

MARY KOWATCH - WAUSAU CITY COMMON COUNCIL 1ST DISTRICT (R)

Key findings include:

- **Repeat candidate with long local footprint, but no electoral wins.** Kowatch is a longtime Wausau resident who has run repeatedly for local office—Wausau school board (2003, 2006, 2014) and Wausau City Council District 1 (2004, 2011)—and also sought appointed seats (school board in 2005; council in 2010), but has not held public office.
- **Clear Republican donor pattern and alignment with conservative local slate politics.** Despite nonpartisan offices, her contribution history to the Republican Party of Marathon County across multiple years (including 2025) suggests durable GOP alignment, and she in 2022 promoted/endorsed a set of conservative-leaning spring-election candidates, indicating continued engagement in local conservative networks.
- **Culture-war and social-conservative signals are persistent over time.** Documented examples include: opposing same-sex marriage in 2006; sharing anti-evolution commentary framing “evolution is just a theory”; and later engagement with anti-trans sports activists.
- **2014 “Cancels Christmas” association.** Kowatch was endorsed by the “Wausau School District Cancels Christmas” group during the high-profile holiday music controversy in 2014. The group later shared COVID-era conspiracy content and far-right/anti-institution narratives, although Kowatch did not appear to have further engagement with the group after the 2014 election.
- **Anti-union rhetoric and grievance framing after defeat.** After her 2014 school board loss, she blamed the teachers’ union (WEA/WEA-aligned activity) for turning out votes against her, reinforcing a theme of anti-union posture and potentially polarizing “insiders vs. parents” rhetoric around public institutions.
- **Issue profile: frugality + disaster preparedness; mixed emphasis on finances over time.** In 2011 she said she wanted the city to be more frugal but lacked specifics; she also highlighted disaster planning and even pandemic-style scenarios (pre-COVID). Earlier (2003) she said her school board run “had nothing to do with finances,” despite financial struggles of the school board, suggesting a shifting or situational fiscal message.
- **Willingness to cut parks—except her neighborhood pool.** In 2011 she signaled openness to cutting parks spending while carving out an exception for Memorial Pool (her neighborhood pool).
- **Credibility/accuracy vulnerability from 2004 flyer correction.** She publicly acknowledged distributing a misleading claim about her 2004 opponent’s casino stance and had to issue corrected campaign materials and write an opinion piece on the matter.
- **Personal narrative includes faith, cancer survivorship, and nursing.** Kowatch’s breast cancer experience (2003 diagnosis; lumpectomy/chemo; later double mastectomy) and her stated faith-based framing may resonate with some voters, and her work as a registered nurse/cancer research nurse adds perceived competence on health/community wellbeing—though she lacks public-sector management experience.

Wausau is the core city of Marathon County in north-central Wisconsin. The city itself is competitive and somewhat more diverse roughly 40,000 people, with a notable Hmong/Asian community, but it sits inside a county that went solidly Republican for president in both 2020 and 2024 (Trump 58%–40% range, +18 R), so city officials operate in a red county but a swingy city environment. At the municipal level, races are officially nonpartisan, but 2024 showed they're not nonpolitical, Republicans backed Doug Diny to oust Mayor Katie Rosenberg, and the council has been part of the same set of fights over drop boxes and city-hall process [[Data USA](#), accessed, 11/5/2025] [[Marathon County](#), accessed, 11/5/2025] [[WSAW](#), accessed, 11/5/2025].

BACKGROUND

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Kowatch is around 63 years old and is a long time resident of Wausau. According to a 2004 candidate profile, Kowatch is married and has five children [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/26/2004]. According to a real estate transaction, her husband is Craig Kowatch [Wausau Daily Herald, 8/14/2004]. Craig Kowatch has made chiding posts about both Republicans and Democrats on his [Facebook](#).

