

Statement by Tim Cullen- March 29, 2017

I am announcing today that I will not be a candidate for governor of Wisconsin in 2018. I have spent most of the past nine months traveling the state and talking to the people of Wisconsin. I received much encouragement from many wonderful and influential people. This was a very serious and extensive effort.

My fundamental reason for considering a race for governor was and is that I believe Governor Walker needs to be replaced. His “divide and conquer” approach is unlike any Wisconsin governor in at least the last 65 years. I believed that I could do a better job of leading Wisconsin and begin the process of reuniting the state.

I have concluded that my desire to lead Wisconsin in a better direction got ahead of the reality of putting together a statewide campaign. Specifically, there’s a huge challenge in raising the campaign dollars to be even remotely competitive with the millions and millions of out of state dollars that will flood Wisconsin to keep Governor Walker in power.

Several people who have run statewide campaigns have all told me the same thing: I need to commit to spending three to four hours every day on the phone calling potential donors. After calling friends in the past few weeks, I decided I would not go the next step: calling strangers, which I would consider a demeaning part of politics today. This is a very sad commentary on the state of democracy and elections in Wisconsin.

I first considered the possibility of running for governor in 1982 when I was first elected as the State Senate Majority Leader. 35 years later that has come to an end. I must say that I am completely at peace with this decision.

A small look at the past few months that I would like to share with you: As I drove from Janesville to meetings and speeches in Wisconsin, I increasingly enjoyed more getting back home to Janesville than I did taking off on another day driving away from Janesville. I am 73 years old and very fortunate to be healthy, so that was not a factor in this decision.

Some think my going to Illinois in 2011 could be a negative in a gubernatorial campaign. It would not be when voters compare the reasons and brief time I was in Illinois compared to the enormously large number of weeks Governor Walker has been out of state raising money from billionaires to save his political career or the months he spent out of state running for president.

Wisconsin needs a governor that can fix the roads. Governor Walker needs to concentrate on filling the potholes instead of filling his pockets with campaign cash. Our governor needs to protect our air and water and address the real challenges in education (kids from dysfunctional homes, poverty, and the underfunding of these challenges.) We also need to put the teaching profession back on a pedestal where it belongs. Walker’s attacks on public school teachers are decimating that profession. Today’s teacher shortages will continue to get worse as we see the results of a 30% drop in student’s choosing to pursue a teaching degree and career. This growing disaster legitimately belongs at the doorstep of the governor.

I will not stop caring about Wisconsin’s future and I look forward to supporting as much as I can the Democratic candidate for governor in 2018. I will stay involved working on two foundations I started in Janesville, as co-chair of Common Cause-Wisconsin, and as a board member of “We Are Many-United Against Hate”, chaired by Masood Akhtar, a 30-year Madison businessman. I’ll continue to speak out with former state senator Dale Schultz on the serious need to stop gerrymandering in our state and throughout the nation. I believe that I can help our state start going in the right direction and I will continue to seek out other ways to make a positive difference in Wisconsin.

Public service is still a high calling and a noble way to give back to our state and nation. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunities that I have had.