

State Office: Senate District: 26

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Questionnaire

1. As a legislator, what are the three issues you will prioritize in the next legislative session?

**Affordable and universal healthcare access for all residents
Statewide Smoking Ban
Campaign Finance Reform**

2. Studies indicate that one in four Wisconsinites have diagnosable mental illness and would benefit from effective treatment. In addition, mental illness is the leading cause of disability for working age adults in the United States. People often can not access effective treatment, frequently citing affordability as a barrier. What will you do as a legislator to increase access to effective treatment and community services?

During my tenure, I have been a vocal advocate and supporter of Mental Health Parity and will continue that support and advocacy if re-elected.

3. Poverty is a reality for many people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Consider these facts, from the American Association of People with Disabilities.

- 27.5% of people with disabilities aged 18-64 live below the poverty line.
- The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is three times higher than for people without disabilities.
- The SSI supplement for Wisconsinites with disabilities has not increased in over ten years.

As a legislator, what will you do to address poverty for people with disabilities?

Work to create or improve programs that allow individuals with disabilities to obtain meaningful and gainful employment without losing their eligibility for healthcare coverage or other assistance programs.

4. One of your constituents contacts you. She is a 68 year old woman whose 70 year old husband has just had a stroke and is now in a nursing home. They have a 46 year old daughter with cerebral palsy who has always lived at home.

Up until now, the family has been providing their daughter's personal care as well as help with mobility and transfers, for example in and out of the bathtub. Now with dad in the nursing home, mom cannot care for their daughter alone. The family is covered by Medicare and the daughter is Medicaid eligible.

All the family's available resources have been expended through caring for their daughter and dad's nursing home costs. Your constituent needs help to provide the assistance her daughter needs and she does not know where to turn. Please describe how you would handle this situation as a legislator and what specific steps you would take to assist this constituent.

First, I would find out from either the woman or her daughter who the daughter's case worker or counselor is with the county and make sure they know the situation and request their assistance. Even in a self-directed care system, there should be a primary contact with the county human services department.

Also, a call to the County Healthcare Ombudsman would be made to let him/her know that this family is going through a crisis and needs assistance. I would ask the ombudsman to speak directly to the family to see what assistance can be provided.

I would also find out if the daughter and her family are working with United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) and contact that individual. If the daughter is not connected with UCP, I would make sure they know the family is in crisis and needs that agencies assistance.

My goal would be to get the family in home personal care or nursing care services they need to care for their daughter in their home. Also to identify any additional grants or program that will give the family assistive technology or other mechanical assistance (lifting, communication, personal care) and financial assistance they are entitled to or qualify for to meet any other needs of the daughter and the family.

5. Do you support expansion of Family Care statewide? Why or why not? If you support other initiatives to increase options for people with disabilities to live in the community, which ones and why do you support them?

I support expansion of Family Care. Giving individuals more and better choices about where they live and what kinds of services and supports they get to meet their needs. Improving access to needed services and

creating an entitlement should eliminate waiting lists for vital healthcare and social programs needed to allow individuals with disabilities to live independently and with dignity.

6. A constituent in your district who is attending high school plans to attend college in the near future. Her high school offers college prep courses and other extra-curricular activities after school. Counselors often recommend that students participate in these activities to make their college applications stronger and to inform them about options and resources they have when it comes to making a decision to attend college.

Your constituent has a physical disability and uses a wheelchair. She is not able to drive or take public transportation. Her high school does not offer accessible transportation for these after-school programs.

This constituent would like her college application to be competitive with students who can participate in these programs. How would you respond if she called to request your assistance?

First, I would identify what types of activities the constituent wants to participate in. Then I would contact local disability agencies that specialize in physical disabilities to see if they have suggestions for finding and securing accessible transportation after school for the student. I would also consider offering an internship in my office if that type of work would be of interest to the student and assist in his or her application process.

7. The 2000 census showed that approximately one in every 6¹/₂ Wisconsin residents has a disability. As a legislator, what specific steps will you take in order to reach out to the disability community and ensure you are proactively meeting the needs of this constituency?

I always have an open door policy. Recently, I was the only legislator to attend a forum on disability issues. I have always been a proactive voice of support for the disabled community and will continue doing so if re-elected.