Kowatch was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. She had a lumpectomy and chemotherapy before an MRI revealed two other spots of cancer, and then she opted to have a double mastectomy. She said the experience has reaffirmed her faith in God and taught her to appreciate the little things, such as feeling good enough to do laundry [Wausau Daily Herald, 10/5/2008].

Kowatch is a registered nurse. She previously worked as a cancer research nurse [Wausau Daily Herald, 1/7/2004]. According to her LinkedIn she is open to work.

CAMPAIGN & POLITICAL BACKGROUND

It does not appear Kowatch has held public office previously, but she did run for a Wausau School District At-Large position in 2003 [Wausau Daily Herald, 4/3/2003], 2006 [Wausau Daily Herald, 4/5/2006], 2014, finishing last out of six candidates (top 3 elected) [[Ballotpedia](#)]. She also ran for Wausau's District 1 City Council seat in 2004 [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/26/2004] and 2011, losing in the primary [Wausau Daily Herald, 2/16/2011]. She also unsuccessfully applied for an appointed role on the Wausau School Board in 2005 [Wausau Daily Herald, 10/14/2005] and the Wausau City Council in 2010 [Wausau Daily Herald, 8/13/2010].

In her personal capacity, Kowatch has previously been outspoken on various issues locally. In 2001, she protested speeding on Sturgeon Eddy Road, where she lives. She also opposed a proposal to allow a casino in the city. The proposal was defeated in 2002 in a voter referendum [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/26/2004]. Her endorsement by a conservative activist group (below) also indicates she has likely remained active locally.

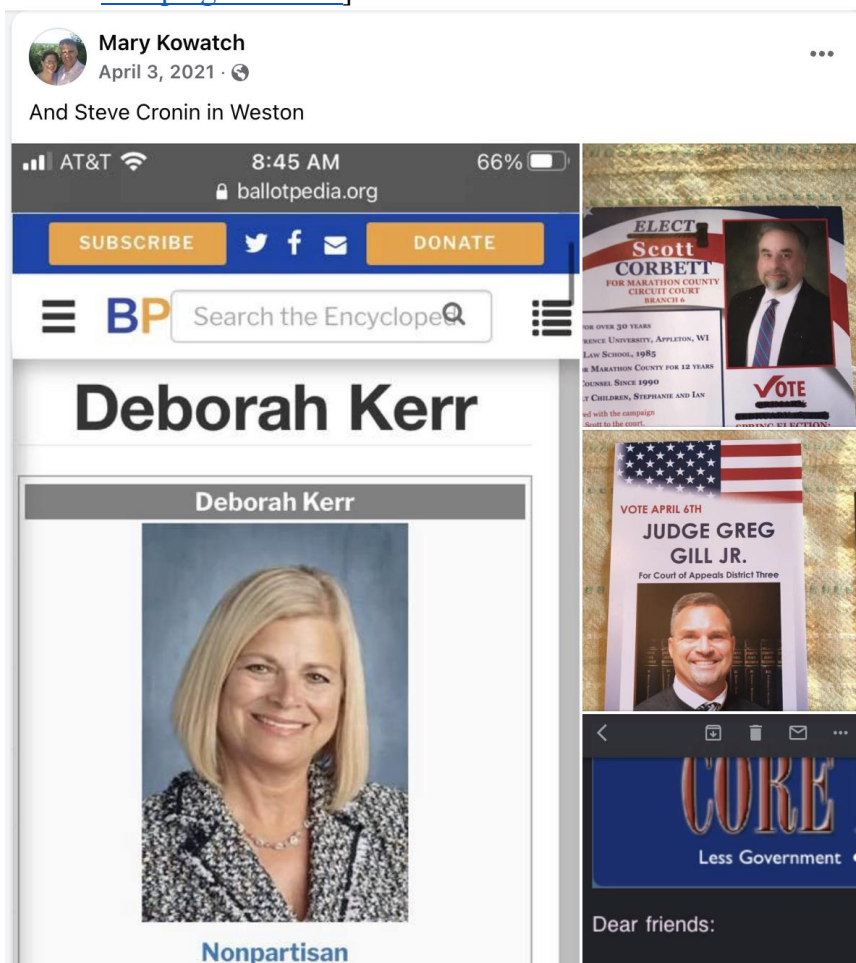
Endorsed by Firefighters Association: Kowatch was endorsed by the Wausau Firefighters Association, L-415 in her 2004 run for Wausau City Council [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/27/2004].

