

Nanette Bulebosh

27th District Wisconsin State Assembly Announcement Speech

June 13, 2016

Elkhart Lake, WI

Good morning. My name is Nanette Bulebosh. I am a teacher, a librarian, a writer, the proud mother of two smart and beautiful children, partner of a very hard-working farmer, and a 40-year resident of this state.

And I am so proud, and so ready, to announce my candidacy for the 27th District of the Wisconsin State Assembly.

Isn't this (Elkhart Lake Village Park) a beautiful setting? I appreciate village officials allowing me to do this here because this park has special meaning for me. Fifteen years ago I was part of a group of parents who renovated this park. We were a group of mothers who met in each other's houses while our children played. We talked and found we all agreed that the playground equipment here needed to be replaced. One of us said, "Why don't *we* do it?" And soon we hatched a plan, came up with a name, wrote a vision statement – that was my job – and then put our plan in place.

After about a year of raising money and generating community support, we had our Build Day and, with the help of our husbands, some very generous vendors, and a lot of volunteers, put up most of this equipment in one day. That was in 2002, and this park has been busy ever since. My own children played here. For a while I worked in that library, and every time I came to work, and saw kids playing here, I'd smile. I still do.

Things like this happen in Wisconsin all the time. It just takes a group of people who care about their neighborhood, and want to make it better. Their differences don't matter. Their political affiliations don't matter. They share a goal and figure out how to achieve it. That's what matters.

I tell you this because I've watched Wisconsin politics for a long time, and it seems to me that the people working for us in Madison used to do this kind of thing more often and much better than they do now.

Watching Politics as a Journalist

I began watching Wisconsin's politics when I first moved here from Illinois with my parents in the late 1970s. I had just finished high school and enrolled in Lakeland College. I worked my way through college with different jobs, but my favorite was working as a reporter for WHBL Radio in Sheboygan. I wrote for radio and newspapers off and on until 1993. It was fun work because I got to meet so many interesting people.

I remember my first political interview. It was 1978, and my boss at WHBL told me to interview a man running for governor.

"No one gives him a chance," he said, "but he's in town, so go get a sound-bite."

"What does he look like?" I asked.

"Just look for the red vest."

That's how I met Lee Dreyfus and his Whistle Stop campaign. He had little money, but he knew how to get attention, and became Wisconsin's 40th governor.

I also met Tommy Thompson running for his first term as governor in 1986. That was at the Elks Club on Erie Avenue. I met Congressman Tom Petri many times, including right after he was elected to complete the term of Congressman Bill Steiger. I met Senators Proxmire, Kohl and Kasten. And I met state lawmakers Carl Otte, Will Turba, Steve Kestell, Cal Potter and Jim Baumgart.

These gentlemen were always kind to me, and I learned so much watching them and writing about them. I watched how they talked to people and how they listened.

When I look back at those years and compare them to today, I'm struck by how different the political climate is now. I wonder if some of those Republicans could even get elected by their own party today.

After all, Gov. Dreyfus signed the first state-wide gay rights bill in 1982.

Gov. Thompson pushed for high-speed rail for years before our current governor opposed it.

And Congressman Petri introduced the Multicare Act of 1994, which called for or government-run health insurance programs, and even included an individual mandate.

I'm not saying I agree with all of these Republicans' political views, and I doubt they'd agree with mine.

But time after time, when I look at politics today, I see Democrats defending things that were once championed by Republicans. They were right to champion these things. The fact that no one in their party does now is a measure of how much has changed.

Public Education Cuts

One of the biggest changes is the drop in support for public education, my number one reason for running. Governor Walker has more from public schools than any other Wisconsin governor. This is hurting local districts, families, students *and* Wisconsin taxpayers.

The latest education bill will take \$800 million of taxpayer money from public K-12 education and give it to private schools. Private School Choice is now 25 years old, and bigger than ever, but no study has shown it improves learning. Not one. Instead, studies found a very high failure rate.

Nearly 4 out of every 10 private voucher schools in Milwaukee have closed since the program began. That's a pretty astounding figure. All that taxpayer money, now gone.

I keep thinking to myself, "Where's the accountability?"

With public schools, if you don't like something, you can go to the school board and voice your complaint. You can run for school board yourself, as I did. I served on the Elkhart Lake Glenbeulah School board for two terms. Their meetings are open. Records are public. You can walk into the office on any day and ask to see the budget.

Why can't we do the same thing with voucher schools, which also get taxpayer money?

