

Fall 2022

# CONSERVATION VOTER



Wisconsin  
Conservation  
Voters



## The Elections

Where we stand and  
what's next



Progress on the  
issues you care  
about



## Wisconsin Native Vote

The program's biggest  
year ever

# A message from the Executive Director

Kerry Schumann

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I truly believe you saved our democracy on November 8.

By re-electing Gov. Tony Evers, holding off a veto-proof majority, and re-electing Attorney General Josh Kaul, the people of Wisconsin kept our state from veering off onto a truly dangerous path.

GOP leaders promised under Republican control they would pass a package of anti-voter bills that would have made it nearly impossible to elect leaders who support clean water, clean energy, and fair democracy. It would have been devastating for conservation in Wisconsin, and it would have set the stage for undermining the will of the people in the 2024 presidential election.

But that didn't happen.

Instead, we re-elected a true conservation champion to the office of Governor, with a mandate to keep moving forward on critical executive action to advance Wisconsin's clean energy future and keep working to clean up our water. And, electing a new justice to the state Supreme Court in April presents a real opportunity to challenge Wisconsin's extreme gerrymander and win fair maps.

There is broad public support for a clean energy future, clean water, and a democracy that works for the people it represents. We held onto our power to keep building the future we so desperately want for our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

You did it. Keep fighting with us. Wisconsin Conservation Voters will continue to be here for you and together, we will keep watch, we will raise our voices, we will vote, and we will protect the Wisconsin we love.



**SUPPORT  
OUR  
WORK**

# THE ELECTIONS

Where we stand and what's next

Newly re-elected Gov. Tony Evers may have said it best (or at least in a very Wisconsin way): “We’re gonna polka tonight and get back to work tomorrow!”

It’s a funny line, sure, but it’s an apt description for what is happening right now at Wisconsin Conservation Voters post midterm elections.

First things first: thank you! Thank you for making this work possible. It was such a gift knowing we had the resources to run an effective, winning program. None of this would be possible without your support and the support of your fellow members and supporters.

What an incredible set of wins for climate and our democracy! We re-elected Gov. Tony Evers and Attorney General Josh Kaul and protected the governor’s veto in the legislature. The ramifications of this victory are enormous, and mean we will continue to work with Gov. Evers and other elected leaders to reduce our dependence on polluting fossil fuels, invest in safe drinking water protections, and make sure we rebuild an equitable democracy.

Let me share a few highlights from our work this cycle – work you made possible:

- Wisconsin Conservation Voters won all but one of our priority races. In almost every place where we knocked on doors, ran an ambitious mail and digital ad program, sent texts to voters, and engaged voters in their communities, we won! These were very close races, like re-electing Rep.

Steve Doyle in La Crosse County. Every voter contact we made was incredibly important and helped push Rep. Doyle and other candidates over the finish line.

- We ran one of the largest independent programs in Wisconsin, spending \$3.8 million to ensure we can keep moving forward on climate and clean water.
- We had one of the largest door-to-door canvass programs in the state, knocking on almost 390,000 doors. There are few things more impactful in elections than that person-to-person contact, and we are incredibly proud to have used that door knocking to propel Gov. Evers and key legislative candidates to victory.
- We ran one of the biggest independent programs to re-elect the Attorney General. We are thrilled



Heading out to talk to voters in Onalaska, where we successfully re-elected Rep. Steve Doyle.

that Attorney General Kaul won and can continue his work to hold polluters accountable and defend our democratic systems. We invested more than \$189,000 on digital ads and text messages in that race and talked with voters about him at the doors.

**Continued on page 9.**

**Your support, your action, and your love for Wisconsin has fueled victories for our environment and democracy.**



Together, we can keep the momentum strong, and build a healthy future for the state we love. Give a gift today and support our work at [conservationvoters.org/donate](https://conservationvoters.org/donate).



# Progress on the issues you care about

This year has proven it's possible to make progress in protecting our water and acting on climate change, even with anti-conservation decision makers controlling the legislature. Because of your support, we've achieved impressive victories at all levels of government across our issue campaigns. Here are a few of our most exciting wins before the election.

