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NEWS

- Main Page
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Washington
- Ozaukee
- Racine
- Wisconsin
- Politics Plus**
 - » Campaign for President
 - » State, Local Elections
 - » Inside State Politics
- Watchdog Online**
 - » Watchdog Reports
 - » Public Investigator
 - » Citizen Watchdog
 - » Data on Demand
 - » No Quarter
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Traffic
- Education
- Obituaries
- SPORTS**
- Main Page
- Packers/NFL
- Packer Insider**
- Bucks/NBA
- Brewers/MLB
- Badgers
 - » Football
 - » Basketball
- Golden Eagles
- Panthers
- Preps
- Golf
- Outdoors
- Wave/Soccer
- Admirals/Hockey
- Racing
- BUSINESS**
- Main Page
- News
- Economy

JS ONLINE: NEWS: POLITICS:

E-MAIL | PRINT THIS STORY

interactive chats



THURSDAY, March 27, chat transcript
Lena Taylor
Milwaukee County Executive candidate

Lena Taylor, a state senator and candidate for Milwaukee County Executive in the April 1 election, answered questions in this JSOnline chat. Taylor's opponent, incumbent Scott Walker, chatted Tuesday ([see that chat](#)).

POLITICS PLUS: State and Local Elections

Q: John of Milwaukee - Why should I vote for a career politician such as yourself?

A: Lena Taylor - Good morning John. Thank you for your question. I think you have me confused with my opponent. I am not a career politician, actually I have worked in the private sector for 2 1/2 years and then ran two business for 8 years, before I answered the call to serve. So you have all the facts, please note my family ran 3 business, and I am an attorney and a business woman who became an elected public servant 5 years. It is my opponent who has been a career politician for the last 18 years, except for a short time when he worked briefly for the Red Cross.

Q: Steve of Milwaukee - Miss Taylor, Why shouldn't riders of the transit system be expected to pay higher fares to pay for services instead of raising everyone in the counties taxes weather we ride the bus or not? I for one am tired of having to pay for someone else's services (ie: transit and welfare programs) in this city while being taxed and fee'd to death just to have police and fire protection, my garbage picked up the streets cleared of snow and ice! Paying for the services you actually utilize, what a novel concept, huh?

A: Lena Taylor - Steve, thanks for all your questions. The overall good for our county is to provide for the essential services and quality of life for all of our citizens. That means an infrastructure that supports access, economic development and promotes economic growth. Transit is a key factor in that equation. Employers don't want to come to a community that lacks the infrastructure to get their employees to work. A formula that increases fares 50% in an administration and shortens and eliminates routes - fails to get that message. Investing in transit is an investment in our community, or region and our future.

Q: Mike of Franklin - The house of corrections is understaffed and over crowded, many staff are going on FMLA to avoid being forced to work double shifts multiple days in a row, what would you do to correct this if elected CE? thanks.

A: Lena Taylor - Mike, thanks for your question. The HOC is a seriously troubled institution as mention by the Bush administration - even though Walker co-chaired his

Health care
Investing
Workplace
More...

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment
Main Page
Dining
Movies
Festivals
Music and
Nightlife
Performing Arts
Visual Arts
TV and Radio
Books
Calendars

FEATURES

Lifestyle
Advice Columns
Homes
» Neighborhoods
» Remodeling
» Gardening
Food/Cooking
Personal
Technology
Health/Science
Religion
Cars
Travel

AP COVERAGE

National
World
Business
Sports
Entertainment

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Placing an Ad
Setting Your Home
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Newspaper
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2002 and 2004 campaigns. The challenges are mostly because of the issues that you mention. Please note the HOC did not have these challenges or security lapses like this before the present mismanagement by Walker. I would expedite the Human Resource process to allow qualified applicants to be hired immediately, which would reduce the 206% increase in overtime cost to taxpayers, and the forced use of FMLA and other methods by employees to get time off from forced overtime. Those changes would improve employee morale and security at the HOC. Mike please note Walker's failure to hire persons and manage is an issue that affects many areas of county government because he either blocks hiring or fails to manage the human resources department effectively.

Q: Colleen Gore of Greendale, WI - What will you do to REDUCE the tax burden of the Milwaukee County Taxpayers? Form what I have seen of your record, you have only increased taxes.

