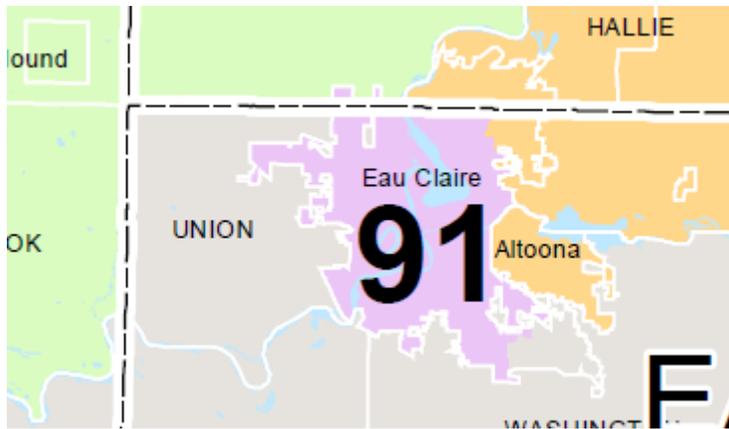




Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce
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Wisconsin 91st Assembly District Legislative Election Questionnaire



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: The Democratic Party and the Republican Party each held individual primary elections last spring. Now, their nominees are running against each other to determine who will represent the 91st Assembly 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 91st Assembly District: In the primaries, the Democratic Party nominated Jodi Emerson and the Republican Party nominated Echo Reardon.

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?

Jodi Emerson (D):

I will fight for affordable and accessible healthcare, encourage the growth of our economy, restore funding to our education system, and protect our environment.

For the past 5 years, I have fought human trafficking. I have successfully passed seven bipartisan bills that strengthen our laws regarding human trafficking. I have witnessed successes in our state but I have also seen the ugliness of politics. I have watched bills go nowhere simply because the party in power didn't author them. I have seen bills not get a vote because leadership had other agendas. I have built connections with policymakers from around the state and now I will use those connections to fight for the Chippewa Valley. I know how to work with others to get things done.

I will not compromise my ideals but will fight for the people of Eau Claire just as I have fought against human trafficking.

Echo Reardon (R):

I'm running to be Eau Claire's voice in the State's Assembly. Madison must get to work to make sure our area can reach its full potential. Wisconsin is going in a great direction and I would like to ensure and build upon the gains that have been made. Eau Claire is experiencing new growth and prosperity, I will advocate policies that provide the tools for everyone to have opportunity to achieve economic prosperity.

- 1) We must build a strong workforce with more investment in our technical schools and apprenticeship programs.
- 2) We must ensure safe and adequate infrastructure.
- 3) We must help our families have access to the high-quality healthcare they need, and guarantee care for those with pre-existing conditions.

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?

Jodi Emerson (D):

I believe one of the issues with funding our roads is that increase in vehicle efficiency has not kept up with the gas tax. Vehicles today are getting better mileage regardless of type of engine but our funding sources have not changed. Our gas taxes have remained unchanged for 12 years. Technology and cars have changed in that time and we are getting more miles out of the same gallon of gas but we are not paying as much for the wear and tear on the roads with that gallon of gas.

Last year, Governor Walker added registration fees for hybrid and electric vehicles and I believe that is a good start. However, the average car is getting better mileage now than it did 12 years ago but our funding hasn't changed. We need to look at new ideas for new technologies. That includes funding roads.

Echo Reardon (R):

To assess the problem, one needs to look at the revenue growth and cost growth separately. Only by assessing the data can we properly address the problem. First, let's accurately determine the needs. Second, let's ensure that we are getting the most for our infrastructure dollar. Only then should we determine the levels and sources of financing to fund this work. The gas tax and registration fee, currently the two sources of infrastructure funding, may be more than adequate, adequate or inadequate to fund these infrastructure needs. There may be other creative financing alternatives available to help fund these needs. I will also fight to ensure our local tax dollars stay local.

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?

Jodi Emerson (D):

I firmly believe that public funds should be used for public education. I think one thing that is hurting our education system right now is all the money being poured into the voucher program. For instance, in Eau Claire our public dollars are paying for nearly 20% of the population of Regis Catholic Schools to attend tuition free. I attended a private school during my elementary years and I have absolutely no problem with parents who choose to send their children to private schools or homeschool them. As a parent, if you feel that is the best learning environment for your child, then that is what you need to do for your child. I do have a problem with public dollars financing private schools. We could fix many of our budget issues in the ECASD by simply getting rid of the voucher program.

Echo Reardon (R):

The product of our education system should be high school and college graduates that are equipped with the necessary skills for their economic success. There are a number of approaches to achieve this goal. Private sector partnerships with the education system to shape curriculum, offer apprenticeship programs, and make monetary investments into facilities and students. Early identification of student's area of interest and subsequent partnering with private sector with tuition support. Offer tax abatement to companies that partner with students and education system. Recruit and retain the brightest and talented in-state and out-of-state students. Encourage technical skills, STEM courses, innovation, and entrepreneurs. Education should be competitive where the best faculty is retained and inspired. Faculty should be paid for research and development, symposiums and seminars thus using these as tools to recruit students. Keep courses specific to the needs of the local area and areas of study not duplicated within the system. Keep tuition affordable for students and parents. Simple economics the lower the price the more people will demand the product. Each child has individual needs. Parents know their children best and must have options for their child's learning.

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?

Jodi Emerson (D):

I never remember a worker shortage at Uniroyal when it was in town because it provided good wages and benefits. It is a supply and demand issue, if companies are having a hard time recruiting workers, they need to increase pay or benefits to attract those workers.

There are things that the state can do to help with those costs. Wisconsin can help by opening up a marketplace for the Affordable Healthcare Act and accepting federal medicaid dollars. Minnesota has done both of these things and costs of healthcare are 20-89% lower in Minnesota than they are in Wisconsin. If employer contributions to healthcare plans were lowered by even the low end of that, that would mean they would have an additional 20% of their budget that they could invest into employee pay. Think about the growth of our economy if workers received a 20% pay increase!

Echo Reardon (R):

We should recruit and retain a workforce by recruiting and retaining businesses. Create a business friendly climate where businesses can have optimism and reinvest in their business and realize growth. Minimize taxes and regulations. Provide affordable housing for employees. Offer grants for start-up companies in the trades.

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?

Jodi Emerson (D):

I am in favor of the new science building at UWEC. The current building was built during the Sputnik era. Technologies and teaching methods have changed significantly since the 1950's however, our building hasn't. If we look at what businesses are thriving in our region, we repeatedly see the need to educate people in the STEM fields. The need for a new science building isn't just an educational wish, it is a workforce development need. The Chippewa Valley has turned into a medical hub but because of lack of updated facilities and other budgetary constraints, we cannot educate enough nurses to fill open positions in our region. The nursing shortage is just one example of how we can solve real world problems by investing in our University.

I believe that this project should be at the top of the list for priorities for the Chippewa Valley lawmakers.

Echo Reardon (R):

STEM courses are a solid investment in our students and our future. Quality state-of-the-art labs and facilities are a vital part of producing bright minds and recruiting a high level of academic talent. Our goal is to educate students at an affordable cost then retain them to be part of our community.