

## GUEST COLUMN

# Mitch Henck: Dallet's big win has the GOP on edge

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Outspoken Wisconsin Republican operative Mike Mikalsen is not mincing words. Smarting from the conservative candidate's 12-point defeat in the Wisconsin Supreme Court race on Tuesday, Mikalsen says, "Our side was too soft."

Mikalsen believes advocates for conservative Judge Michael Screnock let Milwaukee County Judge Rebecca Dallet off the hook. In a post-primary fundraiser in San Francisco, Dallet had told attendees, "Your values are our Wisconsin values that we've lost along the way."

Says Mikalsen, the veteran chief of staff for state Sen. Steve Nass, R-Whitewater: "They never ran that in an ad anywhere! Here we had a liberal Milwaukee judge who appealed to San Francisco values and we do nothing."

"Republicans can't out-Democrat the Democrats," he adds.

But veteran GOP strategist Mark Graul of Arena Strategies says Dallet actually ran a very smart campaign: "She ran a campaign similar to the way conservative Supreme Court candidates have done in the past." Graul points out Dallet's message was that she was tough on crime and that her opponent had no experience as a prosecutor. In fact, Dallet won 24 counties Donald Trump carried in 2016.

Dallet won Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago counties. That is death for a conservative Supreme Court candidate.

Veteran GOP strategist and former state lawmaker Joe Handrick says Screnock's defeat cannot be blamed on a huge Dane County turnout for Dallet: "Screnock lost Dane by 82,000 votes but lost the state by 115,000," Handrick tweeted. "This is unlike many Dem wins where their entire margin comes from Dane."

So why were Republican voters so complacent? Mikalsen went door to door for Screnock in the Fox Valley and heard plenty of frustration with national Republicans. "They kept bringing up Republican failures on health care and the horrible omnibus budget," he says. "Voters are not happy."

If that did quell GOP enthusiasm in a lower turnout spring election, Gov. Scott Walker is warning his Republican Party of a possible blue wave in Wisconsin.

“The far left is motivated by anger and hatred,” the governor tweeted Election Night. “Let’s counter it with optimism and organization.”

To say that progressive Democrats feel anger and hatred toward Walker and Trump may be understating it. Disgust and nausea may be closer to the truth.

Joe Wineke, a former Democratic state senator and state party chairman, says, “It is now Donald Trump’s party, and Republicans are reaping what they sowed.” Wineke adds that it isn’t just crazy liberals going against Trump, because there aren’t enough of them.

“It’s moderates and independents and thinking Republicans who are saying enough is enough,” he says.

Mikalsen fears if Democrats take back power in Wisconsin, they could undo everything Walker and his followers have accomplished in one legislative session.

“It’s time to punch,” he says. “If we are going to lose, let’s do it with our boots on.”

Mikalsen says the U.S. Senate should end the filibuster rule so conservatives have a better chance of getting their agenda passed. If not, he fears Republicans will stay home. If that happens, a blue wave could turn into a hurricane.

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