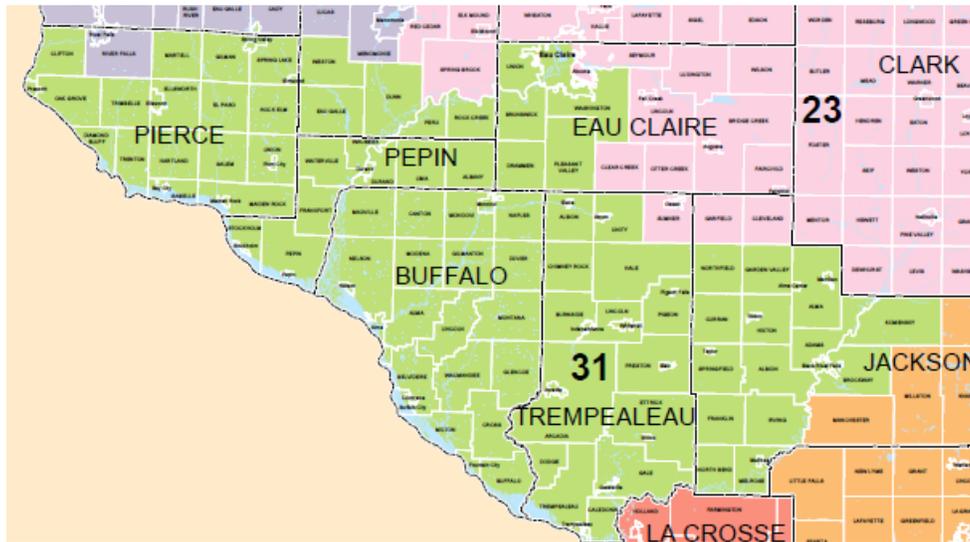




Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce  
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## Wisconsin 31<sup>st</sup> Senate District Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire



**When: Tuesday, August 14, 2018;** polls open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Find your location: [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov)  
Early voting weekdays, July 30-August 10. Contact your municipality for hours and location.

**What it's about:** Democratic and Republican Party Primary election to determine who will be on the ballot in the November 6 General Election.

**Who can vote:** The election is open to all eligible voters. Wisconsin has an open primary system with a secret ballot. You will receive a ballot for all parties, but in the voting booth you must vote for candidates in only one party.

**Where you vote and who is on your ballot:**

- Go to [myvote.wi.gov](http://myvote.wi.gov)
- Enter your voting address to learn which races are on your ballot and where you vote.

**Why this questionnaire:** The Good Government Council (GGC) is a committee of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce dedicated to encouraging voter participation and providing members of the business community with non-biased information about candidates' positions on important issues. Although the Chamber is active in policy issues, it is non-partisan and does not endorse political candidates.

**Who is running in the 31<sup>st</sup> Senate District:** There are three Democrats running for the party nomination – Steve Boe of Taylor, Jon Schultz of Arcadia, and Jeff Smith of Eau Claire – to face the one Republican candidate, Mel Pittman of Plum City. Here are their answers to our questions:

*Q1. Why are you running for this office and what issues will you emphasize if elected to the next session of the legislature?*

**Steve Boe (D)**

I am running for the 31st Senate District because I believe it is time for new leadership and a new approach in Madison that provides a balanced approach that promotes growth and the well-being of people in western Wisconsin and the state.

My top priority in this campaign is to promote a message that reflects the values of those living in the 31st Senate District. We must provide an excellent public education to our students regardless of zip code, address infrastructure challenges and prioritize building strong communities with quality jobs. Our region has much to offer, it is my goal to work in partnership with community and industry leaders to create positive growth in our area.

We need to bring new leadership and new energy to Madison that will work in the best interests of our region and state. I would be honored to serve as your State Senator.