In the 2014 school board contest, Kowatch was endorsed by “Wausau School District Cancels Christmas,” a parent group that formed amid a high-profile dispute over religious/holiday music in Wausau schools. See more in the vulnerabilities section.

Kowatch is a Republican, having contributed to the Republican Party of Marathon County in 2025 (twice), 2018, 2017, 2016, and 2015 [[WI Campaign Finance](#)].

Endorsed conservative candidates: Immediately before the 2021 Wisconsin Spring Election, Kowatch shared pictures of several candidates running for office and listed another in the post description, indicating an endorsement. It should be noted a complete ID check on Facebook could not be completed given lack of campaign announcement, location, or other indicators. However, likely is Kowatch due to her sharing of Wausau and Wausau area politicians, events, and news.

1. **Deborah Kerr (Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction):** a conservative candidate for Superintendent in 2021. Kerr stated support for banning transgender girls from competing in girls' sports [[WPR](#)].
2. **Scott Corbett (Marathon County Circuit Court Branch 6):** Donated to the Republican Party of Marathon County before 2017. Donated to Governor Evers twice in 2022 [[WI Campaign Finance](#)].
3. **Judge Greg Gill Jr. (Wisconsin Court of Appeals District 3):** Endorsed by the The Pro-Life Wisconsin Victory Fund Political Action Committee.
4. **Creisher, Nikolai, and Vandenberg (slate that ran for Wausau School Board):** had the support of the local Republican Party. Organized and ran in response to COVID restrictions in schools.
5. **Steve Cronin (Weston Village Trustee):** Donated to Republican Party of Marathon County [[WI Campaign Finance](#)].



ON THE ISSUES

FISCAL POLICY

In her 2011 run for Wausau City Council, Kowatch said “she'd like to help the city be frugal in its spending -- something she also is hearing from residents in the district -- although she did not have specific areas on which to focus” [Wausau Daily Herald, 2/12/2011]. However, during her 2003 run for school board, she said she was running to "increase parent involvement and say in the schools. ... It really has nothing to do with finances" despite the school district struggling financially [Wausau Daily Herald, 1/20/2003].

DISASTER RESPONSE

In her 2011 run for Wausau City Council, Kowatch said she would focus on helping the city prepare for disasters. “With a background in nursing, Kowatch said she would like to help the city develop plans for disasters such as a food pandemic or a sudden influx of traffic should a terrorist attack happen in Chicago [Wausau Daily Herald, 2/12/2011]. Her emphasis on pandemic preparedness flies in the face of her involvement with an organization and movement in 2014 that later would go on to doubt COVID’s seriousness (see vulnerabilities section).

SPEEDING

In response to speeding in her neighborhood, Kowatch and her family made handmade 15 mph speed limit signs in 2001 [Wausau Daily Herald, 8/26/2001].

VULNERABILITIES & ADVERSE FINDINGS OF NOTE

WILLING TO CUT PARKS BUDGET

In her 2011 run for Wausau City Council, “although Kowatch said parks are "a huge component of Wausau," she's willing to make cuts to the park system if necessary, with the exception of Memorial Pool” [Wausau Daily Herald, 2/12/2011]. Marathon pool is her neighborhood pool [Wausau Daily Herald, 1/7/2004].

EVOLUTION IS JUST A THEORY

Kowatch shared an opinion piece in November 2006 that called evolution just a theory. She spoke out against Democratic State Rep. Donna Seidl’s “extreme views.”

