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## Milwaukee mayor throws hat in ring with upcoming recall election of governor

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MILWAUKEE, Wis. — It took a little while, but Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett has finally decided whether to run in the upcoming recall election.

He's in.

In a Friday afternoon e-mail to supporters, Barrett, who has twice run unsuccessfully for governor, announced that he will be making a third bid for the state's highest office as part of the recall election of Gov. Scott Walker.

"We need to bring our state back," Barrett wrote in the note. "Wisconsin needs a governor who is focused on jobs, not ideology; a leader committed to bringing our state together and healing political wounds, not pitting people against each other and catering to the special interests.

"This is the governor I will be for the people of Wisconsin."

Barrett's candidacy will have an immediate impact.

"His candidacy is a game-changer," said Jim Palmer, head of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, which has yet to endorse a candidate. "The candidates who have been in the race so far have not drawn a lot of excitement."

The mayor's decision to run sets up a possible rematch of the 2010 gubernatorial election. In that race, Walker, a Wauwatosa Republican, defeated the Democratic mayor by 52 percent-47 percent.

Barrett's much-anticipated announcement came just hours after state elections officials officially ordered the recall contest, making Walker the third governor in the nation to face a recall and Rebecca Kleefisch the first lieutenant governor to face one.

The recalls — which come after an unprecedented nine state senators faced recall last year — were sparked by Walker's successful effort to all but eliminate collective bargaining for most public workers.

"This is the recourse available to the people of Wisconsin when their public officials act in such an egregious fashion," said Mike Tate, chairman of the state Democratic Party.

Walker, speaking to reporters while on a visit to a metal fabrication factory on Milwaukee's south side, said he was prepared for the recall.

"My hope is, just as we earned the trust of the majority of voters in 2010, that we'll have a chance to earn that trust again this June," he said at Technical Metal Specialties Inc.

Republicans were quick to attack Barrett after his late afternoon announcement.

Ciara Matthews, spokeswoman for Walker's campaign, took aim at what she said was Barrett's "record of failed leadership" as Milwaukee's top official.

Ben Sparks of the state Republican Party added, "Tom Barrett clearly has not taken the hint, even after being rejected by Wisconsin voters twice in his repeated bids for governor."

Barrett made his announcement even as he is seeking a third term as Milwaukee mayor against little-known University of Wisconsin Extension faculty member Ed McDonald.

The mayoral contest is Tuesday.

With Barrett's announcement, Democrats now have four candidates vying to run against the first-term Republican governor in a recall election.

Former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk was the first Democrat to jump into the race, and she has already locked up most of the union support. Other announced Democrats are Secretary of State Doug La Follette of Madison and state Sen. Kathleen Vinehout of Alma. The four will face off in a May 8 primary election, with the winner taking on Walker on June 5.

Although unions play a major role in Democratic politics, their opposition could turn out to be a key advantage for Barrett in this race, said Tom Holbrook, professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

"Obviously, Kathleen Falk is the choice of the unions," said Holbrook, referring to her pledge to veto the next state budget if it doesn't restore collective bargaining for public workers. "She and her campaign underestimate how much damage that will do her in the general election."

Holbrook dismissed suggestions that unions would refuse to support Barrett if he was the Democratic nominee. "There's no way that they're going to sit on their hands in the general election" and hand victory to the governor who ended most collective bargaining for most public employees, he said.

But on Friday, Mary Bell, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, declined to say if her union would back Barrett in a general election.

"I'm not going to speculate about what may happen," Bell said, adding, "We're standing with our recommendation for Kathleen Falk."

Bell was one of several top Wisconsin labor officials who met privately with Barrett late last year to urge him to sit out the recall race — a request he immediately rebuffed.

Despite the heavy spending on TV ads for Falk, Barrett still holds a comfortable but not overwhelming lead over Falk in most recent polls. Barrett led Falk 36 percent to 29 percent among Democratic primary voters in a new statewide poll by Marquette Law School taken last week.

In his e-mail to supporters, Barrett said he took his time making the decision to run for governor.

"This was not a decision I made lightly," the Milwaukee mayor wrote. "I love this state and I care deeply about our future. That's why I ran for governor in 2010 — even though I knew it was an uphill battle."

Barrett then ticked off a list of criticisms of the Republican governor, including the steps to curb collective bargaining for state workers and cut funding for education. If elected, the second-term mayor said he would "fight to restore collective bargaining rights, because it's the right thing to do."

He concluded: "Starting tomorrow, I will crisscross the state, taking our message directly to the people in every corner, and working every day to restore our values and move Wisconsin forward. With you standing with me, I know we will prevail."

As of March 19, Barrett's campaign had \$453,008 in the bank, according to a campaign finance report filed Monday with the city Election Commission. That figure does not include money he raised Wednesday at a sold-out fundraiser featuring Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

One top Barrett adviser suggested it took some time for Barrett to make the announcement because he needed to resolve family concerns before committing to the race. He and his wife Kris have four children, including one in college and three attending schools in Milwaukee.

But a second aide said Barrett's wife is fully supportive of his third gubernatorial bid. The aide noted that she was laid off from her job with Milwaukee Public Schools last summer as a result of Walker's spending cuts. Kris Barrett now has a teaching job in Wauwatosa.

"She's all in," the second aide said.

This will not be the first time that Falk and Barrett have squared off in hopes of becoming the state's chief executive.

In 2002, Jim Doyle edged out both of them in the Democratic gubernatorial primary, with Barrett finishing second and Falk third.

Less than two years later, Barrett — a lifelong Milwaukee resident — was on a ballot again, winning his first four-year term as the city's chief executive.

In 2008, Barrett easily won a second term.

As mayor, Barrett has stressed jobs and economic development, highlighting new businesses in the Menomonee Valley and the Park East corridor and taking over the regional job training agency. He also brought in Edward Flynn as police chief and has trumpeted the drop in the city's crime rate since then.

On those and other issues, Barrett has employed a low-key, conciliatory style.

But he found himself repeatedly at odds with Walker, then Milwaukee County executive, even before the two went head-to-head in the last governor's race.

The board determined there were 900,939 valid signatures to recall Walker, 67 percent more than the 540,208 needed to trigger the election. More than 30,000 signatures were eliminated from those submitted in January by recall organizers.

The board deemed 808,900 signatures against Kleefisch were valid. The same number was needed to recall her as for Walker.

Among the signatures rejected from the petitions were more than 4,000 each for Walker and Kleefisch. Those who signed twice had one signature counted and one eliminated.

The board also rejected four names it found to be fictitious — Adolf Hitler, Mick E. Mous, Donald L. Duck and I Love Scott Walker Thanks. Board staff on Thursday had recommended striking the name Funky Van Den Elzen as fictitious, but a board attorney later said he had determined the name was legitimate after all.

As the elections were ordered, the Republican Governors Association announced it was launching a new round against Barrett and Falk.

Nationally, just two other governors have faced recall elections: North Dakota Gov. Lynn Frazier in 1921 and California Gov. Gray Davis in 2003. Both were defeated.

Kleefisch is the first lieutenant governor ever to face a recall election, according to Joshua Spivak, who publishes a blog (<http://recallelections.blogspot.com/>) about recalls.

The accountability board's ordering of the elections ended the ability of recall targets to raise unlimited sums to fight the efforts to remove them from office.

Republicans used that legal quirk to their advantage, with Walker raising as much as \$500,000 from one businessman — 50 times the usual \$10,000 limit. Democrats had to adhere to the normal limits over the past four and a half months.