



Wisconsin State Assembly Candidate Questionnaire Fall Election, November 8, 2016

The Good Government Council (GGC), a committee of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce, was formed to act as a focal point for voluntary political involvement by the business community and other interested individuals in the Eau Claire area. One of the main objectives of the GGC is to learn about candidates' positions on various issues to inform and educate our members. The Chamber does not endorse candidates.

The GGC sent out a questionnaire to all of the candidates in State Assembly districts 67, 68, 91, and 93. Here are the responses as we received them from each of the candidates. Candidates are arranged alphabetically by district with the lowest-numbered district first. We encourage you to pass on this communication to anyone interested in learning more about the candidates and their position on issues and challenges that currently face the Chippewa Valley and the State of Wisconsin. To identify which district you live in and what's on your ballot, [click here](#).

For more information about the Chamber and its Governmental Affairs programs, contact Scott Rogers: rogers@eauclairechamber.org or 715-834-1204



Question 1: Why are you running for this office, and what issues will you emphasize if elected to the next session of the legislature?

67th State Assembly District Candidates

Dennis Hunt (D): I am running to restore prosperity to the 67th Assembly District by working across the aisle to solve the tough issues. We need to fix our infrastructure, increase entrepreneurship, and invest in public education. Doing these things will increase opportunities for all residents in the district.

Rob Summerfield (R): I decided to run for the 67th Assembly seat after hearing that the Representative Tom Larson would be retiring from the legislature. I have been following local and state level politics for the past decade, and have a diversified small business background as well as being highly involved in the community. After discussing this opportunity with my family, I made the decision to run for office because I want to represent the people that reside in the region I've called home my entire life.

If elected, I will make it my priority to invest in education, by ensuring that schools are adequately funded, be a part of the effort to balance the budget and ensure the state is living within its means, and finally, to make sure that roads and infrastructure in Western Wisconsin are addressed, while looking to reduce borrowing for transportation funding.

68th State Assembly District Candidates

Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): I'm passionate about the issues that affect the Chippewa Valley. I've served in local and county government as an elected official and believe that I have the knowledge to effectively communicate our needs at the state level. Transportation funding will be a big issue for me in the upcoming legislative session.

Howard White (D): I am running for the 68th Assembly District to bring a voice back to the residents of the Chippewa Valley and Northwestern WI. We need to emphasize aid to new business start-ups and our small businesses. We need to provide the education and job training skills needed for our students and employers to not only fill the available jobs, but to also anticipate those that will be needed in the near future. We need to focus on a stable and maintainable long-term source for funding our infrastructure improvements so that our communities can grow and provide areas for our businesses to grow with them. Finally, we need to focus on wage and tax strategies to boost and strengthen our middle class.

91st State Assembly District Candidates

Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): I'm running for this office, because I believe that Wisconsinites, acting through their elected officials in government, want to make their state a great place to live. They believe that, as citizens, we're all in this together, and can accomplish great things when we all work together. We can invest in public schools to build an educated, creative workforce. We can provide quality, affordable health care that can bring down costs for everyone. We can protect the environment so we have clean air and water, and green spaces that are indispensable to our hunting and fishing traditions and tourism industry. We can build a durable, quality transportation infrastructure that's so critical for economic development. And we can create innovative public-private partnerships, as we did with the Confluence Center, to invest in projects that benefit taxpayers and businesses alike. I believe the Confluence Center, and how it was created, should serve as the new approach Wisconsin should take to investing in and building our state's future.

William Ingram (R): I want to lower taxes and cut spending, while at the same time fixing our local roads and making sure programs for our elderly, our veterans, and our disabled are improved and properly funded. I want to get government control out of our lives.