Under the legislation she is trying to pass, it would be illegal in public science classrooms to discuss any children's questions on the scientific aspect of non-evolutionary views of our world. I have a degree in science and love the study of science, as do my children, but I happen to think that the evolutionary theory is just that a theory and that it is greatly lacking in the scientific arena.

If we are truly to be a scientific community, we can not and should not exclude any theories or children's questions to be looked at in a scientific way.

Seidel's legislation, which she was just supporting once again last month on a local radio program, would drive more students from the public school setting and therefore undermine the strength of our public schools [Wausau Daily Herald, 11/4/2006].

OPPOSED SAME SEX MARRIAGE

In the run up to a 2006 Wisconsin constitutional amendment regarding same sex marriage, Kowatch had a sign supporting a ban on same sex marriages in her yard. Kowatch had her sign stolen in the days leading up to the election. She responded to the incident: "I think it's really sad people are taking away

freedom of speech and other people's rights," Kowatch said. "Our neighbor has a 'Vote No' sign up, and that's fine. I respect our neighbor's right to put up that sign" [Wausau Daily Herald, 11/3/2006].

NO PUBLIC SECTOR EXPERIENCE

Kowatch has been an activist and outside agitator, but she has not had any public sector experience despite multiple runs for public office. In a 2004 candidate profile she admitted to having limited experience: "I'm probably not the wisest person, as far as knowing every little detail of how the city functions," Kowatch said, "but I'm a quick learner" [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/26/2004].

ENDORSED BY WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT CANCELS CHRISTMAS IN 2014

In 2013, Wausau West High School's elite choir group had to temporarily disband their and the city's elementary schools holiday concerts. Wausau West choral director Phil Buch says district administrators gave schools three options - limit religious music, hold a concert without holiday music or postpone any concerts in December.

School Board member Jane Rusch tells the Daily Herald Media that Buch was not told to eliminate religious music, just to mix it with more secular music. Rusch said religion can be an emotional issue for the public, but doesn't think the board should get involved in the decision to limit music [[WISN](#), [Washington Post](#)].

Kowatch was endorsed for her school board run by Wausau School District Cancels Christmas's before the Spring Election in 2014. A Facebook group, [Wausau School District Cancels Christmas's](#), opposed efforts they considered to be anti-Christmas locally.

Facebook group continued to share conspiracy theories related to COVID and universities in 2020. Since the 2014 Wisconsin Spring Election, the account has engaged in other far right issues; the account shared COVID conspiracy theories in 2020 and shared an article title "Facism at Yale." Posts from 2013 and prior are related to initiatives the group considers anti-Christmas, a right wing talking point from then.

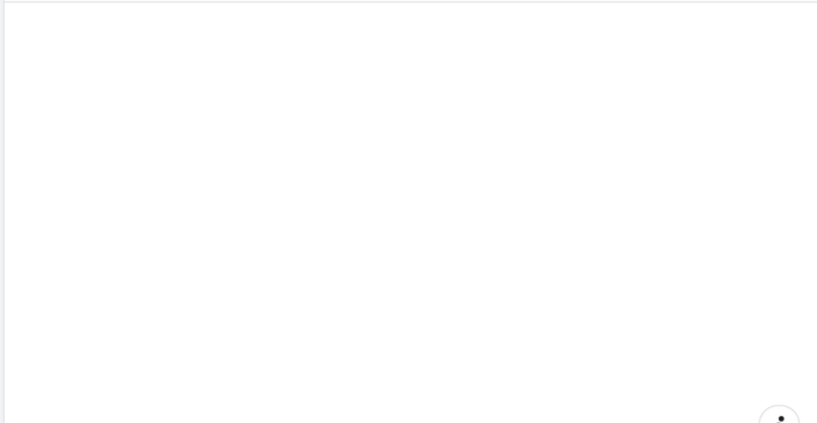


Wausau School District Cancels Christmas

November 14, 2015 · 🌐



Chilling.



HLRECORD.ORG

Fascism at Yale

Like

Comment

Share



Write a comment...





