

Independent Living Council of Wisconsin

State Office/District: State Assembly District 54

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Questionnaire

- 1) I am committed to affordable and accessible health care for all, economic development, funding for the UW System, and better support for cities like Oshkosh who need state support for infrastructure and service investment. I will work for better long-term budgets and planning that address the revenue and spending challenges Wisconsin faces. We face tough fiscal times but must not lose sight of the importance of investment in our human capital through a quality education system Pre-K through college and beyond. I believe we can achieve bipartisan solutions to many problems if we are being honest about the goals and what measures actually achieve them.
- 2) I was a cosponsor of the Mental Health Insurance Parity Bill last session and am committed to getting it passed so we start treating mental illness the same as physical illness. There was bi-partisan support and enough votes to pass it, but the leadership in the Assembly was not interested in increasing affordable health insurance coverage for mental illness.
- 3) Income inequality is higher than at anytime since the Great Depression and a higher percentage of Wisconsinites are living in poverty. While wages remain flat, the costs of basic necessities continue to increase. The cost of in-state college tuition has grown considerably over the past five years making educational opportunity less affordable. Health care costs have gone up four times faster than wages during the past six years while the personal savings rate is the lowest it's been since the Great Depression. Recent tax exemptions such as that on Social Security income benefited the upper two-thirds of income brackets instead of targeting those most in need.

Targeted Property Tax Relief - In tough economic times, affordability is a major concern. In order to provide relief to those who most need it, I support increasing the Homestead Credit Amount and the eligibility level so those on a fixed income can remain in their current homes or apartments.

Improve Assistance to Disabled Workers: To help all workers adapt to a rapidly changing economy, I would work to continuously update available worker training and extend it to service industries. It is crucial we help workers retrain, and provide retraining assistance for workers in sectors of the economy. We face workforce shortages and it will be important to increase the skills of all workers.

Invest In a Clean Energy Economy: Incentive and invest support the next generation of biofuels and fuel infrastructure, encourage the commercialization of plug-in hybrids, promote development of large scale renewable energy. Help lead workforce and manufacturing centers to assist American workers in obtaining the skills and tools they need to pioneer the first wave of green technologies that will be in high demand throughout the world.

Raise the Minimum Wage: Raise the minimum wage, consider indexing it as other states have done and consider increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit to make sure that full-time workers are able to earn a living wage that allows them to raise their families and pay for basic needs.

Limit Predatory Lending by capping outlandish interest rates on payday loans while Improving Disclosure: I was cosponsor of a bill that places a 36 percent interest cap to all payday loans. I support

requiring lenders to provide clear, accurate, and simplified information about loan fees, payments and penalties.

Work to support affordable childcare and high-quality afterschool opportunities for people.

- 4) I would contact the Department of Health and Family Services as well as Winnebago County and ARC of Winnebago County to see what the options are. If the family's resources are exhausted, they should be eligible for Medicaid benefits. There may be assisted living facilities available that accept Medicaid and provide the level of care necessary for the daughter. If not, the County still operates and maintains program support. With the future expansion of Family Care, additional options may be available depending on the needs of the daughter. As a legislator, I always follow up directly by phone and by letter to ensure needs of constituents are being met. It may be that State of County caseworkers are better equipped to explain options, but I want to know that the response is satisfactory.
- 5) Family Care on paper is very appealing. We need to be more flexible in our limited resources going to the level of care people need, which can vary greatly. Everyone supports the concept of independent living, but I have concerns about the costs of the project. While the original goal of the program included savings to the Medical Assistance budget, it is likely that enrollment will expand and increase costs tremendously in the long run. Some community advocates for the disabled have raised concerns over standards, supervision, and accountability of the program as well.
- 6) I work with the school district on a number of issues, and while not everything has a solution, we could work on what options are available. Perhaps there are others who have a similar situation where it would be cost effective to duplicate efforts and reach this person currently left out of these options. Prep courses should be made available online and be made available for such cases and situations. Lastly, I always have work that needs to be done. If someone needed a resume builder or accessible extracurricular activity, I would offer them an internship.
- 7) My local ARC group has invited me to speak to their council and answer questions directly from members with disabilities and I have attended their annual picnic. They have also been in regular contact on issues and budgetary items of interest in concern. I do my best to be available to all constituents with monthly office hours at the accessible senior center and by being an active member in the community. If there is a caretaker or relative actively involved in their life, I try and build a relationship with that person to make sure they no I am always available.