



WisPolitics.com/WisBusiness.com

The Post-Election Landscape

By Jeff Mayers, WisPolitics.com President



Divided government has returned to Wisconsin for the first time since 2009.

And that means the first gubernatorial transition since 2011.

Eight years ago, Milwaukee County Executive **Scott Walker** took over for Democratic Gov. **Jim Doyle**, who left office voluntarily after two terms.

Now it's **Tony Evers** taking over for Walker, defeated by the state school's superintendent in an election that saw Democrats sweep all the statewide races. U.S. Sen **Tammy Baldwin** easily won another six-year term, dispatching GOP state Sen. **Leah Vukmir** of Brookfield. **Josh Kaul**, a former federal prosecutor, upset Republican Attorney General **Brad Schimel** after one term. Democrats also won the offices of Treasurer and Secretary of State.

But Walker had a Legislature dominated by his own party after the 2010 elections and through the end of 2018. Evers will have to contend with a Legislature dominated by Republicans and led by two veteran leaders: Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos**, R-Rochester and Senate Majority Leader **Scott Fitzgerald**, R-Juneau. The previous Democratic governor, Doyle, enjoyed a Dem-controlled Legislature for his final two years in office.

Evers' collaborative style could come in handy when it comes to compromise on big issues like road funding. But others worry that if Senate Republicans and Assembly Republicans unite, the Legislature could continually frustrate Evers.

The two-year state budget will be a test.

Evers gets to introduce his budget soon, and he promised two-thirds funding of schools and a middle-class tax cut. Typically, governors get 80 percent of what they ask for from the

Legislature. And if they don't, they have one of the most powerful veto pens in the country.

The Joint Finance Committee will be led by two veteran co-chairs, state Rep. **John Nygren**, R-Marinette, and state Sen. **Alberta Darling**, R-River Hills. And Republicans will once again dominate the budget panel 12-4.

Republicans also hold wide majorities in the two houses. In the Senate, Republicans have 19 seats to the Dems' 14. In the Assembly, the GOP holds a 63-36 majority.

Democrats will have the same two leaders despite disappointing results on Nov. 6: Senate Minority Leader **Jennifer Shilling**, D- La Crosse; and Assembly Minority Leader **Gordon Hintz**, D-Oshkosh.

That means while Democrats in the Legislature can offer rhetorical help to Evers, he and his administration will have to do the heavy lifting.

After the Nov. 6 election, Evers got to work putting together a new administration. His transition team led was led by women.

He has named **Maggie Gau**, his campaign manager and a former legislative aide, as his chief of staff. Originally of Wausau, Gau formerly served as chief of staff for state Rep. **Chris Taylor**, D-Madison, and state Sen. **Janis Ringhand**, D-Evansville, and previously worked for former state Rep. **Ann Hrachuck**, D-Balsam Lake. Before that, Gau was deputy state political director on President Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign.

And Evers' transition director was **JoAnne Anton**, a top aide to ex-U.S. Sen. **Herb Kohl**. The deputy transition director was **Tia Torhorst**, the director of Strategic Partnerships for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater

Milwaukee who managed the 2016 re-election campaign of Milwaukee County Executive **Chris Abele**.

Also in the mix were a healthy number of ex-Doyle agency leaders. **Aaron Olver**, the managing director of the University Research Park and a former Commerce secretary under Doyle, assisted Evers with personnel recruitment.

Olver led a 20-person Personnel Advisory Council that will work with making sure the incoming administration appointees reflect talent from around the state.

Among the council members were some former top Doyle appointees:

» **Frank Busalacchi**, former DOT secretary under Doyle.

» **Sean Dilweg**, former Wisconsin Insurance commissioner, now senior vice president government relations for MGIC.

» **Roberta Gassman**, former Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development secretary.

» **Donsia Hill**, former Department of Regulation and Licensing secretary.

» And **Ruben Anthony Jr.**, head of the Urban League of Greater Madison and a former top Department of Transportation official under Doyle.

That doesn't mean the new administration will be Doyle 2.0. But insiders say it's natural to tap the knowledge of veterans of past administrations. Evers, a less partisan figure, is seen as charting his own course.

Jeff Mayers is president of WisPolitics.com and WisBusiness.com. The websites are specialty online new organizations that provide subscriber services and organize news events in Madison, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C.