

Madison County Board Member Says It's "Volatile Time" in County Republican Party

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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COLLINSVILLE/MARYVILLE - Madison County Board member Paul Nicolussi recently appeared on ["Our Daily Show!"](#) at [RiverBender.com](#) to talk about the Madison County Conservative Caucus and the conflict and collaboration between Republicans and Democrats at the county level.

Nicolussi, who identifies as "very conservative," noted that it's a "volatile time" within the Madison County Republican Party. He spoke about the conflict he has witnessed between "establishment Republicans" and other conservatives. The Conservative Caucus aims to provide a space for Madison County conservatives to come together regardless of party affiliation.

"As a Republican, I just want to make sure I'm voting for a Republican, and that gets to the reason we started the caucus," Nicolussi explained. "I think we are the gold standard of conservatism in Madison County now. We check all the boxes. We're for parents' rights, freedom of religion, we are pro-life...We want the most efficient government for the people. No favors to your friends, no giving somebody a bid without multiple bids, not hiring people based off who they know but off skills and merit. When things get away from hiring people on merit, you go off the rails."

Nicolussi said that many Republicans will support Democrats, which he disapproves of. He points to Madison County Republican Chairman Ray Wesley as an example, noting that Wesley and others backed Alton Mayor David Goins a few years ago. Nicolussi said that this is when he began noticing a pattern of some county-level Republicans working with and endorsing Democratic candidates over other Republicans.

“The upper-level people in the Republican party, people kind of running it including Chairman Wesley, they’re really not worried about conservative issues,” Nicolussi said. “Man, it just seems like they don’t care if they are a Democrat, if they have their values or not, they will just back them against another Republican just because they’re a part of our group or they’re not a part of their club. Some of the establishment Republicans do not have a problem working with Democrats to beat other Republicans. That is a fact. So that’s something we noticed in the caucus when we formed it in 2022.”

He also voiced his support for lifelong Democrats who change party affiliations, but said he does not believe these new Republicans should run against established Republicans.

Nicolussi said that many “establishment Republicans” have decided to work against Madison County Chairman Kurt Prenzler, who the Conservative Caucus has endorsed in his race against County Treasurer Chris Slusser. Prenzler appointed Nicolussi in 2022.

“There’s a lot of fine Republicans in this county who are not part of our group,” Nicolussi added. “But there’s a certain group of Republicans, their voting record shows. There are six Republicans on the Board who never vote with Kurt, just guaranteed, no matter what he does. They’ve turned down all kinds of qualified people for appointments, like T.J. Callahan...I think there’s board members that got elected in 2020 and got appointed by Kurt, actually, and since they’ve got on, they’ve just dedicated their political career to going after him and his appointees. And it’s not what they ran on.”

Nicolussi said these conflicts, which he believes are personal in nature, are “unprofessional” and “wasting tons of time.”

“And the thing is, I don’t know where these people stand on issues because it’s never about that. It’s never been about that because it’s just about personality,” he said. “It’s not why I got involved in politics. Just a lot of conduct that I think is very unprofessional. It’s not why our constituents sent us there. They didn’t send us out there to do personal grievances or, ‘I got a problem with this person’s friend,’ or, ‘This happened years ago so we’re going to go after you.’”

He added there are many “good conservatives” within the Republican Party in Madison County. The Conservative Caucus aims to identify these candidates and support them, according to their [official website at MadCoConservatives.org](http://MadCoConservatives.org). Nicolussi himself endorsed Michael Turner, Dwight Kay, Douglas Matthews and Linda Wolfe.

“Everybody’s transfixed on national politics, which is good. It’s good to be informed,” Nicolussi added. “But they don’t really realize what’s going on locally, which has more impact.”

To watch Nicolussi’s full segment on “Our Daily Show!,” click [here](#).