

State Debate: Bruce Murphy explains why Justice Michael Gableman decided to call it quits

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Urban Milwaukee's Bruce Murphy's column today explains why Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman decided not to run for re-election next year. He recounts the justice's sordid history, his racist campaign and his questionable decisions, including the dismissal of the Scott Walker John Doe, all of which convinced the justice's wealthy backers, including WMC, that he would be too vulnerable to attack ads in another campaign.

Walter Olson of the libertarian CATO Institute writes that he's pleased the U.S. Supreme Court has decided to take the Wisconsin gerrymandering case. He says that gerrymandering remains a distinctive political evil that promotes the interest of a permanent political class.

The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign's Matt Rothschild also is happy because this will allow the whole country to view the crude manipulations by the Republican majority in the Legislature to draw maps in their favor. Meanwhile, Rothschild hopes the Legislature will come to its senses and pass a law to place redistricting in the hands of a nonpartisan commission.

Boston Globe columnist David Daley also joins in the commentary, wondering if the Wisconsin case will appeal to swing justice Anthony Kennedy. He calls the Wisconsin case the most promising yet to tackle the dark art of gerrymandering to assure election wins.

While Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback's experiment with trickle down economics has been a disaster, which Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker ought to heed, Kansas can still teach Wisconsin some things, says columnist Bill Kaplan on WisOpinion. Kansas gets 31 percent of its power from wind, compared to Wisconsin's continued reliance on coal and at least the state had the savvy to expand Medicaid, something that Walker continues to fight, Kaplan points out.

Political Environment blogger James Rowen notes the number of times that independent groups have had to get together to fight for the state's land and water, something that Scott Walker's Department of Natural Resources fails to do. He lists several examples.

Political Heat blogger Chris Walker is excited about the announcement by Randy Bryce of Kenosha that he will run against Paul Ryan in the 2018 congressional election. He's even more excited about an advertisement that iron worker and veteran Bryce is running and he posts it on his blog for others to see.

The Beloit Daily News likes the idea being floated by Rep. Amy Loudenbeck, a Republican from Clinton, to tack a per mile user fee on heavy trucks to help bolster the imperiled transportation budget. The fee would be levied in four neighboring states and could bring in up to \$250 million every two years. Somehow we've got to solve the problem, the paper says, and this is worth looking at.

The Racine Journal Times likes legislation proposed by State Sen. Steven Nass of rural Whitewater and Scott Allen of Waukesha, both Republicans, that would make it difficult for the Joint Committee on Finance to make budget changes out of public view. Their legislation, called the Budget Transparency Act, is a wonderful idea, the paper says.