93rd State Assembly District Candidate

Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): Working on behalf of my constituents and continuing to be their strong independent voice in Madison are my reasons to seek a fourth consecutive term. My work will continue to focus upon:

- * Providing excellent educational and employment opportunities for our citizens
- * Creating a more common sense and balanced taxation, bureaucratic, and regulatory environment which encourages entrepreneurs, farmers, manufacturers, and other business owners to build and invest in our State
- * Providing excellent services to our Veterans
- * Providing quality health care to the poorest of our poor citizens
- * Eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse of State funds and resources
- * Protecting our beautiful natural resources while increasing opportunities for tourism and

recreation

* Maintaining our strong infrastructure systems and law enforcement agencies to ensure our safety and welfare

* Leveraging private and public resources into expansion of Broadband Internet access for rural areas of Wisconsin

* Continuing work with law enforcement and our Attorney General's office to address Wisconsin's epidemic of heroin, opioid, and methamphetamine substance abuse

* Continuing work with Wisconsin Job Centers and Department of Workforce Development to connect those who want family-supporting jobs with employers and/or that they have opportunities to receive the training needed to obtain those jobs.

Question 2: As the legislature approaches its overall budget for the next biennium, what are your budget priorities? What areas of taxation and spending would you increase or decrease?

67th State Assembly District Candidates

Dennis Hunt (D): I am an accountant, business owner and experienced government financial management officer. I understand setting priorities and balancing a budget based on available resources. We must prioritize investment in our future. Providing adequate funding for public schools and job training programs, assisting small businesses and investing in transportation and infrastructure are top priorities. We must stop taking public school funding and transferring it to unaccountable private schools. Like other states, we should take advantage of federal funding opportunities for federal healthcare funds. I believe we should hold the line or reduce net taxes for middle and working class Wisconsinites. We also need to provide economic development incentives only to companies that meet targeted performance metrics and not companies who reduce state employment.

Rob Summerfield (R): I'll seek to ensure proper funding for education and roads. I will first and foremost advocate for balancing our budget by searching for efficiencies in the way that the government operates. The budget process is lengthy and there are many moving parts that haven't even been put into play yet. Until I am able to evaluate the agencies' budgets and Governor's suggestions, I do not believe I will be able to answer the best areas to increase or decrease spending.

68th State Assembly District Candidates

Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): Again, transportation funding will be a major issue. I've also focused on aging and long-term care issues over the past session. I'd like to see the state continue to support programs like the respite care and grants for local mobile crisis teams to be trained in dementia care.

Howard White (D): We need to alter our priorities in the next budget. I would place a priority on providing increased funding for our public education and job training, assistance for small business and new business start-ups, and stable and reliable funding for our infrastructure improvements. We should stop the reduction of funds to our public schools and especially the siphoning off of monies to unaccountable voucher schools. We should stop the tax breaks and hand-outs to large businesses by the WEDC and make more of those funds available to small business growth. We should be looking at all options for funding our roads, treatment plants, etc, rather than continuing to borrow and increasing the State's debt service. Nothing should be "off the table" when funding is considered.

91st State Assembly District Candidates

Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): We must reverse the massive cuts to our K-12 public schools and the UW System that have taken place over the last five years. Our public schools not only educate our future workforce, but they also serve as a support system and safety net for children who face a variety of challenges at home. With its aging population and slow population growth, Wisconsin can't afford to leave a single child behind if we're to compete in a global economy.

Nearly all new jobs are created by new and young businesses. In an economy increasingly reliant on technology and a diverse, highly-educated workforce, the massive cuts the UW System schools have absorbed couldn't be more damaging, in both reputation and practice, to our state's economic future. We should be encouraging investment in higher education and transferring the ideas students and faculty develop in the lab into successful commercial products.

In recent years, our tax system has redirected revenue from the middle class to the wealthy. The result has been a shift in responsibility for paying for schools, roads, public infrastructure and services to working people, and a decrease in the funding for those programs which benefit our rapidly shrinking middle class. We need to restore balance to our tax system, stop the handouts to the wealthy and allow working families to keep more of their money, which will return to the economy through spending on goods and services provided by Wisconsin businesses, not sitting in the bank accounts of wealthy shareholders.

