

Memorandum

To: Clients and Friends
From: Michael Best Strategies
Date: February 17, 2023
Subject: 8th Senate District Special Election

Background

Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) retired from the state Senate in December of last year, creating a vacancy in the 8th Senate District. Aside from losing a longtime member of the Senate GOP caucus, Senate Republicans also lost the supermajority they briefly held following November's election results. With Sen. Darling's retirement, Republicans have a 21-11 majority in the Senate, one seat shy of a veto-proof majority. With a supermajority in the upper chamber, Senate Republicans could expedite legislation and remove state officials for crimes or corruption through the impeachment process.

Governor Tony Evers (D-Plymouth) issued an executive order calling for a special election to be held to fill the vacant 8th SD seat on April 4, 2023, in conjunction with the 2023 Spring Election. A Republican primary election will be held on February 21, in which the top GOP vote-getter will advance to the general election to face the Democratic candidate. Four candidates are currently in the race, including three Republicans and one Democrat. The Republican candidates include state Rep. Dan Knodl of Germantown, state Rep. Janel Brandtjen of Menomonee Falls, and Thiensville Village President Van Mobley. The lone Democratic candidate is Jodi Habush Sinykin of Whitefish Bay.

The Republican Candidates

Dan Knodl

Rep. Dan Knodl (R-Germantown) has served as the representative for the 24th Assembly District since 2009. He was last re-elected to the Assembly in 2022 with 61.2% of the vote. Rep. Knodl is the current Chair of the Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight. In previous legislative sessions, he served as Assistant Majority Leader and Majority Caucus Chair. Prior to being elected to the Legislature, Rep. Knodl served one term on the Washington County Board of Supervisors from 2006-2008. In addition to being an elected official, he is the owner and operator of the Reef Point Resort on Pike Lake. Rep. Knodl's campaign website lists reducing taxes, increasing funding for public schools and creating a "pro-growth" economy in Wisconsin as his top priorities.



Janel Brandtjen

Rep. Janel Brandtjen (R-Menomonee Falls) has served as the representative for the 22nd Assembly District since 2015. She was last re-elected to the Assembly in 2022 with 64.6% of the vote. Rep. Brandtjen has been a leading proponent of decertifying Wisconsin's 2020 presidential election results. She is one of just four returning Assembly GOP members who will not be in leadership, on Joint Finance or serve as a committee chair for the 2023-24 session. Prior to being elected to the Legislature, Rep. Brandtjen served four terms on the Waukesha County Board of Supervisors from 2008-2016. In addition to being an elected official, Rep. Brandtjen co-owns an advertising agency with her husband. In a press release announcing her senate run, Rep. Brandtjen vowed to "continue to fight for the principles that every American shares." Former President Donald Trump endorsed Rep. Brandtjen for the 8th SD seat on Feb. 15.



Van Mobley

Van Mobley is serving a fourth term as Thiensville's village president. Prior to that, he served as a trustee on the village board. In addition to being a local elected official, Mr. Mobley is a professor of history and economics at Concordia University Wisconsin. Mr. Mobley says he is running for state Senate to "transform the tax code by abolishing the state income tax and shifting our revenue system toward the type of system deployed in more economically vibrant states like Florida, Texas, and Tennessee."



The Democratic Candidate

Jodie Habush Sinykin

Jodi Habush Sinykin is a practicing attorney who specializes in environmental law and policy. She is a graduate of Nicolet High School who completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan and attended law school at Harvard University. Ms. Habush Sinykin co-owns a textile mill in Janesville with her husband. In a press release announcing her candidacy, Ms. Habush Sinykin said her priorities would include "the cost of health care, a woman's right to make her own health and reproductive decisions, maintaining safe communities, ensuring a good education for our children, and finding ways to ensure that area businesses and jobs can both survive and thrive in these difficult economic times."



