cover this huge rally.

[VIDEO](#) – Representative John Larson (D-CT) pushing back against Musk's plan to privatize Social Security.

Substacks:

[Joyce Vance - Civil Discourse](#)

[Heather Cox Richardson - Letters from an American](#)

[Menomonee News Net](#) – An online newsletter with the goals of filling in the gaps in local news, promoting citizen journalism and supporting existing news sources.

## **RESOURCES**

[Civic Media](#) – Progressive news to inform progressive minds. Regular listeners highly recommend this program:

[Amicus: A Law Review with Jim Santelle](#) on Saturdays from 9 – 11 a.m. Get solid, factual information (not the hype) from a Wisconsin attorney.

[WPEN](#) – Keep up to date on the advocacy work of the Wisconsin Public Education Network.

[Goods Unite Us](#) – This website and app allows users to search brands to see which political party the company and/or its top level employees support with campaign donations. If corporations have a constitutional right to political speech, consumers have a right to hear what they're saying.

[Democracy Docket](#) – subscribe to a newsletter that covers the legal actions to fight back against the Trump administration's action to undermine our Democracy.

[Democrats Abroad](#) – Check out what democracy advocates are doing throughout the world.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Guest: Rebecca Cooke – 3<sup>rd</sup> CD**

Rebecca Cooke recently announced that she is again running to unseat Derrick Van Order as the 3<sup>rd</sup> CD representative in next year's election.

Cooke reviewed her vote-getting performance last year again DVO, out-performing Harris and Baldwin in some areas. Her plan is to continue the strategy to reach out to rural voters and emphasize support for farmers and rural health care access. Unlike DVO, she plans to host in-person town halls throughout the district. There's opportunity to capitalize on "buyers' remorse" among the Trump/DVO voters. She noted that she has an established campaign and is hoping to get unity from Democrats across the district.

### **Q& A – Topics covered:**

- Trumpster regrets – Will die-hard Trump voters ever really regret their choice? Some who might see the light: Union members fighting for the prevailing wage and other employee rights because DVO has opposed the PRO Act; Veterans who will be affected by the huge cuts to the VA Administration; conservative farmers hurt by tariffs and mass deportation threats; People who didn't vote for Musk and don't agree with what he is doing; lower and middle income workers who aren't really DVO's constituency. Like other Republicans, he votes for the interests of the wealthy and ultra-wealthy donors. This is a class war. Cooke pledges to continue to campaign on working class issues. Let's push the Path to Prosperity for all, which is not something Republicans talk about.
- Threats to our Democracy – People are already anticipating that the GOP will try to stop another presidential election in 2028. Oligarchs will be running our country. Will there be legal guardrails to stop it?
- "Flippable" counties in 3<sup>rd</sup> CD – some possibilities include Pierce, Grant, Vernon, Jackson.
- Independent voters – There are voters who don't identify officially as Democrats, but who support a values-first message, like that of Bernie Sanders.
- "Paid campaigners" accusation – DVO likes to say that campaigners for his opponents are paid. Although a few are paid to do literature drops, all of the campaigners are volunteers to talk directly to voters. It's the Republicans who fund paid staff.
- College voters – There are six UW campuses in the 3<sup>rd</sup> CD. Also, there are Technical Colleges that should be folded into the campaign reach, since those students mostly live in the surrounding communities. We shouldn't

assume young = liberal. They want a place where someone seriously listens to their issues and concerns, not just organizing “fun” events and buying pizza.

After her presentation, the group extended the discussion to talk about the divisive effect of multiple Democratic candidates in a primary and the need to make DVO “own” the VA cuts and holding him accountable for his votes. DVO has been complaining about the massive number of calls from constituents; his short-fused, thin-skinned response to criticism is showing.

### **Local Activism**

The Ides of Trump postcard campaign – Members were encouraged to participate in a nationwide event on March 15 to flood the White House with “You’re fired” and other resistance messages on postcards. The goal is to send 1 million+ postcards with the clear message to Donald Trump: You’re Fired. You’ve Failed. We Reject You.