## The Inflation Reduction Act

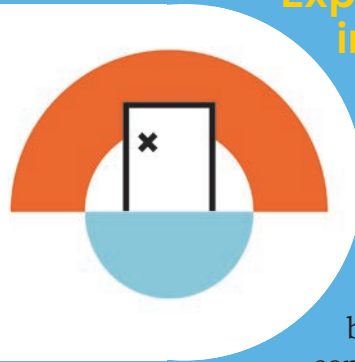
From its beginnings as Build Back Better to its final passage as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the U.S. passed the largest investment in climate action ever, putting the country on the path to cutting climate pollution 40 percent by 2030. Through the Justice40 initiative, for the first time in our nation's history, the federal government has made it a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments will flow to communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. The IRA will help make that a reality.



**CLEAN  
ENERGY  
FOR ALL**

## Expanded early voting hours in Green Bay

**DEMOCRACY  
FOR ALL**



After years working shoulder-to-shoulder with students, labor members, disability advocates, Wisconsin Conservation Voters members, and many others, we were able to expand early voting in the City of Green Bay. The very limited options for early voting in Green Bay had long been a concern of local residents and students. The combined organizing efforts of these diverse groups –

along with the support of Green Bay Clerk Celestine Jeffreys – led to a unanimous vote to expand early voting hours and access to the ballot box.

"This decision enhances our freedom to vote by expanding early voting access and working to ensure all Green Bay residents have equal access to cast their vote," said Organizing Director Casey Hicks.

## The fight for clean drinking water

With the passage of PFAS standards for drinking water this past spring, Wisconsin took a giant step forward in protecting your water from these highly toxic chemicals. Now, as those standards take effect and municipalities begin testing for PFAS in drinking water, we are beginning to see just how widespread the problem is, and how much more work we need to do to protect the health of Wisconsinites.



**CLEAN  
WATER  
FOR ALL**

Recently, the DNR launched an interactive tool with information about PFAS throughout Wisconsin.

**Continued on page 10.**



## WISCONSIN NATIVE VOTE IS GROWING

This year’s Wisconsin Native Vote program, run by our sister 501c3 organization Wisconsin Conservation Voices, was notable for deeper partnerships with tribal governments and leaders than ever before, engagement of artists and influencers, and thousands of one-on-one conversations with voters.

Ultimately, the work of Native Vote led to high turnout in tribal communities. In a year when overall voter turnout declined by 2.7 percent from 2018 in Wisconsin, turnout in Native American communities remained steady.

### Urban Native Vote Organizer Anne Egan-Waukau, Menominee

“I remember walking into my polling place years ago and being told by the poll worker that Indians can’t vote. At Wisconsin Native Vote, we work to ensure that will never happen again – and that Native people feel comfortable and proud to cast their vote.”

The Native Vote team worked with 10 of the 11 federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. We engaged tribal leaders as spokespeople and worked with tribal governments to reach their members through mail, newsletters, and events. We engaged artists and influencers, including commissioning a prominent Ojibwe/Ho-Chunk artist, Christopher Sweet, to create a mural in Milwaukee and local artists to post original content on social media. We also worked with the Milwaukee Bucks who created a video with their Native American player, MarJon Beauchamp, to promote voting.

The Native Vote team focused heavily on direct voter contact. It was great to be back at pow wows and other events after the pandemic shut those



events down in 2020-21. We asked voters at events to sign pledge-to-vote cards and followed up with them in the week leading up to the elections. We also knocked on

4,500 doors in tribal communities, distributing voter information and fun gift bags.

We educated voters through mail and social services, placing voter education literature in 500 tribal pharmacy boxes and 2,750 elder food boxes. Through our close partnerships with tribal governments, we helped multiple nations mail a total of 46,000 pieces to their members – reaching 23,000 households. This allowed us to reach voters who live throughout the state – not only on tribal reservations.

