

Today, much of state government is quiet. It's a furlough day in many state agencies. In this era of economic challenges and tight budgets, some want even more cutbacks and downsizing in services. Some foolishly think that short-term solutions will move us forward. They are wrong.

Those who want to dismantle our quality of life built by great names like Robert La Follette and Gaylord Nelson are looking for even more cuts. They want public servants and our neighbors who rely on strong public services to take it on the chin again.

I'm here to raise my voice and say enough. Enough. A few minutes ago I filed the necessary paperwork with the County Clerk. I am officially a candidate for Dane County Executive.

I'm running for County Executive to help preserve Dane County's unique quality of life, because in order to thrive in the 21st century, we need to build both a robust private sector and to preserve a strong public sector.

That's not going to win many friends from the tea party movement or afternoon talk radio hosts. But I don't care. Because I don't think public service is a dirty word. I am here to defend what we hold dear – compassionate human services, effective public safety, a clean environment and a modern transportation system.

I am proud to have served in local government for 15 years on the county board, the last four as County Board Chairman. I am proud to have worked with Kathleen Falk. I have never known someone who worked as hard every single day to make Dane County a better place to live and she deserves our gratitude and appreciation for her years of service.

I also want to thank all of you who are here for coming today. No one can even think of taking on a challenge like this without the support of friends and family like you. I'm honored that so many local government leaders, past and present, are supporting me. I was born into a family that valued public service. My mother worked at a community college and my father was the commissioner of park and planning for a large county in Maryland. I came to UW Madison and fell in love with this community and with my wife Megin. We are raising our family in Dane County because this is a special place.

From Verona to DeForest, from Waunakee to McFarland, this part of the world is a beautiful place full of hard working families who understand that our communities are unique, but our way of life is under siege from those who want to turn back the clock. I love to take my daughters Eleanor and Annie to out Blue Mounds where they can see the vistas of this great place, but without proper stewardship what will that vista look like 20 or 30 years from now.

Dane County is worth protecting, from our lakes and streams to our rich farmlands, from our world class university to our caring social services networks, from our commitment to all modes of transportation to our belief in social justice. Yes, worth protecting.....

Make no mistake about it, the political right and naysayers – many from outside this county – look to Dane County and want to tear down what we created. They don't believe in protecting human services. They don't believe public service is a higher calling. They do not honor those that teach our kids, repair our roads, or take care of our disabled or elderly. If they want to make our society like a Mississippi I say no, not here, not now, not ever.

I believe public servants are the backbone of this community. I have always been there to stand up for them and I always will be. We must protect the incredible mix of public and private sectors we have in Dane County. It is the only way we can move forward – working together to plan for future growth, to protect our natural resources and to defend the things we hold dear.

Dane County has been fortunate to have avoided the double digit unemployment that has hit most of the state and nation. But our families are suffering. Some have been laid off or seen their savings wiped out. Others have seen their hours and wages reduced substantially. And the effects are obvious. Construction of new homes and businesses are way down. New purchases of goods and services are at record lows.

But now is not the time to panic. Now is the time for a steady hand – to invest in clean and renewable energy, to diversify our workforce and our economic base. Now is not the time for more furloughs, more cuts and less investment in public infrastructure. That is short sighted. It is not the Dane County way.

The future belongs to those communities that retain and attract young talent. Dane County is one of those places. We have a high quality of life because we make investments in quality transportation, good schools, strong human services and clean environment.

I am running for County Executive with a simple promise – to protect Dane County's future and defend our progressive values. But I need your help. Let's first roll up our sleeves and elect progressives on November 2nd. If you are from Madison early voting has started right here, so go vote when we are done, vote for Russ Feingold, vote for Tom Barrett, vote for Tammy. Then let's all keep this campaign to protect what we hold dear. Let's work together to keep Dane County special.

Thank you.