Wausau School District Cancels Christmas

August 24, 2020 · 🌐

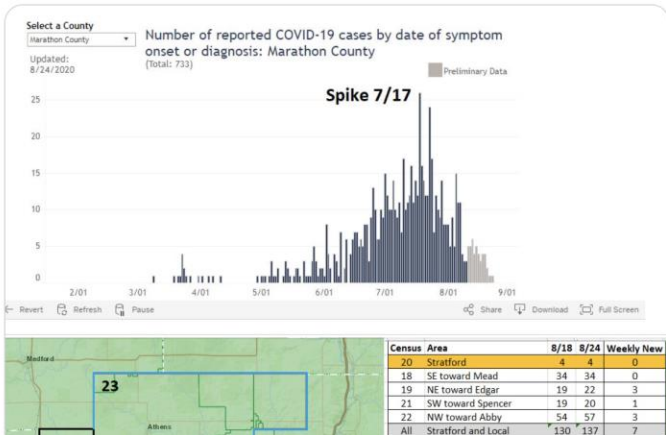
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Marathon County Board Supervisor Chris Dickinson shares his experience with the very dishonest county health department. Why are they hiding the truth? Why would they delete his comments? Why the cover up?

Contact County Health Officer Joan Theurer and tell her to start telling the truth about the Covid test data. If they are not capable of providing fully accurate numbers (ALL of the negative test data), then they should not release any information until they can. Anything less than that is DISHONEST.

Joan.Theurer@co.marathon.wi.us
715-261-1903

#sharethefacts #telltthetruth



Wausau School District Cancels Christmas

August 7, 2020 · 🌐

...

Central Wisconsin Freedom Rally
Sunday, August 9 - 2PM
1040 Indianhead Dr. Mosinee, WI

I WILL NOT COMPLY

GET INVOLVED
 WISCONSIN, INC



Get Involved Wisconsin, Inc.