Fundraising Numbers (Jan. 1 – February 6, 2023)

Jodi Habush Sinykin

\$ Raised: \$252,694
\$ Spent: \$224,737
Cash on Hand: \$58,543

Dan Knodl

\$ Raised: \$63,060
\$ Spent: \$5,308
Cash on Hand: \$106,928

Van Mobley

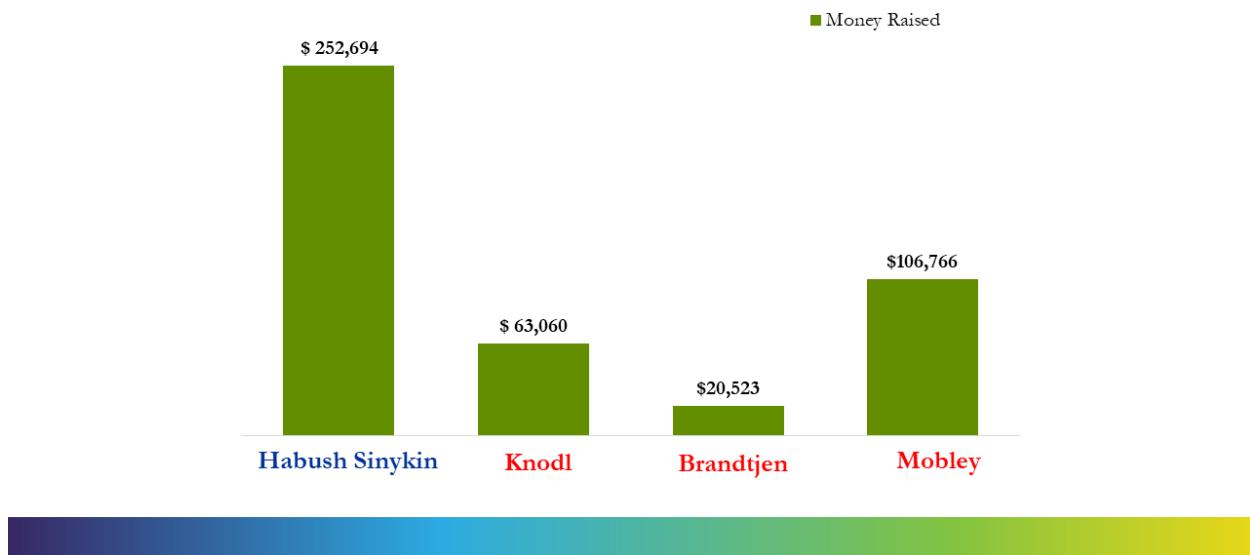
\$ Raised: \$106,766
\$ Spent: \$77,912
Cash on Hand: \$28,854

Janel Brandtjen

\$ Raised: \$20,523
\$ Spent: \$22,366
Cash on Hand: \$23,550



8TH SENATE DISTRICT FUNDRAISING (JAN 1 – FEB 6)



Fundraising Summary

In the first full look at fundraising numbers for the 8th Senate District Special Election, lone Democratic candidate Jodi Habush Sinykin led the field in money raised. Ms. Habush Sinykin reported \$252,694 in receipts and \$224,737 in disbursements during January and the first week of February. Ms. Sinykin reported \$56,550 in receipts from committees, including \$50,050 from the State Senate Democratic Committee.

Thiensville Village President Van Mobley raised the most money out of the GOP candidates thanks to a \$100,050 loan he made to his campaign. Mr. Mobley reported \$106,766 total in receipts, \$77,912 in disbursements and \$28,854 cash on hand. Out of the money Mr. Mobley spent, \$72,500 went to TV advertising.

State Rep. Dan Knodl (R-Germantown) raised \$63,060, spent \$5,308, and had \$106,928 cash on hand to end the reporting period. Committees accounted for \$14,050 of Rep. Knodl's contributions, including \$1,000 donations each from the campaigns of state Rep. Rob Brooks (R-Saukville) and Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine).

Rep. Janel Brandtjen (R-Menomonee Falls) reported \$20,523 in receipts, \$22,366 in disbursements, and \$23,550 cash on hand. Committees accounted for \$9,710 of Rep. Brandtjen's contributions, including a \$2,000 donation from the campaign for Sen. Andre Jacque (R-DePere) and \$1,000 from the Republican Party of Langlade County.

The 8th Senate District

Located in southeast Wisconsin, the 8th Senate District comprises northeastern Milwaukee County, southern Ozaukee County, southern Washington County, and northeastern Waukesha County. The 8th SD is a lean Republican district that has not had a Democrat represent it in three decades. In November, Republican U.S. Senator Ron Johnson captured 54.3% of the vote in the 8th SD and Republican gubernatorial candidate Tim Michels captured 52.0% of the vote. Republicans need to win the 8th SD seat to regain the 22-11 supermajority they had in the Senate following November's election and prior to Sen. Darling's retirement.