A: Lena Taylor - This is a great question, Colleen. If we don't get our fair share from state and federal government because of a lack of advocacy and relationships by our county executive it falls exclusively on the backs of Milwaukee county taxpayers. We need to have a person who will not allow their personal ideology and political desire to run for governor to get in the way of fighting for what's best for Milwaukee county residents. Moreover, we have been stuck in the trap of thinking that we only have two choices: reduce services which our citizens rely upon and need; or raise taxes. We cannot rely solely on raising taxes any more than we can solely rely on my opponent's strategy of trying to cut our way to prosperity. The alternative is economic growth. We must develop strategies which foster business growth in our county. With business growth and the development of good paying jobs, we will grow our tax base, and at the same time provide the essential services and quality of life services which our citizens expect and deserve. An added benefit to the development of good paying jobs is to provide our children with the hope of a brighter future. When young people have the promise of a better life and a promising career, they will stay in school, and engage in less risky behavior. This is the Milwaukee County I believe we can attain. But it cannot be reached with the shortsighted politics of my opponent. We must engage in regional cooperation and advocacy at federal and state levels to get our fair share. Lastly, I look forward to innovative thinking that gains us partnerships with the private sector, schools, colleges and other regional governments to grow our region.

Q: Kennedy of Milwaukee, WI - Senator Taylor you are a super delegate... who are you going to cast your vote for?

A: Lena Taylor - Kennedy, Thank you for the question. There is a lot of energy in the Presidential election right now for the Democratic Party. I wish more of that energy was focused on the race that will have such a huge affect on us right here at home. We need to have a county executive that will be able to work with the federal level to get our fair share for the many underfunded federal mandates that exist out there. As a result, my sole focus at the moment is to be elected Milwaukee County Executive. Sometime after April 2, I will make my decision.

Q: Amy of Whitefish Bay, WI - Lena what do you like to do in your free time with your son?

A: Lena Taylor - Amy, thanks for the question. You make me miss Isaiah more at this exact moment. We like to watch movies - cartoon, Disney types (we've seen Shark Tales so much i can't count anymore)- and we play board games. This summer the pools, water parks will be our past time.

Q: David Samolinski of St. Francis - What kind of relationship will you have with the County Board? Will you work with them or dictate to them?

A: Lena Taylor - David, thank you very much for asking such an important question. As a State Senator, I have established a solid track record of working collaboratively with the County Board to secure legislative changes at the State level that helped the County address some of it's budget challenges. Walker usually abandons his responsibility during the County's annual budget process, leaving the County Board to make the tough decisions, and set priorities. As County Executive, I will accept the responsibility to lead the direction of Milwaukee County's financial future. I am committed to working with the County Board for budgetary and policy changes that benefit Milwaukee County residents. I have a track record of listening to them, working with them for things that benefit Milwaukee county like transit, child support, child care and public safety funding.

Q: Jordan of Brown Deer - I heard you talk about relationships being important to "get the job done" in one of your forums. What exactly did you mean?

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A: Lena Taylor - Jordan, thanks for your question; It has been a key message in my campaign. As an elected official, the type of relationships you have at the local, state and federal level have a direct effect on the taxpayers/residents of our county. As a county executive if you have ideas and policies you want to implement and you can't get the board to agree with you, nor the majority to sustain your veto - you are irrelevant in the process. For example, the CE did a budget and the board amended it. He vetoed it, they overrode his veto rendering him irrelevant in the budget process. He surrendered his responsibility to them. At the state and federal level there are many underfunded mandates that will require relationships to get the votes and consideration for Milwaukee County. The CE has fought with the Governor and legislature when we were in the budget process trying to get more funding - bad relationship building. I have the relationships to get it done for us and I proved it with transit funding, public safety funding etc since I've been in the legislature.

Q: Tony E. of Milwaukee - Senator Taylor, if you were to get elected as County Executive what is your plan to cut taxes?

A: Lena Taylor - Thanks for the question Tony E. This is a key issue. The present CE has not established the relationships with the board, local county leaders, state or federal elected officials and executives to get our fair share, and reduce cost through collaboration intra and inter county. I want to get our fair share at the federal and state level, and get rid of the costly inefficiencies and mismanagement in county government, like those at the HOC, Jail, medical examiners office, health care, transit and with the continuing Pension mess just to name a few. Those collaborative efforts and better management will yield savings for Milwaukee county residents as my first priority.

Q: Bill of Wauwatosa - Do you believe that a college degree is a requirement to be a county executive?

A: Lena Taylor - Bill, thanks for your interest in this election. A college degree may not be a requirement for county executive, but I have pointed this difference out between my opponent and myself because I believe that it speaks volumes about our ability to get the job done. My life experiences show a drive and sense of commitment which I believe is lacking in my opponent. When I set my mind on a goal, I stick with it until it is completed. Our education is but one example of our commitment and ability to get the job done. My opponent was elected county executive and almost immediately began his campaign for governor. He abandoned the job we elected him to do because of personal ambition. For almost two years, while he campaigned for governor he was absent. During this time when the county was without the services of a full-time county exec, the problems multiplied. We now have \$300 million in deferred Parks maintenance alone, the pension problems which happened on his watch continue to multiply, county health insurance is out of control, and the county lacks a coherent strategy to promote and develop economic growth. At the same time, my opponent continues to be the poster child for bad relationships with others to get the job done for Milwaukee county whether it's within our county, our region, state or federal levels. A college degree may not be a requirement for being the county executive, but in a county where less than 20% of individuals have a higher degree - we need a leader that will lead by example so we can encourage growth in this area. My opponent's lack of college degree speaks volumes regarding his priorities and his ability to complete what he starts. Moreover, would his credentials warrant his salary in the corporate arena, or an increase in pay by \$50K when his management has cost us millions of dollars at the HOC, jail, courts, Huber, mental health, etc.

