

2026 GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

RODRIGUEZ MAKES CASE



OWEN ZILIAK, STATE JOURNAL

Sara Rodriguez hopes to become the first Wisconsin lieutenant governor to be elected governor in more than 50 years.

Lieutenant governor running for Wisconsin’s top job

MITCHELL SCHMIDT
mschmidt@madison.com

As the first Democratic candidate to jump into the race for Wisconsin governor, Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez is looking to capture a promotion not seen in the battleground state in decades.

But while Rodriguez is leaning into her experience as outgoing Gov. Tony Evers’ second-in-command while campaigning across Wisconsin, it’s her full resume that defines her as a candidate, she said. That includes being a mother, a registered nurse, a state lawmaker, a business owner and an epidemic intelligence service officer, the 50-year-old told the Wisconsin State Journal last week.

“I have spent more time outside of the political realm than I have spent inside of it,” Rodriguez said. “I think that’s a good balance of having a regular job, working as a nurse in an emergency room, but also working as an executive and being within political office and understanding what you need to do to get things across the finish line.”

A resident of Brookfield, Rodriguez holds a master’s degree in public health and spent time as an epidemic intelligence service officer with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She also spent time with the Peace Corps, as an emergency room nurse in Baltimore and as vice president of population health and integrated care management for Advocate Aurora Health before opening her own health care consulting business about five years ago.

Frustrated that the Republican-controlled Legislature wasn’t doing enough to address the COVID-19 pandemic, Rodriguez ran for state Assembly in 2020 in Republican-leaning Waukesha County and went on to unseat incumbent state GOP Rep. Rob Hutton.

After new legislative maps shifted the boundaries of her 13th Assembly District to lean more heavily in the GOP’s favor, Rodriguez launched a bid for lieutenant governor after then-Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes opted to run for the U.S. Senate seat held by Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh.

Barnes lost that race, but Rodriguez won the August primary in 2022 and later the November election on the ticket alongside Evers.

Next year’s election promises to be Rodriguez’s most challenging yet.

“That’s why I announced as early as I did, because I knew I was ready and I knew that this is going to be a difficult race and we’re going to have to make sure that we’re doing all we can to keep this seat,” she said.

A Wisconsin lieutenant governor has not moved into the governor’s seat since 2001, when then-Gov. Tommy Thompson, a Republican, joined President George W. Bush’s administration and Lt. Gov. Scott McCallum finished out the final two years of Thompson’s fourth term.

Lt. Gov. Martin Schreiber also made the leap in 1977, when Democratic Gov. Patrick Lucey was appointed ambassador to Mexico about 2½ years into his second term as governor.

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Trump: US troops won’t be sent to defend Ukraine

Spokeswoman says Putin has told president he will meet with Zelenskyy

DARLENE SUPERVILLE AND AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump offered assurances Tuesday that U.S. troops would not be sent to help defend Ukraine against Russia after seeming to leave open the possibility the day before.

Trump also said in a morning TV interview that Ukraine’s hopes of joining NATO and regaining the Crimean Peninsula from Russia are “impossible.”

The Republican president, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other European leaders held hours of talks at the

White House on Monday aimed at bringing an end to Russia’s war against Ukraine. While answering questions from journalists, Trump did not rule out sending U.S. troops to participate in a European-led effort to defend Ukraine as part of security guarantees sought by Zelenskyy.

Trump said after his meeting in Alaska last week with Russian President Vladimir Putin that Putin was open to the idea of security guarantees for Ukraine.

But asked Tuesday on Fox News Channel’s “Fox & Friends” what assurances he could provide going forward and beyond his term that American troops would not be part of defending Ukraine’s border, Trump said, “Well, you have my assurance, and I’m president.”

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ALEX BRANDON, ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Donald Trump speaks Monday as French President Emmanuel Macron, left, and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, right, listen during a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, foreground left, and European leaders in the East Room of the White House in Washington.