William Ingram (R): I want to lower taxes and cut spending, while at the same time fixing our local roads and making sure programs for our elderly, our veterans, and our disabled are improved and properly funded. I want to get government control out of our lives.

93rd State Assembly District Candidate

Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): We must, we have in the past, and we will again, make Public Education the number one priority item in the next state budget, and we should continue to find ways of increasing K-12 funding, especially in financially challenged small rural school districts. Secondly, finding a long-term, sustainable solution to paying for the transportation funding issue is of utmost importance; it is my belief that all funding options should be on the table for our state's infrastructure needs. Thirdly, if we can discover methods by which to reduce the often onerous property and income tax burdens on hardworking Wisconsin families, I would support those measures as well.

Question 3: The primary sources for transportation revenue, including gas taxes and registration fees, have been growing slower than transportation spending, leading to projections of increasing shortfalls in revenues vs. planned expenditures and increasing levels of debt. What measures would you support to match transportation fund revenues with the state's transportation needs?

67th State Assembly District Candidates

Dennis Hunt (D): Wisconsin has failed to provide sustainable transportation funding for far too long. As a representative, I will work hard to identify realistic funding sources rather than just adding to the state debt or delaying projects for decades. I am open to considering any pro-growth

proposals that provide adequate funding for our transportation infrastructure. I am willing to consider user-based funding options such as indexing gas tax to inflation.

Rob Summerfield (R): I am open to every option that will create a sustainable and fiscally conservative solution to the transportation funding issue. I am currently awaiting the DOT to release an audit report that will allow the legislature and all parties to be made fully aware of the current standing of the agency, and where efficiencies and savings can be made. I believe it is best to be fully informed before pledging to abide by any method.

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Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): I believe that a few small increases would not have a significant impact on our taxpayers and yet allow us to get control of our debt service, while we address needed repairs. I also think that a different revenue source for a limited time should be considered so local governments can get a handle on their own repairs. The tax burden we pay now for gas tax, by percentage, is unchanged but actual dollars are less; the reason is that our vehicles get many more miles per gallon. At some point, we will need to address the reality that some hybrid vehicles pay very little in gas tax.

Howard White (D): All measures need to be considered when addressing funding. There can be no "sacred cow" when the only alternative is continued borrowing and increased debt service. At the very least the gas tax needs to be indexed to inflation so that it can grow as the economy grows. This alone will not solve the problem.

91st State Assembly District Candidates

Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): Our state is facing an over \$939 million shortfall in our transportation budget to simply keep the roads and bridges we have in good repair. Governor Walker hasn't led on this issue, and his latest proposal, which demands complete offsets of any revenue increases, would require massive cuts to our public education, health care and correctional systems. Poor roads cost businesses and consumers millions of dollars in premature wear and tear, accidents and congestion. Every option to bring in revenue to build up our roads and bridges, ranked among the worst in the nation, must be carefully considered.

William Ingram (R): We need to keep transportation decisions local and the work done by local employees. The fuel tax should be a small percentage instead of the fixed tax or eliminate it completely and tax it with the standard sales tax. I am opposed to the wheel tax and want to keep registration fees low. We should be looking at a weight tax on the currently exempted overweight corporate vehicles that are destroying our rural roads.

93rd State Assembly District Candidate

Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): State Transportation funding has been in a rebuilding phase ever since the previous administration raided \$1.4 billion of highway funds to pay for other State programs. Thanks to the Constitutional Amendment we passed in our last Legislative Session and with overwhelming support from Wisconsin voters, the funds are now segregated and protected from mismanagement. I have strongly advocated in the past for more funding for local roads along with less bonding (borrowing) to pay for our transportation infrastructure system. We are anxiously awaiting a Legislative Audit of the Transportation Department which will give us solid data upon which we will base intelligent options for finding spending efficiencies and underline long-term and sustainable options for funding our highways and roads. We must ensure we are spending transportation dollars in the most efficient and effective way possible while keeping our

roads safe. This will be a top priority of this budget cycle and I will work diligently with my Colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find creative, reasonable fiscal solutions to our transportation system challenges.