**Jon Schultz (D)**

I live on a beautiful farm where I was raised to care deeply about conservation, education, honesty and social equality. Wisconsin was built on these values. My rural background, blue-collar work experiences, and education were integral to successes I've led in resolving a complex range of issues Trempealeau County; where I am a Board Member since 2014. I also served as Town of Arcadia Chair from 2015-17. I contend with levy limits and unfunded mandates while preserving local control and expanding local democracy. I've protected water, property values and conserved landscapes. I've made fair road and bridge decisions. I established our state's first parks, tourism and economic development committee. Economies thrive in places where people want to live and spend their time. I'm excited about what I can accomplish serving our Senate District in Madison where investing in Healthcare, Education, Conservation, and Real Family Farms will be my priorities.

**Jeff Smith (D)**

Serving my community and state while doing all I can to leave a better place for the generations to follow us. We can fix problems we create when it comes to many things, but if we contaminate our water it may be irreversible, thus is it high on my list of priorities to protect our groundwater and all other natural resources. Wisconsin has an incredibly high rate of incarceration over other states and we need to visit our policies that force families apart, cost us billions of dollars and exacerbates the problems that cause crime in the first place; let's explore legalizing and regulating marijuana. Healthcare access must be addressed as it is becoming more and more difficult for too many families. Public education at all levels must be given the respect and attention it deserves for the next generations to succeed.

**Mel Pittman (R)**

It's about going back to the community, caring about succeeding generations, all children and grandchildren, and using one's talents to help make our state better.

- Improving our infrastructure, roads and broadband
- Welfare reform/jobs
- Education and school safety

*Q2. 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?*

**Steve Boe (D)**

Budgets are about priorities. I believe it is critical that Wisconsin balances the needs of our communities and being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. It is imperative that we intentionally invest in our state and our communities in key areas such as: infrastructure, public education and healthcare.

## **Jon Schultz (D)**

After years of a weak “coupon-clipping” attitude in Madison has denied investments in education, healthcare and infrastructure, Foxconn is a slap in the face to the people of Wisconsin who’ve been told that budget cuts and freezes are necessary. Clearly, our greatest deficit is honest leadership. Rewiring budget priorities will take election success and creative ideas. Local units of governments do the actual job of governance. They need help dealing with challenges from roads and aging jails to the resulting costs of the opioid crisis. No more unfunded mandates! The WEDC is an expensive failure and deserves deletion, with the exception of the few programs that do directly assist small businesses and communities. The MAC tax credit needs scrutiny while schools need fair funding. The working class deserves a measured plan to raise the statewide minimum wage, while also allowing municipalities the ability to set living wages locally.

## **Jeff Smith (D)**

Fully fund public education. Move the \$800million going to private vouchers back into our public schools. Restore the funding to our UW system. Give our local elected officials the power to do their jobs by lifting revenue caps and other restrictions that have handcuffed them. Fix the transportation/infrastructure mess. If this legislature can find \$90million to expand the road to Foxconn for Illinois workers we must find the funding for the rest of our state. The state budget is a moral document that tells where the priorities really lie for our legislators and governor. End the handouts to favorite donors and special interests. Increase the DNR budget to restore our science positions and protect our resources.

## **Mel Pittman (R)**

- Obtain more revenue for infrastructure needs (roads and broadband)
- Adequately fund education and provide the necessary resources to have schools safe from terrorism and violence
- Consider sales tax and lower income tax (consider, meaning up for discussion)

*Q3. The primary sources for transportation revenue, including gas taxes and registration fees, have been growing slower than transportation spending, leading to 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?*

## **Steve Boe (D)**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to road funding. While the gas tax and vehicle registration fees are two parts to a complex solution, I am willing to explore and discuss other options that can help fund our transportation program. It is critical that we move with a sense of urgency on this issue and keep all options on the table.

