

SPOTLIGHT

Taking Stock of the Wisconsin Senate Race

A top pickup opportunity for Republicans could get complicated.



Eric Hovde, candidate for the U.S. Senate, gives his concession speech to supporters during his election night party Tuesday Aug. 14, 2012 in Peaukee, Wis. Wisconsin voters choose Republican candidate Tommy Thompson for U.S. Senate in the primary election.

AP Photo/Tom Lynn



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Nov. 30, 2023, 11:39 a.m.

Competitive GOP primaries dot the Senate map, but the race to take on Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) has flown under the radar due to a lack of credible Republican candidates.

The NRSC encouraged wealthy real estate executive Eric Hovde (R) to run and he’s expected to launch a bid early next year. National Republicans have said that if Hovde runs, another wealthy businessman who’s been considering a bid, political newcomer Scott Mayer (R), likely will not enter the race.

But Mayer told *Hotline* he is still very much considering getting in and will make a decision in the first quarter of next year, regardless of what Hovde does.

“I am absolutely seriously considering it, part of it’s going to see how things play out in the first quarter of 2024. If there’s not another serious candidate, I absolutely believe I would run,” Mayer said.

But there’s one caveat: Though Mayer isn’t ruling out running against Hovde, at the same time, he wants to avoid a messy primary.

“I can’t commit to that at this point,” Mayer said when asked if he would stay out of the race if Hovde runs. “It’s not as simple as if he runs, I won’t, or if I run, he won’t. It’s probably a little bit more significant and deeper than that, but we don’t want a bloody primary.”

Mayer isn’t the only candidate still considering a run. Controversial former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke (R), a vocal Trump supporter, also hasn’t ruled out a bid.

Republicans already have primaries brewing in Ohio, Nevada, Michigan, and possibly Montana too, which could complicate their path back to power. Democrats need to defend every incumbent to keep their majority, and expensive GOP primaries could leave the eventual nominee at a disadvantage once the general election kicks off.

Wisconsin, a perennial battleground that President Biden only carried by less than a point, is a prime pickup opportunity that Republicans don’t want to squander.

Regardless of who gets in, Mayer thinks money will win the race and a wealthy candidate has the best shot at flipping the seat, whether it’s he or Hovde.

“There’s nobody else other than, two sort of insignificant candidates, and nothing against them, they just don’t have the funding and the connections that Eric Hovde and myself have,” Mayer said.

“My elevator pitch is: if everybody like me—meaning all these CEOs on the big boards in Wisconsin, all the big companies—if everybody like me says no [to a Senate run], then sometimes we’re stuck with not such great candidates,” he said.

— Sydney Kashiwagi

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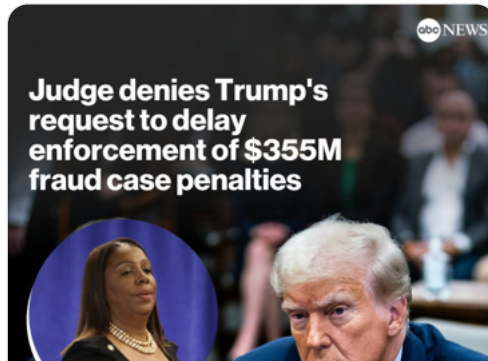
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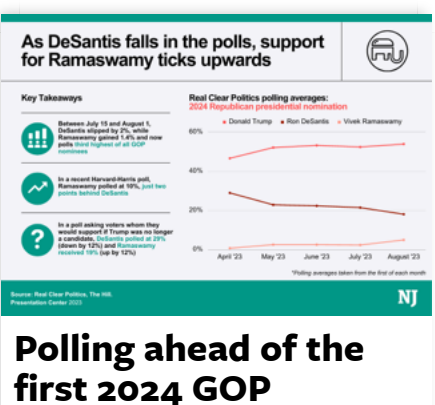
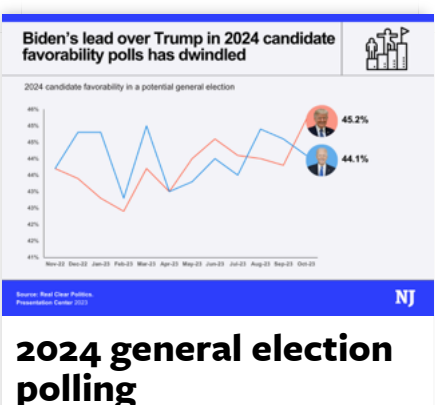
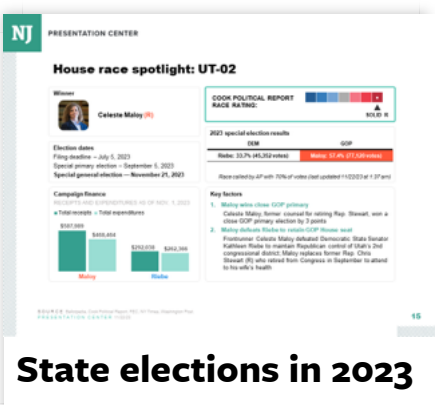
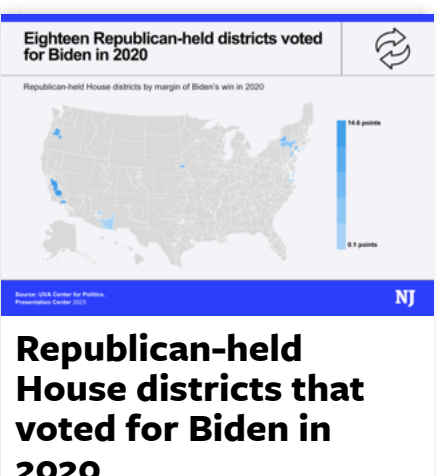
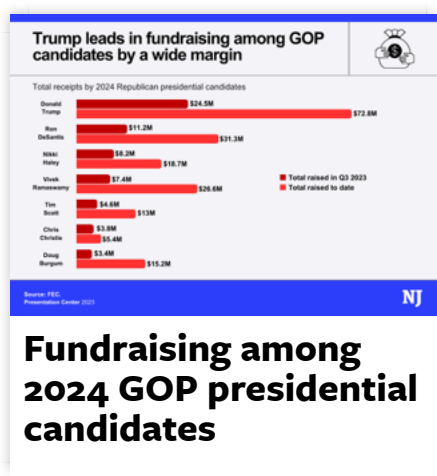


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