ACLU – The local ACLU is reactivating by having Action Hours every two weeks on Wednesday nights, 6 p.m. at The Lazy Monk. The first meeting on March 12 drew so many people, they moved to the private meeting room.

5 Calls App – Stay informed with issues and be able to respond with calls to our representatives.

The national Indivisible has a guidebook for strategies and tips for fighting back. Right now, their website offers a Musk or Us March Recess Toolkit of ideas for action during the time Members of Congress will be back in their districts.

GOP MoCs have been advised by the party leadership to avoid town halls, causing some local constituents to hold a town hall and direct their concerns to an empty chair or an effigy of their representative.

The local Chippewa Valley Indivisible group is holding weekly meetings on Saturdays at 4 pm in Market on the River in downtown Chippewa Falls (drawing about 200 people) and Defend Democracy rallies every Wednesday from 4 – 5:30 p.m. in front of the Federal Building in downtown Eau Claire. There is interest in gathering earlier at 3:30 p.m. at Van Orden’s office on Barstow, a short walk from the Federal Building. Recruit your friends to join in raising our voices. Several members offered some observations and shared exchanges they had during the Wednesday afternoon protest.

- Some think Democrats lost based on their pro-choice stances.
- Young people don’t know about Nazis, so that reference doesn’t resonate with them.
- Young people don’t think things are so bad regarding civil rights. They don’t know the history of the Civil Rights movement.
- WEAU inaccurately reported that the event was organized by the Democratic Party.

All are encouraged to contact the Leader Telegram to inquire about why they didn’t cover the Bernie Sanders rally in Altoona a few weeks ago.

Democrats “not doing anything” – The array of non-partisan groups are working on the values espoused by the Democratic party. They are forming coalitions to build strength, but without the Democratic Party label.

### **STATE POLITICS**

Constitutional Amendment – Tell voters to vote NO on the amendment that’s on the April 1. See explanation from the League of Women Voters.

State Supreme Court Race – Views supporting Crawford

From retired Republican-appointed Dane County Circuit Court Judge Josann Reynolds

*“As a recently retired circuit court judge, I made it a priority to stay out of politics. I was appointed by Governor Walker and was twice elected to the bench by the citizens of Dane County. I recently returned from a trip out of the country and after watching the onslaught of TV ads about our upcoming Wisconsin Supreme Court election, I now feel compelled to speak. Judge Susan Crawford was my neighbor in the courthouse. We were not close and in fact we never shared a meal or so much as a phone call. I respected her completely as a jurist. She is not the one who is a politician in this race. She was never known as “Catch & Release Crawford” until Musk decided he wanted to buy another election, this time in our great State of Wisconsin. Anyone who understands our criminal justice system knows that the vast majority of criminal cases (up to 98%) are resolved by plea bargains that the parties bring to the judge. If this was not true, the system would be overwhelmed. In addition, a judge has absolutely no say in where an inmate is housed or lives following his or her release from prison. The DOC has absolute authority and control over their location. These attack ads are false, misleading and designed to play on voters’ emotions. The choice is clear in this race, you either want a jurist like Susan Crawford on our highest court, or you want a bought and paid for politician.”*

Share this statement and the facts here when talking with friends. THIS IS A CRUCIAL ELECTION!

Article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: David Lubar, Anoop Prakash and Tom Florsheim Guest columnists