Q: Tony of Oak Creek - Wisconsin or Davidson?

A: Lena Taylor - Wisconsin of course! GO Badgers GO!

Q: Chip of Wauwatosa - Why do you oppose sentencing 17 year olds as adults? Criminals are getting younger.

A: Lena Taylor - Chip, thanks for this question. I've wanted an opportunity to address the blatant lies the Walker Campaign has stated on this issue and my position on crime. As a lawyer, mother and life long resident of Milwaukee County I'm concerned about the 216% increase in spending on corrections and 6% decrease in spending on higher education that we've done in this state. As the Chair of Judiciary, Correction and Housing Committee, I have had an opportunity to see the best practices that provide the outcomes to reduce recidivism and cost to taxpayers. I support a Judicial Discretion approach on this issue. After carefully evaluating a juvenile's history and reviewing assessment results, a judge should make the determination as to whether a particular 17 year old would benefit from rehabilitative services offered in the juvenile justice system, that are not available as options in the adult system. I don't oppose juveniles going to adult court - that's another Walker statement you can't believe - the legislation

says judges should decide if a juvenile should get the services to reduce recidivism or go to adult court where those services are not available. Statistics show that 17 year olds in the adult system re-offend at twice the rate of those that go through the juvenile system. Finally, except maybe during campaign season, Walker has cut all the initiatives that effect public safety: court commissioners, victim witness protection, and paralegals for the DA, medical examiners office, AODA services, preventive services, and etc. Those things truly affect our ability to promote public safety.

Q: Pookie of Milwaukee - Why should I pay higher taxes for buses I don't ride and parks I don't go to?

A: Lena Taylor - Pookie, thanks for getting involved. I think you your question was asked by Steve from Milwaukee, and my answer is posted. Thanks.

Q: Jonathan B. of Milwaukee - How have the cuts in mental health services effected Milwaukee County? What, if anything, should be done about mental health services in Milwaukee County? Thank you.

A: Lena Taylor - Jonathan thanks for getting involved in this online discussion. 70% of person in our correctional institutions have mental health or AODA issues. Preventive services are necessary to reduce that huge cost on taxpayers. Cuts in mental health services are having devastating impacts on clients in need of mental health services, the family members assisting with caring for them, and on criminal justice system budgets. Much of the money that should be spend on supportive community based services is ending up in the criminal justice system and jail budgets. One of the worst outcomes of the present situation is that many county residents who need mental health and other treatment services are ending up in the criminal justice system by default, or as the MJS series showed some die for lack of adequate management (Walker's big failure). Jail administrators are not equipped to address the medical, theraputic, and rehabilitative needs of this population. Many deaths and "in-house" conflicts in the jails involve persons with serious to to severe mental illness. Tragedies even occur when law enforcement officers find themselves ill prepared to deal with individuals who, because of mental illness, cannot respond in an adequate manner. Adequate community based case management services need to be in place to insure housing, access to counseling, medication, and supportive services to clients and family caregivers. A comprehensive community based services plan needs to be developed and implemented in Milwaukee County.

Q: Gabe Bosler of Tosa - Ms. Taylor: I have heard that the reason Scott Walker got kicked out of Marquette is because he plagiarized. Any truth to that?

A: Lena Taylor - Thanks Gabe for getting involved in this online discussion. I don't know if there is any validity to Walker being kicked out of school, nor is that the issue. I believe getting an education is a very important issue, especially in a county where less than 20% of residents have higher education degrees. In a global market where 75% of the emerging jobs are projected to be in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, we have to take education more seriously. Because we lead in drop out rates and lowest graduation rates, we need a leader who can lead and inspire change in the area of education. When employers say there is a disconnect between the jobs they have and the number of qualified and educated people to fill them - we need leadership to help fill that disconnect.

Q: Steve of Milwaukee - Miss Taylor, I disagree with your commercial in which you state our parks are in dis-repair or however you worded it. I use our county parks year round and fail to see parks that are in such dis-repair. Can you site examples of what you are refering to in your ad?

A: Lena Taylor - Steve, thanks for asking. Please ride through Estabrook park, Lincoln park, or almost any other and you will see the 300 million dollars of deferred maintenance (150 million under Walker's administration alone) that exist under the present county executive. You could also look for Sup. Broderick and others press release that ask for the immediate release of funds that Walker has held up for park maintenance for leaking roofs, heating systems, plumbing - you know the things that will cause more disrepair when not addressed timely.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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