Struggling Families

I'm also concerned about the fact that so many Wisconsinites are still struggling just to make ends meet, even if they work full time. We need family supporting jobs. Since Walker signed the Right to Work law a year ago, layoffs are up,

incomes are stagnant or failing, and poverty has increased. We're dead last in new business start-ups and 37th in the nation in private sector job growth.

I read recently that *CEO Magazine* rates Wisconsin the 12th best for business. That's great to know. I got to interview a lot of CEOs when I was a reporter and I respect what they do, the jobs they create.

But they are not the only voices we need to hear from. What about people trying to pay their health care bills? What about people who have to drive these roads - now the 4th worst in the country - every day?

What about people in rural areas who still can't get affordable broadband at a decent speed?

And what about the people still making minimum wage? They're not all teenagers. They're often parents, and right now, while many of us are enjoying the beginning of summer vacation, they're stressed out because now they have to find child care for their young children at home.

The *Capitol Times* reported just this weekend that one in five Wisconsin children faces food insecurity. One in three if you're African American, Hispanic or have a single parent. If this state really wants to keep young families, I think it should look at things like childhood hunger, and health care and affordable child care.

It should think about maybe finally accepting that half a billion dollars in Medicaid money so 80,000 more people could be covered by health insurance.

It should look at college student debt. Democrats offered a plan to help graduates refinance college loans, but the majority party wouldn't take it up.

Early childhood education is one of the best investments you can make, but parents have a hard time finding quality teachers at an affordable price. Affordable child care, just like refinancing student debt, is an economic growth issue. These initiatives help build the middle class. Assembly Democrats tried to bring back funding to a child care program started by Tommy Thompson, but Republicans stopped it

Loss of Local Control

Finally, we should also be concerned about the loss of local control. In the last few years, Republicans passed over 100 bills undermining the decision making power

of municipal governments. These bills affect our schools, our natural resources, public safety and health.

I talked earlier of the political celebrities I got to meet as a reporter, but most of my time back then was spent covering local government. I've been to meetings in nearly every city, village or town hall in this county, and several in Manitowoc too. Local officials work long hours, for little or no pay. They do it because they truly care about their communities.

But now the state has usurped local decisions on shoreland zoning and other environmental issues. This is an issue that could affect three beautiful lakes right here – Elkhart Lake, Little Elkhart Lake and Crystal, and I'm very concerned.

Wisconsin used to be the gold standard of clean politics. We were what other states wanted to emulate. But many things have happened in the last six years to undermine people's trust.

Former State Senator Tim Cullen discusses this in his new book, Ringside Seat: Wisconsin Politics, the 1970s and Scott Walker. He is familiar with the policies of Walker's ten predecessors in the state house. They all had different approaches to governing but, in Cullen's mind, all of them were uniters, men who truly wanted to unite the state. Walker is the opposite, Cullen says, someone who worked from Day One to divide us.

That's not the Wisconsin way. That's not the Wisconsin I moved into in 1976, and I don't believe that the residents of the 27th District are comfortable with it either.

A member of Walker's cabinet recently said we need to have family conversation about our roads. I agree. We also need a family conversation about voter access, open records laws, university funding, DNR inspections, and so much more.

But here's the thing about family conversations. If they're going to work, you have to invite *everybody* to the table!

I intend to spend my time between now and Nov. 8 meeting as many people as I can, and doing a lot of listening. Two things I learned to do in all three of my careers - teacher, librarian, and reporter – are how to ask a lot of questions, and how to listen.

I want to thank all of you for coming here on a summer morning. I'd also like to thank my family for their support. Hans took a break from making hay. This is a

busy time for him. We celebrated our 20th anniversary two weeks ago. John and Simone both should be at work right now. They have four jobs between the two of them at local shops and resorts. Clearly they take after their dad. I am so proud of who they're becoming.

A campaign like this is going to need a lot of help, so if you see my friend John with a sign-up sheet for volunteers, please let us know how you can help. And, as much as I am in total agreement with Sen. Bernie Sanders on the need to get money out of politics, we need to play by the rules in place today. Contributions of any size are welcome, either a check or through our *Nanette for Assembly* ActBlue account.

One of the slogans I've started using is "We have it in our power." It comes from Thomas Paine's "We have it in our power to begin the world anew." I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't believe that was true.

If we unite, if we talk to our neighbors, if we speak out and write letters, if we vote, if we help our neighbors vote, I think we *can* take this state back. We have it in our power to make Wisconsin work for all of us.