Shake off that election fatigue and lock in! Another consequential election for Wisconsin is around the corner, taking place on April 1. Voters will elect a new member to the Wisconsin Supreme Court to fill the seat being vacated by Justice Ann Walsh Bradley, and the winner will set the balance of the court for years to come. Several of the important issues from the 2023 Supreme Court election, such as abortion and redistricting, will likely shape this contest, we would argue there are even bigger risks in play for the economic and civic health of our state. That's why our coalition of business leaders endorses Judge Susan Crawford, a balanced, nonpartisan jurist, to maintain the impartiality, fairness and trust in our judiciary that is essential for our state's economy to thrive. The role of the Supreme Court is far reaching, with implications for business and regulatory rulings, enforcement and administration of the rule of law and protecting business from partisan overreach by other branches of government. In addition, the court plays a critical role in reviewing civil rights matters and is charged with defending the integrity of our state constitution. Wisconsin needs a centrist, common sense Supreme Court A balanced court, one that is driven by centrist common sense rather than partisan doctrine, can be an enabler for business and economic growth. A balanced court ensures consistent application of the law, avoiding extreme swings in judicial philosophy that can disrupt business and environmental regulations. Consistent and predictable rulings also allow businesses to plan long-term investments and create jobs confidently and without fear of abrupt changes. A court that represents impartial views is also less likely to favor excessive government intervention or unchecked corporate power. It also fosters an environment where business 1/2 about:blank 3/16/25, 11:00 AM E: Ideas Lab owners can trust the judicial system to fairly resolve disputes, whether related to regulations, employment law, or contracts. Conversely, courts characterized by extreme views and overt influence from political forces can be destabilizing. We see this happening in real-time today in the state of North Carolina. There the balance of the court has shifted to the extreme right, and in short order has put a hold on the certification of a statewide election, shifted the balance of power away from the executive branch to the legislature in several areas, and ruled that the legislature can draw their own district maps without judicial oversight, essentially concentrating political power in one party in perpetuity. And North Carolina justices are just getting started. As pragmatic business people, we believe that past behavior is the best indicator of future actions, and we would ask all voters to consider the two Supreme Court candidates' political histories closely. Susan Crawford has reputation for upholding the rule of law Susan Crawford is a circuit court judge with an established reputation of being tough on crime and upholding the rule of law. She has clearly and consistently expressed the view that Supreme Court justices must be impartial and fair, use common sense, and not politicize the Constitution. Crawford's career has also been as a public servant and private attorney, rather than as a politician. She previously served as an attorney at the state government level, and had never run for partisan office or been involved in electoral politics until choosing to run for the Wisconsin Supreme Court in this election. Her opponent, Brad Schimel, is also circuit court judge. He has previously run for elected office twice as a Republican, serving as the state Attorney General for four years after his first run, and subsequently losing his re election bid. Since running as a GOP candidate in 2015, Schimel has further bolstered his partisan credentials, participating in the RNC convention, traveling to Washington D.C. for the 2025 inauguration, and actively campaigning with Turning Point Action to elect President Trump. He openly supported Trump's pardon of January 6 convicts and was recorded saying that 'another bloody revolution' was needed to reclaim freedom in America. We believe the contrast between them is clear and only Crawford promises the balance and impartiality that Wisconsin's economy needs. While both candidates have ideological leanings, Crawford's emphasis on judicial impartiality will achieve a far better balance for business than Schimel's firmly partisan positions and numerous obligations he has garnered from his overt political ties and affiliations in Washington. A balanced Wisconsin Supreme Court will ensure stability, predictability, fairness, and trust in the legal system factors that are crucial for businesses making long-term decisions on investment, hiring, and growth. We encourage you to cast your vote for Crawford, which is a vote for our economy and a vote to keep Washington politics out of Wisconsin courts.

Anoop Prakash, Tom Florsheim, and David Lubar, are members of the **Wisconsin Business Leaders for Democracy**, a bi-partisan group of business leaders focused on civic engagement and strengthening our democracy. Lubar is the president & CEO of Lubar & Company; Prakash is a manufacturing executive and Marine Corps veteran based in Milwaukee, and served in the administration of President George W. Bush; Florsheim is the CEO of WEYCO Group, based in Milwaukee.

## **NATIONAL POLITICS**

The effect of the massive cuts to the federal workforce has local impacts. Some have heard about fired workers moving to Mexico and people whose kids have decided against having a family. What is the ripple effect on the US workforce?

### **Quotes for our times:**

*The first step in a **fascist movement** is the combination under an energetic leader of a number of men who possess more than the average share of leisure, brutality, and stupidity. **The next step is to fascinate fools and muzzle the intelligent, by emotional excitement on the one hand and terrorism on the other.***

Bertrand Russell: Freedom, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen, Harcourt Brace, 1940.

*"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."* — Desmond Tutu