Question 4: Given recent trends in the financing of all levels of public education in Wisconsin, how should education funding be structured in the next budget to assure appropriate financing for every level of public education?

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Dennis Hunt (D): I believe investment in education is critical to future business growth and success of our great state. We must reverse much of the \$2.05 billion cut in state aid. These cuts included \$1.05B to K-12 school aids, \$785M the UW System, and \$203M for vocational colleges. The state needs to invest in these programs to provide the educated workforce we need to compete now and in the future.

Rob Summerfield (R): Simply put, this isn't a single answer sort of question. After talking with an abundance of constituents in the 67th District, it is clear education funding is a priority. Clearly, education is the stepping stone to success. I believe in giving a solid foundation to all children by ensuring that K-12 funding is not cut. It is also important that the tuition freeze is continued into the next biennium which will make college more affordable for those who decide to pursue a post-secondary degree. However, I want to emphasize how important funding for technical training is for the 67th, as it will help close the skills gap and allow more people to be employed in high-demand fields.

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Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): Funding K-12 education remains one of the most important and expensive parts of the state budget. In fact, one third of the state's general purpose revenue goes toward public education. We've seen some challenging budgets over the past few years, which has turned into a situation where our small schools are pitted against larger districts. Since revenue limits were imposed many years ago, low spending schools have been penalized. I'm looking at possible solutions to hold revenue limits for certain schools to allow others to catch up.

Howard White (D): In the last 3 budgets under GOP control our K-12 schools, UW system, and Vocational colleges have lost over \$2 billion. These funds need to be replaced to continue the high standards of education for which WI is known. The funding formula is broken and needs to be fixed. There have been proposals made for changes, but hearings are not held and votes are not allowed. The areas hardest hit by this obstructionist policy are rural areas like the 68th District. There are no easy answers, but the legislature needs to tackle the problem before more school districts are faced with operating-expense referendums.

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Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): I'm a supporter of the goals of DPI Superintendent Tony Evers' Fair Funding for Our Future plan, introduced last budget cycle, to make Wisconsin's school funding formula clearer and more equitable. It will provide an increase in support for public schools districts, in addition to restoring some of the ability for districts to utilize their levy to secure the funding they believe is necessary to keep the quality of the students' educational

experience high. DPI points out that taxpayers continue to pass referenda in order to keep their schools running throughout the state. Providing adequate and equitable school funding is a requirement of the state under our constitution, local citizens shouldn't have to tax themselves to make up for what the state refuses to do. In addition, allowing more and more school districts to operate dependent on referenda means that inequality between districts that pass them and those that don't will only grow. We can provide a quality education for all students while protecting property taxpayers. Every child is important, and has the potential to play an important role in each of our communities in the future. We can't afford to squander the talents of a single child in this state.

William Ingram (R): We need to remove education funding from the property tax and work toward total elimination of property taxes on homes that are owned by the elderly or disabled or by homeowners that take in and care for elderly or disabled family members. We need to insure funding will provide a better education for the student. Tenure needs to be eliminated and parents should have the freedom to decide which school their child will attend. Funding should come from income tax instead of property tax since most people go to school to learn how to earn a living not how to own property.

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Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): As it should be, K-12 Education remains our top priority in the State budget with over one-third of all General Purpose Funds going to local school aids. This is a solid investment in our future and I will continue my work to advocate strongly for even more equity in the obtuse and complex Equalization Aid Funding Formula so that the schools of my 93rd District receive as much State Aid as possible. We will continue to examine spending in all State Departments to further eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse of program funds while maintaining responsible and balanced levels of taxation and spending. I opposed the cuts to the UW-System in the last budget, and believe we should increase funding for K-12 education in the next budget. Thanks to the dedicated work of outstanding instructors, administration, support staff, and involved parental and community support, our schools in Western Wisconsin remain strong, successful, and vibrant centers of learning for our young people. Wisconsin student graduation rates and student SAT test scores remain among the highest in the United States. By working together with the education professionals of my District, I remain committed to doing all I can to ensure their continued success.

