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Dr. Maggie Turnbull, candidate for governor, says recent events point to need for an independent candidate

MADISON—National and state events whirling at breakneck speed point to an urgent need in Wisconsin—a truly independent governor.

So says Dr. Margaret "Maggie" Turnbull, who in May collected the 2,000 signatures needed to appear on the November gubernatorial ballot in near-record time.

Now she is hitting the campaign trail hard, and vowing to end the carousel of politics as usual between Democratic and Republican candidates.

"Voters are sick of the extremism on both sides and resulting polarization," Turnbull said. "We are inviting people to get off the political merry-go-round and think about independent leadership this year."

On Thursday, Turnbull visited the planned site of the giant Foxconn plant in Racine County, working to filter out the truth between Republican claims of an economic savior and Democrat cries of a giant corporate giveaway. President Trump and Governor Walker were there earlier in the day, as part of a high security groundbreaking ceremony.

Turnbull said the independent truth, minus the party static, is that the state's economy should be strengthened from within, by investing in Wisconsin-owned businesses and revitalizing smaller communities that have room to grow through tax incentives, grants to build supportive infrastructure and beautification projects to create livable communities.

"Whatever happens with Foxconn, let's just keep working to sustain our own economy, based on good working relationships with each other and a shared respect for the land we depend on," she said.

The economy must also be diverse, she stressed, in order to withstand changes to the wider market.

"That doesn't mean we can't work with outside investors, including offering tax incentives," she said. "But the laws we have in place to protect our natural resources have to be taken seriously. We need healthy ecological systems in order to survive and enjoy our lives here, long after any one company arrives or leaves."

Turnbull has been campaigning at events and festivals across the Badger State, and she said that while enthusiasm has been infectious, some are questioning whether a truly independent candidate can be elected in a state torn by party politics.

That's the point, she said. The system is broken—witness the cavalcade of Democratic candidates for governor and Gov. Scott Walker's stranglehold on the GOP—and cannot be repaired from within.

"We are resonating across the political spectrum," Turnbull said. "We are the meeting ground for the environment, education and science vote as well as the rural/small municipality, fishing, property rights, reasonable gun rights and fiscally responsible vote."

With a nod to her career as an astrobiologist, Turnbull's campaign slogan is "Let Wisconsin Shine!"

"It's a reference to our beautiful dark skies, our precious rivers and lakes and our vast human potential," she said.

Although she now lives in Madison, Turnbull often returns to the northwoods, enjoying hunting, fishing, skiing, kayaking and a variety of other outdoor pursuits.

While she made her home base in Antigo, she helped develop the farm market and spearheaded a project tapping municipal maple trees. She also served as Ninth Ward alderman from 2009 to 2013. She now manages a large nationwide team of scientists to design and build spacecraft as part of NASA's mission to search for planets and life beyond our Solar System.

"Working in our nation's space program has given me the broad experience of tackling complicated tasks with diverse teams and communicating about this work to our federal representatives and the general public. Meanwhile, serving on the Antigo Common Council taught me about the unique challenges that small municipalities face, and how state policies can help or hinder our efforts to thrive," she said.

"Small towns and rural areas have values that are different from the larger cities and I feel we need someone in the governor's office who understands the entire picture, on large and small scales."

Originally hailing from West Allis, the candidate is a 1993 Antigo High School graduate. She continued her studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Arizona and Carnegie Institution of Washington, and is an authority on star systems which may have habitable planets, solar twins and planetary habitability.

She has received numerous honors, including being named Antigo High School Alumnus of the Year in 2007 and being cited as a "Genius" by CNN for her work cataloging stars most likely to develop planets that could support life and intelligent civilizations. The UW-Madison Alumni Park bears a quote from Turnbull on her thoughts about the human journey, saying, "We are not evolved to be pigeon-holed."

IMAGE: Turnbull and an area resident view the Foxconn site, which straddles the Lake Michigan and Mississippi River watersheds within the Racine County wetlands.