## **Jon Schultz (D)**

The people of Wisconsin understand that we must catch up on roads and highways, so lets prioritize straightforward investment in roads that get us where we need to go. To get us there, I’m in favor of a \$0.05 gas tax increase but with a sunset of 5 years that allows for reassessment. Minnesota’s progressive vehicle registration fee is working and should be looked at, but their range in fees does seem excessive. I’m strongly opposed to tolling. Tolling is costly to implement, has internal operating costs, and would be costly to reverse. I’m concerned with the costs and practicality of designing and building roundabouts on our major highways. They work fine on local road systems, but make little sense on truck routes. Maintenance of local roads has lagged for decades. Without functioning ditch and culverts, it’s wasteful to lay blacktop on damaged road beds which are costly to reconstruct.

## **Jeff Smith (D)**

The legislature should never have repealed gas tax indexing because they will never have the courage to raise the tax on their own. Restore this easy mechanism. I like the idea of a value based vehicle registration. It is far more fair and progressive if you can afford a more costly vehicle you can afford to pay more. We need to become more creative with how we can coerce the heaviest vehicles to pay more for the damage they do to the roads. It is my understanding that many trucking firms register their trucks in another state to avoid paying their share. Fix the shared revenue and

road aids formulas so our tax dollars come back into our local communities. Who knows best of the needs in our communities than local officials?

**Mel Pittman (R)**

Increase revenue for transportation, considering gas tax increase, vehicle registration, possibly a mileage log to capture alternative fuel and electric vehicles.

*Q4. 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?*

**Steve Boe (D)**

Wisconsin schools and students deserve equitable funding and an equitable education regardless of their zip code. It is clear where the current leadership's priorities are given the 4.5 billion dollar gamble for Foxconn at the expense of our rural schools. It is necessary that a new school-aid formula is created that adjusts according to inflation and takes into account the needs of our rural schools. The current formula chooses winners and losers when it comes to the opportunities and experiences that school districts can offer to their students. Attending and working in rural schools in western Wisconsin, I have experienced the inequity the current formula perpetuates on school districts that suffer from a lower socioeconomic status. Currently, our state is not meeting the obligation to our students by ensuring an excellent public education. Our schools, educators and communities need a funding formula that adequately meets the needs of our students in a way that is sustainable and transparent. Our schools, communities, state and students would benefit immensely from an equitable school funding formula.

**Jon Schultz (D)**

Education is an investment: for individuals and society. With that attitude, Wisconsin earned its reputation as the leader in fair, quality education. We now lag behind neighboring states in education investments. The Voucher system must be overhauled or deleted. Public funds must go to schools, not select parents. If private schools provide equal services and access to all students, then we talk about public funds. If Vouchers continue, it can't come at the expense of public schools. More people are acknowledging that ACT 10 failed. Let's repeal it with an amendment capping administrative pay to no more than twice that of the same school's average or median teacher's pay. A 'boss' culture doesn't serve education. Let's build a leadership culture where school employees operate as co-workers. At the secondary level, let's ensure that university and technical college tuition is affordable for working class people of all ages, especially working parents.

**Jeff Smith (D)**

Education is not the enemy. Stop treating education and educators as though they are the problem. Restore funding to our UW system that has been taken from them. End the failed "parental choice" program and defund the vouchers so we can focus on one preK-12 system. Finally replace the funding formula for preK-12 that relies on the wrong premise that property values determines state aid while holding districts to 1993 spending levels. Trust and respect our citizens and the officials they elect to school boards to determine what their needs are and how much they are willing to spend. Over the years there have been many workable solutions that have been ignored by the legislatures for political reasons. Let's get serious and preserve this invaluable tool which is our public education.

**Mel Pittman (R)**

We have a complicated formula for school funding and then the difference with the larger schools in southeast Wisconsin and Western Wisconsin. I will work to have equitable funding across Wisconsin. The state of Wisconsin will need to increase funding to K-12 grades to cover inflation and COLA.

*Q5. 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?*

**Steve Boe (D)**

Addressing Wisconsin's workforce challenges, including a "skills gap" between employer and labor demands is a top priority for me in the upcoming legislative session. We must take into account the needs of our business community and create opportunities in education to match the needs of our workforce here in this state. I look forward to working with leaders in the education and business communities to come to an effective solution to our state's workforce challenges. One particular solution is a closer partnership between Wisconsin's Technical College System and the business community to meet regional workforce needs.