Question 5: Our region faces several significant workforce challenges, including a "skills gap" between employer labor demands and the available workforce, as well as demographic issues related to the size of the workforce and the ability to recruit and retain employees to the area. What should be the state's role in solving these issues?

67th State Assembly District Candidates

Dennis Hunt (D): As an employer and accountant to businesses, I understand the challenges of employers adding the skilled labor they need to expand and compete. Wisconsin should help this effort by investing in the organizations that educate and train workers. I support proposals to provide increased investment in vocational colleges for high-demand fields as employers will likely partner with schools and students to match this investment.

Rob Summerfield (R): In order to improve Wisconsin's competitive edge for job growth and creation, we need to continue to invest in the education system in order to create a multi-skilled workforce. This includes looking beyond the traditional four-year college route. Our region offers good-paying, family-sustaining jobs in the trades. We need to invest in training and technical education programs to ensure that individuals have the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace.

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Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): As the Assembly author of the Wisconsin Fast Forward legislation, I can confidently tell you that our employers don't need all employees to have a college degree. What they do need are workers that have the drive and ability to learn the skills that will assure a good paying job. We now have a program that employers can pursue with matching funds to train or retrain their employees. We will likely need to do more of this.

Howard White (D): The WEDC attempts to lure businesses with tax benefits, job credits, etc. Part of the problem with this approach is when the businesses review the communities they find areas that are not prepared from an infrastructure standpoint to handle a new, larger business moving to the area. This may be because of roads (air, rail) lack of broadband expansion, or available workforce. Job credits and tax breaks won't always be the difference. We need to deal with all of these issues in order to provide a complete package to employers and businesses. The legislature should also reconsider the Dem. Assembly bill that provided for investment for training in high-demand fields to meet some of the demands of the state employers.

91st State Assembly District Candidates

Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): The global economy will rely more and more on workers who have post-secondary education and who have the skills to learn constantly evolving technologies on the job. We need to focus our investments in our technical colleges, where specialized skills can be delivered to workers based on the needs of employers in that region, relatively quickly and at an affordable cost. We can no longer think that the goals of our public schools is to educate children through 12th grade. Our state should begin a shift toward providing widespread, accessible and affordable post-secondary education that will not only fill a region's immediate workforce needs, but will also emphasize entrepreneurship and business development skills so we can generate the spin-off and start-up businesses that create the vast majority of new jobs. Our aim isn't just to close the gap, but to have an educated workforce that grows Wisconsin and puts Wisconsin on the forefront of our economy, nationally.

William Ingram (R): The State needs to get out of business, eliminate the minimum wage and the forty hour work week limitation, and make it unprofitable for businesses to employ illegal immigrants.

93rd State Assembly District Candidate

Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): Having the privilege of serving as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development this Legislative term, it has become apparent to me that private sector, family-sustaining careers are the fundamental key component of personal economic success and prosperity, which subsequently, through responsible taxation, provides adequate funding for public government programs. It has always been my firm belief that the government's primary role in economic development is to help create the best environment possible for private-sector job growth; in action, that translates to reducing overbearing government regulation, keeping the tax burden as low as possible, and providing job training programs and opportunities that help

provide skilled employees for businesses. This session I was proud to author a bill which increased funding for “Wisconsin Fast Forward” grants, which provide workforce training and technical equipment to school districts. On September 27th, the Job Center of Wisconsin website posted a remarkable number of 91,263 available jobs! By starting career and technical training at an ever earlier age, we can be successful in helping fill the desperate need of employers in all sectors for skilled, adept, creative employees.

Question 6: Medicaid is already the second largest state funded program, and its percentage of the total state budget continues to grow. How should the legislature respond to the ongoing financial pressure this creates, while keeping Medicaid sustainable and able to serve those who need its assistance?

