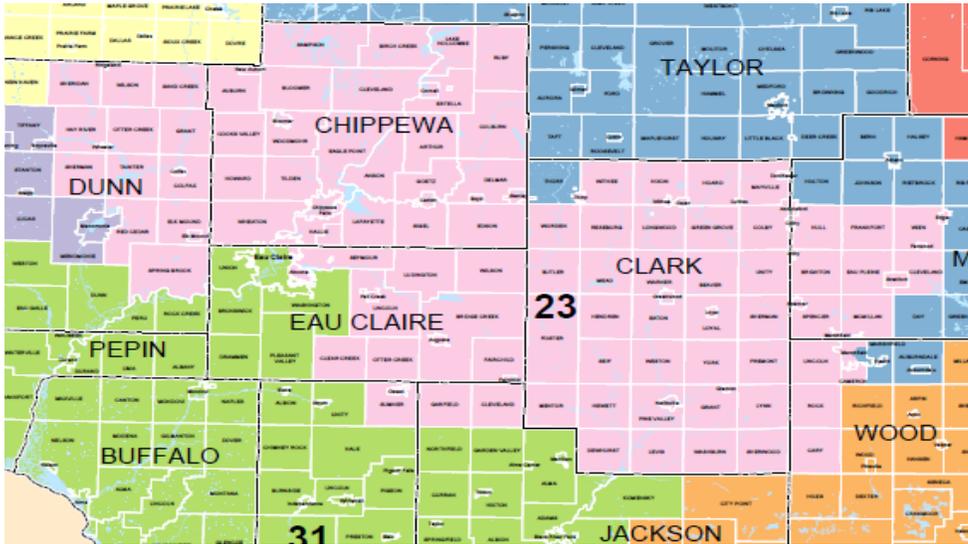




Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce
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Wisconsin 23rd Senate District Legislative Election Questionnaire



When: Tuesday, November 6, 2018; polls open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Find your location: myvote.wi.gov. All absentee ballots must be requested by November 1st and be turned in to your municipal clerk by November 4th at 5 pm.

What it's about: Both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party held individual primary elections. Now, their nominees are running against each other to determine who will represent the 23rd Senate District in the next legislative term.

Who can vote: The election is open to all eligible voters, and you are free to vote for any candidate, regardless of the party to which you belong.

Where you vote and who is on your ballot:

- Go to 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 23rd Senate District: The Democratic Party nominated Chris Kapsner and the Republican Party nominated Kathy Bernier.

Q1. Why are you running for this office, and what are the top three priorities you will emphasize if elected to the next session of the legislature?

Chris Kapsner (D):

I am running for the State Senate because I believe Wisconsin has tremendous potential and I know that by investing in each other, we can create opportunities for everyone to get ahead. During my term, I would work to strengthen communities by increasing access to quality, affordable healthcare, investing in our public education system and building a 21st century infrastructure network. As an emergency room doctor, father of four, and longtime resident of Wisconsin, I see the challenges facing our local communities first hand. In the State Senate, I would advocate for working families, build up our middle class, and help create an economy that works for everyone in our state.

Kathy Bernier (R):

My top priority if elected will be to ensure that we don't undo all of the tremendous progress we've made as a state over the last several years. Unemployment is at historically low levels, confidence in the economy is booming and our state is in great fiscal shape for the future. Two other important issues are healthcare and transportation, and while we've already started improving health care for Wisconsin families, we must continue to increase the affordability of our already high quality health care system. I also believe we must continue improving our transportation system and last year I voted for the largest increases to local road and bridge aids in 20 years with that in mind. These are all important issues for me, but for me, the number one reason I'm running for the state senate is to continue serving my constituents by listening to their concerns and then going to work for them. One of my greatest pleasures is helping people, just like you, with issues and concerns that they have. I want to be your voice in the State Senate.

Q2. The primary sources for transportation revenue, including gas taxes and registration fees, have been growing slower than transportation spending, leading to 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?

Chris Kapsner (D):

Wisconsin needs a long-term funding solution to fix our crumbling infrastructure. Our local officials are constantly asked to do more with less as the funding they rely on is diverted to other parts of the state. Continuing to rack up large amounts of debt while delaying long overdue repairs is irresponsible and unfair to Wisconsin taxpayers.

