



July 21, 2022

Fellow Republicans:

This election year has been full of surprises and new challenges for the Republican Party, and we have recently received many questions about how the process of endorsement works, how it differs from state endorsement, and even why we have chosen to endorse at all. We want to recognize the many different opinions of our members and be transparent about how the endorsement vote is considered and conducted, as well as how we came to our decisions. In an effort to answer many questions at once, we'd like to provide the following information which we hope is helpful to those who are confused or concerned.

### **What's Up With Endorsement?**

Political parties across the spectrum often endorse candidates to inform the supporters of that party and strengthen their chances of winning an election. Without endorsement, it's common to see political parties throw a wrench in their own chances of success because of a split vote. Endorsements are also very helpful in non-partisan races so voters know who aligns more with their political values even when they're not declaring a party.

The Republican Party of Kenosha County (RPKC) is allowed to endorse candidates at the municipal and county levels, as well as for state Senate and state Assembly districts within Kenosha County. We cannot endorse in federal or statewide elections. That's why you won't see an endorsement from us for Governor, Lt. Governor, US Senate, etc. However, if the Republican Party of Wisconsin (RPW) or the First Congressional District of Wisconsin (CD1) endorses a candidate, those endorsements cascade down to the RPKC. That's why we have also announced our endorsement for Ron Johnson and Orlando Owens.

There are many Republican, Republican-leaning, and swing voters who wait for our endorsements before making their final voting decisions. These people are often well-informed, but also want to ensure that they aren't missing critical information, such as if a candidate doesn't have a financial pathway to win, or has been dishonest about their background, agenda, or conservative values.

### **What About No Endorsement?**

Both the RPKC and RPW are not required to endorse anyone. We can endorse one person, endorse multiple candidates, or choose not to endorse anyone at all. The county level process for endorsement works differently than the state level, in that the endorsement decision is made by the RPKC Executive Board based on the current political situation and the trustworthiness and electability of available candidates. Each candidate is considered independently of the others, and they are considered for endorsement regardless of whether they formally applied for endorsement.

**P.O. Box 853 · Kenosha, WI 53141 · 262.697.6144**

**[www.kenosha.gop](http://www.kenosha.gop) · [info@kenosha.gop](mailto:info@kenosha.gop)**

*Paid for by Republican Party of Kenosha County, Erin Decker, Chair.*



Just like at the state convention, endorsement is decided on with a 60% vote from those on the Executive Board, which is a difficult bar to clear for most candidates. The endorsement vote is taken by secret ballot and votes are counted by an agreed upon delegate from outside the county. This is to ensure the members of the Executive Board do not know who voted for whom, nor do they know the breakdown of how many votes each candidate received.

### **I Thought There Was a Resolution for “No Endorsement” at Caucus.**

A resolution was passed at the 2022 RPKC caucus, the content of which was specifically to add the option of “No Endorsement” at the state convention, not to eliminate endorsement entirely for the RPKC or RPW. Keep in mind that resolutions are not policy, and they do not change any process, by-law, or element in the RPKC or RPW constitution. That said, during the RPKC’s endorsement vote, the members of the Executive Board were given a “no endorsement” option.

### **Why Did We Endorse Who We Did?**

Through research and campaign strategies, the RPKC works to ensure that we are not endorsing RINOs (Republican In Name Only) or unqualified candidates. We all know how much misinformation and propaganda is out there, so we work tirelessly to verify our information, sources, and the claims of candidates.

We’ve had many questions about our decision to endorse David Zoerner for Sheriff, so we’d like to make available the information that was considered when deciding whether to endorse or not endorse each candidate.

- **David Zoerner** is the only candidate who has command and supervisory experience. In addition to his four years of experience as a military police officer, Dave has been a deputy in the Kenosha Sheriff Department for 23 years, 11 of which have been in a supervisory role. He has worked in every division of the Sheriff’s Department: Patrol, Civil Process, and Detentions, and he has first-hand experience in a wide variety of law enforcement specialties such as Drone Operation and Hostage Negotiation. David has committed himself to higher education as well—he has a degree in Political Science and is working toward his Master’s in Police Administration. He’s also a veteran Marine, and proudly served as the Presidential Guard (Reagan and Bush 41) during his service. He is heavily involved in community service, including the Opioid Task Force, Women and Children’s Horizons, and the Kenosha County Chapter 51 Committee for Mental Health. David has been endorsed by Racine Co. Sheriff Chris Schmaling and the Kenosha County Deputy Sheriff’s Association. He has been a member of the RPKC since 2019 and a committed conservative activist.

You may have heard that he ran as a Democrat in 2018, and this is true. He first ran as a Republican in 2014 and lost. He then received advice to run as a Democrat against Dave Beth in 2018. Although some disagreed with that strategy, members of the RPKC board supported him at that time, knowing that he was not truly a Democrat. It is not uncommon for candidates to run as an opponent in another party depending on the current political climate, and it is a strategy that often works—it’s how Milwaukee County elected David Clarke as Sheriff. As you all know, politics can get complicated and sometimes campaigns must get creative to ensure the truth is being heard.

- **Ray Rowe** has been promoted as Dave Beth’s hand-picked replacement, and we believe he is falsely portraying himself as a conservative. Ray Rowe not only signed the Walker recall, but also stated in the recent Candidates for Sheriff Forum in June that he did not support citizens’ 2nd Amendment rights in government buildings. He has supported and has received support from prominent Democrats such as Dave Beth, Rebecca Matoska-Mentink, Mayor Antaramian,



and many others. Ray Rowe hasn't supported or been involved in the RPKC or any conservative causes that we're aware of, and only recently became a member (April 2022).

- **Albert "Brian" Gonzales** presents as a candidate with strong conservative values, but we believe his qualifications to run the Sheriff's Department fall far short of what is needed at this time. Brian Gonzales has many years of experience in the City of Kenosha Police Department, but never in a countywide department. In addition, he is a controversial figure in Kenosha's law enforcement history due to his involvement with the Michael Bell, Jr. shooting and the book he wrote about it. Speaking strategically, if Brian Gonzales were to win the primary, the Democrats would exploit that controversy and win handily. Due to this factor, we believe he unfortunately does not have a viable pathway to win the general election. Lastly, Brian Gonzales had been unknown to the RPKC until he decided to run for office. He only recently became a member in September of 2021.
- **Tyler Cochran** is relatively unknown to the RPKC and we don't believe he has the qualifications necessary to run the Sheriff's Department. He is KPD's Officer Friendly and schedules the school guards in Kenosha, but this does not boast extraordinary leadership experience to the RPKC. He also signed the Walker recall, although he has stated that he now regrets that action. Strategically, Tyler Cochran does not have enough momentum or a large enough following to have a viable pathway to winning the general election. He is not a member of the RPKC and never has been to our knowledge.

### **Hope That Helps!**

The RPKC exists to help get trustworthy conservatives elected to office. In that mission and in the business of endorsement, we must consider factors like electability, work ethic, history, etc. It's a part of successful strategy to consider all sorts of situations, which include things like whether a candidate has a history with the RPKC or any other verifiable conservative record, has skeletons in the closet that could give the Democrats ammunition, makes faux pas or is generally unlikable, is reluctant to knock on doors or talk to constituents, etc. It's a complex decision, and not one the Executive Board takes lightly.

Please consider our endorsements when making your decision of who to vote for in the primary election. We have worked diligently researching the candidates and hope you will unite behind the endorsed candidates to ensure victory in November.

We hope this answers some questions that many members have been asking, and reassures you that the leadership of the RPKC is working tirelessly to ensure all of Kenosha County stays RED.

Sincerely,

Erin Decker  
Chair