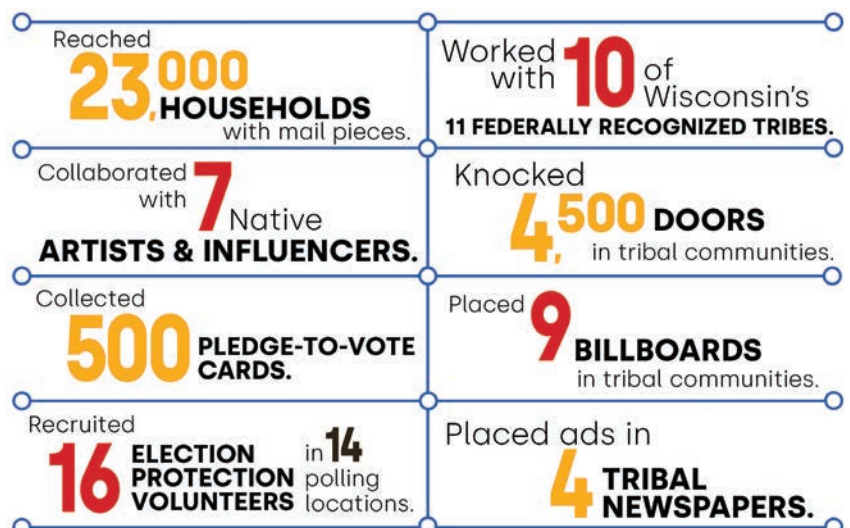
Finally, we focused on uplifting the voices and images of tribal leaders and community members, building on the pride Native people feel about their culture and people. We put up nine billboards featuring respected community members who represented veterans, elders, water walkers, and youth. We used those same images in mail pieces and made video and digital ads featuring tribal leaders that were viewed over 640,000 times.

From the summer pow wow circuit to the mural unveiling to door-knocking, the Native Vote team connected with voters about the issues they care about and helped make sure voters made it to the polls. We are so proud of the impact of Native Vote on voter turnout and the ability of this program to celebrate Wisconsin's Native American cultures and people!

All of this work is made possible by your generous giving. The Native Vote program is an example of how your commitment is helping us build a movement through deep relationships and trust alongside tribal nations. Visit [conservationvoices.org/nativevote](https://conservationvoices.org/nativevote) for more information on the Native Vote program. While there, check out the work Wisconsin Conservation Voices does throughout the year!

### Clockwise from top

Artist Christopher Sweet (Ho-Chunk/Ojibwe) in front of his mural; Native Vote by the numbers; Teenagers at the Bad River Pow wow



# Up next: fixing the high court

The upcoming April election could make it or break it for gerrymandered districts

With the latest election over, we're already gearing up for the next one. And, again, it's an important one that will shape Wisconsin's future for many years to come. Indeed, it's an opportunity to throw out the partisan gerrymandered maps created by the State Legislature and redraw fair ones – a true opportunity to rebuild Wisconsin's democracy so that it works for all of us.

This is our best shot at finally beginning to fix the most extreme gerrymander in the nation and restore just representation to all of us, so that we can fairly choose our representatives – not the other way around. Just as this year saw the biggest fall election program in our organization's history, next year, with your help, we'll seek to run our biggest spring election program.

From protecting democracy to holding polluters accountable, the Wisconsin State Supreme Court wields significant power. It's essential to elect a justice who will ignore the partisan gamesmanship being wrought by legislative leadership and make decisions based on law and serving the people of Wisconsin.

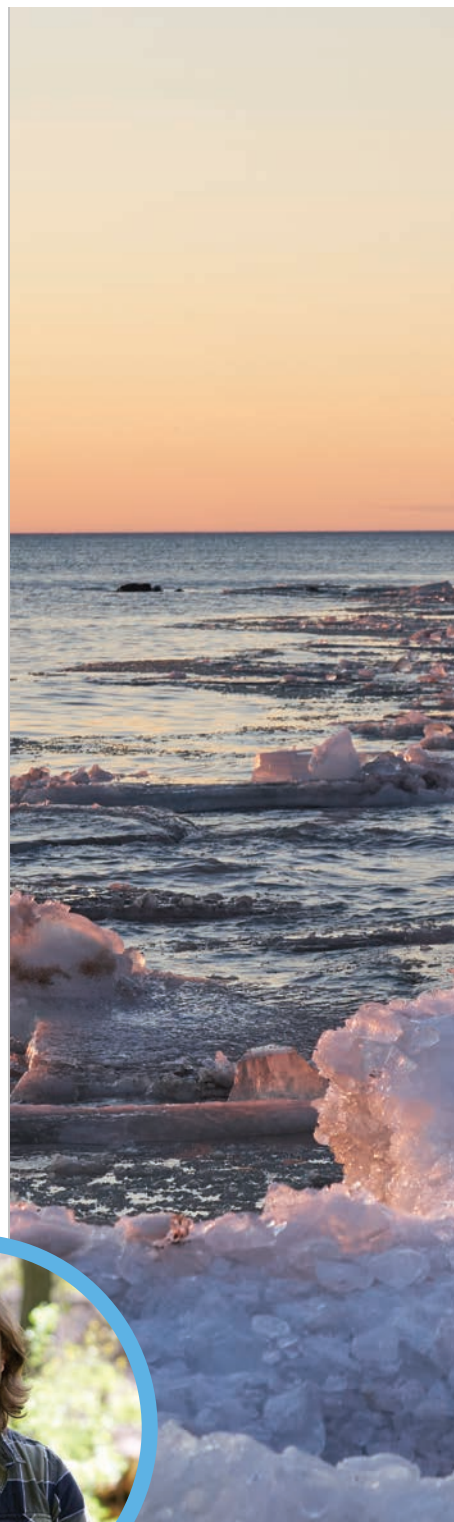
The April election will determine control of the Supreme Court. The 4-3 majority today nearly always takes its cues from radically conservative policy-makers, donors, and think tanks. In April 2020, we helped propel Justice Jill Karofsky to her seat on the court. Of course, as is almost always the case now, we expect the margins will be slimmer than ever.