I know that a strong transportation network is a cornerstone of a safe and successful community. In the State Senate, I would work to protect our economic opportunities now and in the future by investing in the quality and safety of our roads. I believe that the citizens using the roads most should be paying for the use of the roads. The gas tax is the closest to a sustainable user fee and should be utilized as part of a comprehensive approach to keep our transportation fund solvent and reduce our infrastructure debt.

Kathy Bernier (R):

Raising taxes significantly to just throw more money at the problem is not the answer. I am certain there are significant efficiencies to be found at the DOT but I also believe more funding is needed in certain areas. In the last budget, I fought for more local funding to repair our roads and bridges and succeeded with a \$65 million increase in aid for local roads, including an additional \$20 million to fix bridges across the state, something communities in our area are already benefiting from. While I haven't decided on a specific direction, I do believe the bump in spending for local roads will need to be carried into the future for some time.

Q3. 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?

Chris Kapsner (D):

Great public schools don't just lead to better outcomes and more opportunities for students - they are the heart of every local community and a key driving force for all aspects of success including economic success. Local public schools are the foundation of our communities and we need to make sure we are retaining quality teachers, investing in modern facilities and meeting high education standards to give students the best possible opportunity to get ahead. For the past several years we have seen historic cuts to Wisconsin's public schools, unfairly shifting a greater burden onto local communities and property taxpayers. If elected, I would work to readjust the current school funding formula, creating a funding system that is more fair and beneficial for all of Wisconsin's students.

Kathy Bernier (R):

We are continually increasing our investment in both K-12 and technical colleges, along with holding down costs for those in our university system. I successfully fought for \$600 million in new funding for K-12 education, including an extra \$604 per student over the next two years, but we can still improve a flawed school funding formula to provide more resources for the neediest districts. Just as with transportation though, we can't simply throw more money at schools and expect success, we must also challenge our administrators, teachers and parents to seek out new and innovative ways to encourage learning and then reward success.

Q4. 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?

Chris Kapsner (D):

Our UW schools and Technical Colleges are a key driving force behind the economic success of our communities, businesses and families. Several years of cuts to UW campuses and Technical Colleges have resulted in teacher layoffs, millions in lost research funding and longer graduation times for students. I know that a skilled workforce is key to Wisconsin's success in a rapidly changing 21st century economy. If elected, I would expand the pipeline of highly-skilled workers from our Universities and Technical colleges by restoring much needed investment in these institutions. I also believe that burying families with high student loan interest rates and a lifetime of debt isn't fair to those individuals who work hard and want to advance their career. In the State Senate, I would work to lower student loan debt and expand economic opportunities for everyone.

Kathy Bernier (R):

The lack of skilled labor is an unfortunate side effect to our flourishing economy. While there is no single solution to this problem, there are a number of things that we are doing to tackle our worker shortage. First, we can improve our workforce here at home. I authored a bill specifically to increase support for our technical colleges and to better match workers with available jobs. We've also taken steps legislatively to encourage workers to get off state assistance programs and enter the workforce and to better support those who are already trying to do so. Worker training, apprenticeships, addiction counseling and mental health support are all parts of the solution. Finally, we can look for workers outside our state. Wisconsin and Eau Claire specifically is a great place to live and work for so many reasons. Spreading this good news around the country can only help our workforce grow.

Q5. The UW Board of Regents recently approved a budget proposal containing funds to build a new UW- Eau Claire science building. What is your view on this project, and what level of priority should it take among the Chippewa Valley legislative delegation?

Chris Kapsner (D):

As a strong proponent of science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics or STEAM curriculum, I support the new UW Eau Claire science building project and believe it should be prioritized by our legislative delegation. Investments like this are a critical component of building a highly skilled workforce capable of meeting the demands of a 21st century economy. This project will not only help attract students to the university, but will also strengthen the economy of Chippewa Valley as a whole by helping to attract new employers to our region.

Kathy Bernier (R):

I supported the state's investment in both new and renovated dorms on the UWEC campus and was instrumental in obtaining state support for the Confluence Project because I considered it a smart investment that would save tax dollars in the long run. The new science building does have a tougher road ahead, partially due to the number of previous projects that have been approved relatively recently. That said, I plan to work with my colleagues to help the University make their case for the building's inclusion in future state budgets.