**Jon Schultz (D)**

'Worksconsin' has trended 1% below our nation's unemployment rate for decades. As Wisconsin's rate of population growth declined, the cost of exporting our work ethic has caught up with us. Regarding the "skills gap", employers serve themselves best by hiring talented individuals and teaching them 'in-house' skills on the job and compensating employees at levels where they feel valued. For an economy to thrive in the face of declining population growth, efficiency is key and helping working adults invest in skills and education is vital. Hope is fuel. Our universities and technical colleges must continually upgrade their offerings and ability to provide quality education for all Wisconsin residents. When knowledge is increasingly universal, brick and mortar is less necessary. Expanding distance learning options are key. Talent recruitment goes hand-in-hand with building livable communities. The Eau Claire region has made proven investments in being a great place to live and work.

**Jeff Smith (D)**

Broadband expansion. Our older generations have watched as their children and/or grandchildren have been forced to leave rural Wisconsin for metro areas where they can work for higher technology business. Given the choice, who wouldn't want to live in the beauty that we have here, but most don't have a choice without access to broadband. As mentioned earlier, we need to provide the necessary funding and flexibility for our schools to produce the next generation of entrepreneurs, creative thinkers and skilled labor. Mass Transit will be even more critical as we move forward and hope to move workers, clients and product as efficiently as possible. We must invest in high speed rail and allow RTAs (Regional Transit Authorities) for regions to address their own needs.

**Mel Pittman (R)**

Welfare reform can help by changing to a sliding scale whereby anyone that works more hours is financially better off while receiving a lesser amount of benefits. Need a prisoner rehabilitation program for non-violent individuals to bring them into the workforce prior to release and will reduce recidivism. The state needs to provide adequate funding for technical schools so they can provide the training to students and make use of apprenticeships.

*Q6. Medicaid is already the second largest state funded program and is growing faster than other items in the total state budget. 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?*

**Steve Boe (D)**

It is critical that Wisconsinites have access to affordable healthcare. Our current system for funding healthcare in this state is simply unsustainable and detrimental to community and business growth. We must accept the Medicaid expansion dollars and work towards a sustainable funding solution that meets the healthcare needs of people in our state.

**Jon Schultz (D)**

Medicaid has been a moving target for too long. Frankly, the best analogy is a carousel that changes speeds so often that people can't safely get on or off. People need a stable program they can depend on. Instead of leadership, federal and state politicians are playing games of ideological warfare with people's needs for basic health services: at a time when we have a state budget surplus for Medicaid and the federal government enacted irresponsible tax cuts when economic indicators do not support their viability or need. We must acknowledge the facts that healthcare costs are

rising and our state's population is aging. First, taking the profit out of healthcare, and reign in prescription drug costs. Second, continue to build a strong, diverse economy in our state. A diverse population of all ages supports an economy that can provide fair services for everyone

**Jeff Smith (D)**

Stop this artificially and politically created crisis by accepting the Medicaid expansion dollars offered through the Affordable Care Act. Though not anywhere close to a perfect solution, politicians have gone out of their way to sabotage the ACA and hurt so many citizens who cannot afford the access they need. In the first 4 years alone we lost over \$678million and according to a Feb. 2016 article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel "The expansion would have covered adults with incomes below 138% of the poverty threshold — \$16,394 for one person this year — and without dependent children." Our leaders are seriously injuring people over their own petty ideological reasons.

**Mel Pittman (R)**

First, Wisconsin needs to promote and encourage private insurance and group health plans offered by employees. If possible, need to hold back the growth of Medicaid to more citizens to control increase cost to state (taxpayers). May need to revive the HIRSP program for those unable to obtain insurance on private market. When possible, people need to financially help cover costs of health care personally.