Even though the last election is still shaking in our bones, it's time to start again with a strategic and robust campaign to elect a justice who cares about making decisions that help everyone, not just rich donors. We'll be updating you throughout the campaign. For now, set your calendars for the Primary Election on Feb. 21, 2023, and the Spring General Election on April 4, 2023.

In the meantime, your support will help build a program big and effective enough to finally begin to dismantle the gerrymander!

## Deputy Director Seth Hoffmeister

"This fall, we saw the impact we can make when we go door-to-door and have deep conversations with voters. We will build on that momentum this spring and work to elect a candidate who has our best interest in mind."





# THE ELECTIONS

Continued from page 3.

We know that turnout was one of the key factors in these wins. From early information, it looks like turnout from young people, particularly students, was high. We specifically focused on college students with messages about climate justice – an issue that is top of mind for young people – exposing Tim Michels’ role in building pipelines that harm the environment and disregard tribal sovereignty.

I’m especially proud that we focused so much of our work on the positives – letting voters know how our candidates are standing up for them and their quality of life. It provided a stark contrast to messaging from the radical MAGA folks who doubled down on racism, fear, and conspiracy theories.

The bottom line is we ran the most robust election campaign in our organization’s history and re-elected a governor who promised to defend our freedom to vote, protect our waters, and fight for a sustainable Wisconsin – and who has delivered on that promise. It is clear the people of Wisconsin want leaders who will work for equitable solutions to the climate crisis and rebuild a democracy in Wisconsin that works for everyone.

This is a victory for the people of Wisconsin. We are grateful to our dedicated members,



supporters, and volunteers who committed countless hours to reaching voters and fighting for the Wisconsin we love. This achievement was possible because we united around our shared goals and aspirations. Together, we can build a brighter future for Wisconsin.

Now, our focus turns to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The April election will determine control of

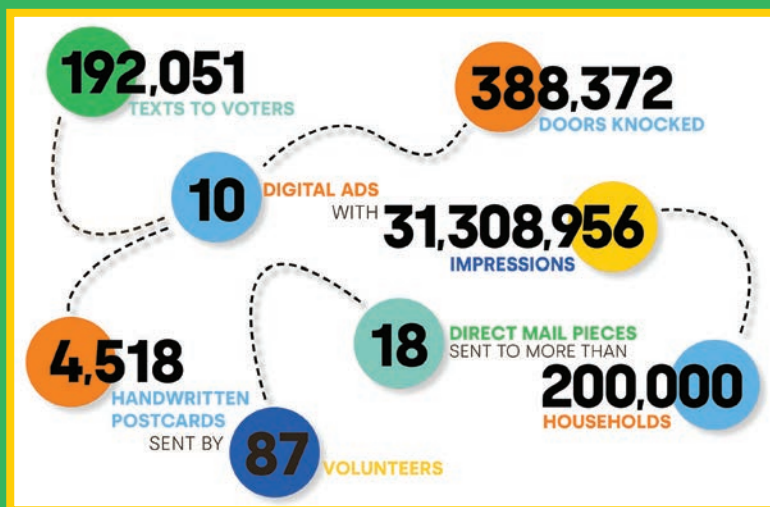


## Executive Director Kerry Schumann

"I'm especially proud that we focused so much of our work on the positives – letting voters know how our candidates are standing up for them and their quality of life."

the court. Right now, the 4-3 majority often sides with corporate polluters and against democracy. That must change if we are to rebuild a democracy for all in Wisconsin.