67th State Assembly District Candidates

Dennis Hunt (D): Healthcare costs continue to rise across the country. Wisconsin must continue to address this critical need. Wisconsin should be the 32nd state to take advantage of available federal healthcare funding for vulnerable residents. This would have saved state taxpayers \$300 million in the current budget alone and could have created an additional 10,500 state healthcare jobs.

Rob Summerfield (R): Medicaid funding is an issue that even the top people in the health industry find complex. If there was a simple answer, I think it would have already been addressed in previous years. Despite this not being my area of expertise, I believe that the legislature should continue to investigate if there are ways to create efficiencies that would consolidate care while ensuring that quality of care and funding will not be sacrificed.

68th State Assembly District Candidates

Kathy Bernier (R) (Incumbent): Medicaid funding provides varying services, from health care insurance to home care for the elderly. We need to look at administrative efficiency as well as program safe guards. Nearly all new tax revenue is pushed toward Medicaid-funded services, this cannot continue at the same rate. This is why we are looking at a more efficient and effective family care program. I am committed to serving as many disabled and elderly as possible in their home, but we need to do this in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Howard White (D): One of the biggest mistakes made by our Governor was the rejection of the \$300 million in Federal Medicaid funds that were available to our State. That would have helped our budget significantly. It is estimated it could have also created over 10,000 additional healthcare jobs.

91st State Assembly District Candidates

Dana Wachs (D) (Incumbent): Wisconsin is the only state in the country to participate in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and not take the federal dollars we’ve already paid into the program to help pay for it here in our state. By the end of 2017, Wisconsin taxpayers will have spent \$678 million more to provide health care than if the state has taken our own federal taxes back into the state. By expanding coverage and accepting our own money back into the state, we can invest in public health programs that bring people into the health care system in time to diagnose and treat

illnesses that would otherwise eventually drive someone without coverage into the emergency room, where it increases costs for everyone else.

In addition, Governor Walker refuses to establish state-based health care exchange markets. With his administration expending almost no effort to publicize the availability of federal health care exchange markets, enrollment lags behind what it potentially could be. Minnesota has fully-embraced the ACA, and as a result, Wisconsin's premiums are now 79% to 99% higher than Minnesota before tax credits are applied. Rates in Eau Claire are 116% higher. If Wisconsin had well-publicized, state-based exchange markets, we could increase enrollment, stabilize the market's enrollment, drive down premiums and cover more people, creating an overall healthier population and saving money for everyone.

The healthier our population as a whole, the less medical care we consume, and that which we do consume is done in a more affordable, forward-looking way that averts additional costs down the road. Governor Walker's approach to this issue vividly illustrates the old adage, "penny wise and pound foolish."

William Ingram (R): Wisconsin tax payers have paid into this system all their working careers. It is unacceptable for the government to turn their back on them now because of cost. We need to insure that our elderly, our disabled, and our veterans are taken care of. There are many other programs that can be cut or eliminated to make this happen.

93rd State Assembly District Candidate

Warren Petryk (R) (Incumbent): We must continue to discover methodologies which will help the State provide quality health services to Wisconsin's poorest of our poor in an efficient and effective manner. We can be justifiably proud of the fact that today, Wisconsin is one of the only States in the U.S. providing health care to all our citizens living under the Federal poverty level. This session, we expanded FamilyCare statewide, which will provide essential health services to individuals living in our communities. We in the State Legislature also pushed back on Governor Walker's original proposed changes to long-term care and instead worked to create a sustainable plan which garners efficiencies and makes the processes at the Department of Health Services more streamlined. Preliminary reports are indicating the good news that the number of sign-ups to BadgerCare are trending lower for this budget cycle which may mean there would be more money available for our number one priority, K-12 education. If that is actually the case, it will be welcome news indeed; we will need to see what the actual data indicates in the coming months.