August 3, 2020 · 🌐

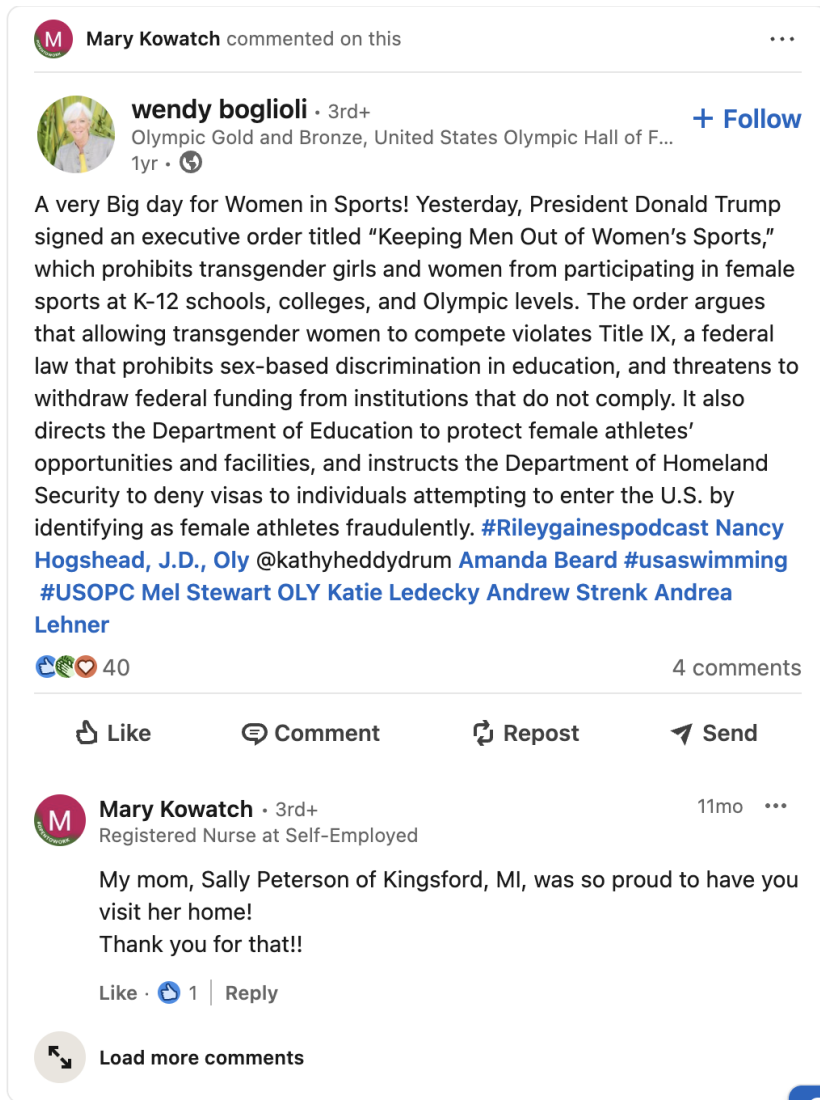
BLAMED TEACHERS UNION FOR ELECTION LOSS

In 2014, after her sixth place finish in the Wausau school board election, Kowatch blamed the Wausau Education Association teacher’s union for her loss. She said “You know, the WEA is well organized, as

they showed in the informational pamphlet that was put in the teachers' lounge. They get out the vote" [WPR].

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN SPORTS

Kowatch commented on a post on LinkedIn that praised an executive order from Trump titled "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports." While Kowatch's comment does not express anything related to the executive order or Trump, her engagement with the post could indicate sympathy the President. Further, sympathies for efforts against trans women in sports could indicate engagement with a wedge issue from far right politicians.



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn comment thread. At the top, it says "Mary Kowatch commented on this". Below that is a post by "wendy boglioli" (3rd+), an Olympic Gold and Bronze medalist, who posted a long text praising President Trump's executive order "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports". The text of the post is: "A very Big day for Women in Sports! Yesterday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled 'Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports,' which prohibits transgender girls and women from participating in female sports at K-12 schools, colleges, and Olympic levels. The order argues that allowing transgender women to compete violates Title IX, a federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in education, and threatens to withdraw federal funding from institutions that do not comply. It also directs the Department of Education to protect female athletes' opportunities and facilities, and instructs the Department of Homeland Security to deny visas to individuals attempting to enter the U.S. by identifying as female athletes fraudulently. #Rileygainespodcast Nancy Hogshead, J.D., Oly @kathyheddydrum Amanda Beard #usaswimming #USOPC Mel Stewart OLY Katie Ledecky Andrew Strenk Andrea Lehner". Below the post are 40 reactions and 4 comments. Mary Kowatch's comment, posted 11 months ago, says: "My mom, Sally Peterson of Kingsford, MI, was so proud to have you visit her home! Thank you for that!!". It has 1 like and a reply button. At the bottom is a "Load more comments" button.

SAID COMMON CORE WAS BIGGEST ISSUE FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT

After her loss for school board in 2014, she described Common Core as "probably going to be our biggest challenge in the future" [WPR]. This could indicate conservative leanings given the conservative wedge issue that was during that time.

INCORRECT CLAIM ABOUT OPPONENT IN 2004

Kowatch wrote an opinion piece in the Wausau Daily Herald correcting a flyer she made about her opponent that he supported a proposed casino in Wausau in 2002. She sent out campaign flyers that he

supported the casino “under the misconception, based on a previous radio debate with Rosenberg on the issue, that he was in favor of having a casino in Wausau.”

Kowatch already sent out the campaign flyers and made corrections to campaign flyers that had yet to go out. “Even though I feel I can best represent the interests of the people of District 1 to our city, I also believe in giving people fair representation - even my opponent. Sorry for the confusion, and thank you for your vote” [Wausau Daily Herald, 3/30/2004].

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

[LinkedIn](#)

[Facebook](#)