Your support will be critical in the coming months. We have a strong spring election plan and we’ve helped propel a Supreme Court justice to victory before. Thank you for being a conservation voter, and congratulations on a successful mid-term election!



The team getting ready for GOTV (left); the program by the numbers (right)

# PROGRESS ON THE ISSUES

Continued from page 5.

The PFAS Interactive Data Viewer combines information from multiple sources into one tool to allow users to more easily understand what is known about PFAS in Wisconsin. The tool includes locations with known contamination, PFAS-related fish and game consumption advisories, and waterbodies sampled during monitoring.



**PFAS  
Interactive  
Data Viewer**

The DNR also restarted rulemaking for PFAS in groundwater – responding to new health advisories issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. It was your hard work that led to the passage of drinking water standards for PFAS – speaking at hearings, signing petitions, talking with your decision makers. Soon, we'll be asking you to again speak up and help ensure standards for groundwater, so that we solve the problem, rather than simply treating water that is already contaminated.

**Well  
Compensation  
Grant Program**



If you or anyone you know has a private well contaminated with PFAS (or other contaminants), Gov. Evers launched a new Well

Compensation Grant Program to help private well owners treat or replace their wells.



## **Government Affairs Director Jennifer Giegerich**

“Months of advocacy from impacted communities, our members, and allied stakeholders have elevated the issue of PFAS and clean water across the state. We will continue to keep this issue in the spotlight.”

# THE GREEN TIE GALA

## An unforgettable night

Conservation leaders, activists, partner organizations, and volunteers from across Wisconsin came together for the Eighth Annual Green Tie Gala on Sept. 22, and it was an inspiring night.

After several years of virtual events, it was wonderful to gather in-person at Milwaukee's Discovery World on the shore of Lake Michigan to celebrate victories, get fired up for the election, and warmly

reconnect with familiar friends while making new ones.

Attorney General Josh Kaul delivered a powerful keynote. He has been an enormous ally and conservation champion in the courts. Gov. Tony Evers and Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes sent video messages reminding us of all that was at stake in the election.

We were proud to present Conservation Action Awards to UW-Madison student activist Stephanie Salgado and Wausau Mayor Katie Rosenberg for their important work on climate change and water quality. Progressive leader Matt Rothschild delivered a stirring defense of democracy while accepting our Green Tie Award.

A special thanks to our fantastic host Lindsay Wood Davis and all our wonderful sponsors. We hope you will join us next time!

### Clockwise from top

Group photo at the end of the night; the three award winners:

Stephanie Salgado, Wausau Mayor Katie Rosenberg, and Matt Rothschild; the crowd watching the speeches



### A special word of thanks to the following lead sponsors:

Brico Fund, Don and Mary Stirling, Jeff Rusinow and Jen Ellis, SC Johnson, Tory Vollrath and John Mathwick, William Lynch, Joel and Ann Rivlin, Karen and Martin Voss



**Wisconsin Conservation Voters**

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## A UNIQUE WAY TO GIVE

Act by Dec. 31 and give a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA

You can support Wisconsin Native Vote, work to improve public health, protect natural resources, and promote a robust democracy in Wisconsin with a tax-smart gift to our sister organization Wisconsin Conservation Voices.

Donors aged 70.5 years or older can contribute money or stock directly to Wisconsin

Conservation Voices (a tax-exempt, 501(c)3 organization, EIN 73-1628891) from a retirement plan.

Because your contribution counts toward your required minimum distribution but does not count as taxable income to you, you could realize a tax benefit even if you don't itemize. Contact your plan administrator to request the appropriate form to make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD).

Visit [conservationvoices.org/give](https://conservationvoices.org/give) to learn more!

*This information is for educational purposes only and should not be considered tax or legal advice. Please consult with your financial and/or legal advisor.*