

U.S. House of Representatives District: 4

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Questionnaire

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

- a. The Economy (to include the expense of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan).
- b. The need for a comprehensive Universal Health Care initiative
- c. Election reform (to include campaign finance, media coverage and voter access)

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?

a. I will work with other members of congress to introduce and pass legislation that will create a comprehensive Universal Health Care Program that will cover the gamut of disability related health issues. My proposal would replace Medicare, Medicaid, employer and State Group Health plans and redirect money being spent on these programs to the Universal Health Care program. In addition the UHCP would require minimal co-pays based on income.

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

- o 27.5% of people with disabilities aged 18-64 live below the poverty line.
- o The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is three times higher than for people without disabilities.
- o 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?

a. I will work to increase the SSI supplement by introducing legislation that will index SSI to inflation.

b. I will work to eliminate poverty through employment and training opportunities for all US citizens.

c. I will introduce legislation that will apply the Social Security (OASDI) income tax to all employee income, removing the \$102,000 ceiling currently in place for employees. The tax ceiling would remain intact for employer contributions and the self employed. The Medicare tax would stay the same. Currently the rates are: 6.2% OASDI and 1.45% Medicare. All wages are subject to the Medicare tax; there is no ceiling.

d. I will work to increase federal funding to Wisconsin Counties for long and short term employment supports for people with disabilities.

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.

a. I would refer the constituent to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services to speak with a counselor who could coordinate in-home care for the daughter and financial assistance for the husband's nursing home care. I would also have a staff person contact the DHFS on the constituent's behalf.

5. Do you support the Community Choice Act (HR 1621)? 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?

a. I will support the Community Choice Act as long as it does not result in the imposition of more or higher taxes. According to Congressional findings in the Bill..... [Sec 2(a) (4) Despite the more limited funding for community services, the majority of individuals who use Medicaid long-term services and supports are in the community, indicating that community services is a more cost effective alternative to institutional care.] I would contend then, that this finding would support the fiscal prudence of the Act and I would embrace it on the merits of the Bill as well as for the cost effectiveness it proposes.

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?

a. I would refer this constituent to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for services relative to preparing for postsecondary education and employment. DWD-DVR could provide funding either through the school or directly to the student for transportation services to attend extra curricular activities that will enhance her college applications.

Recognizing that many of Wisconsin's School Districts are already working with very tight budgets and some with budget deficits, I would not suggest that the school district assume the expense of providing accessible transportation for extra curricular, after school activities. That expense could impose an unreasonable financial burden on the school district and ultimately raise the property taxes of residents in the school district.

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?

a. I will assign a Disability Advocacy liaison to work from my office in Milwaukee with the directors of the myriad of disability advocacy groups in Wisconsin to

ensure that their voices and the voices of their members are being heard in Washington. I will work with the Governor, the Director of DWD and the administrator of DVR to ensure equal access to employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities.