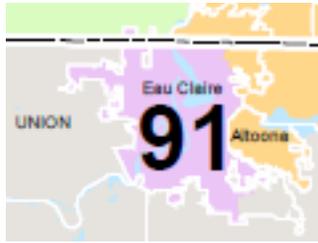




Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce  
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## Wisconsin 91<sup>st</sup> Assembly District Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire



**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. [Click here for early voting location info.](#)

**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. In light of the competitive primary races in the Assembly 91<sup>st</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup> districts, and Senate 31<sup>st</sup> districts, a primary questionnaire containing six questions was sent to candidates for these seats to help inform voters.

**Who is running in the 91<sup>st</sup> Assembly District:** There are four Democrats running for the party nomination – Jodi Emerson, Eric Larsen, Rich Postlewaite, and Thomas Vue – to face the one Republican candidate, Echo Reardon. The current Representative is Dana Wachs (D) of Eau Claire, who is not running for reelection.

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?*

**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.

**Eric Larsen (D)**

I am running to continue a lifetime of service to the country, the state, and the City of Eau Claire. I am a Navy veteran, a 28 year Eau Claire Police veteran and I was twice elected to serve as an at-large city council member. I have been involved in public policy projects to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for the Eau Claire community and the broader Chippewa Valley for over 15 years. I have seen how good public policy can improve people's lives and I want to continue that work in Madison.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

To help solve the opioid crisis. Funding for schools by using the additional revenue from internet sales tax. Funding of roads from an additional 7 cent increase in the excise tax on gasoline.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I think it is important for the state legislative body to have a diverse representation and it is time for our Asian communities to take ownership of state affair. If I get elected, I will emphasize for Healthcare, Education and Economy/Jobs. Those are few of my priorities.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire

*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?*

**Jodi Emerson (D)**

I believe that we need to restore funding to our education systems. Wisconsin will grow best with a qualified and educated workforce. The best way to do that is to fund our education system. We need to invest in both K-12 and the UW system. A high priority for the next budget cycle needs to address our deteriorating roads. Last year, the road repair budget was cut by \$79 million but during that same legislative session, our state was able to find billions to bring FoxConn to Wisconsin. I believe that our state needs to work to bring companies to Wisconsin but in order to attract companies, we need to provide a place their workers would want to live. We need to provide good roads, good schools and a safe place to live in order for companies to expand here. That is the best way to increase our tax base.

**Eric Larsen (D)**

I think we must restore funding for our public education, and our highway infrastructure.

From 2010 to 2014, Wisconsin cut its public school funding by the highest percentage per student in the country. As a result, public schools have lost over \$1.5 billion in revenue in the last seven years. In that time local school district have held 213 referendums to raise property taxes above the levy limits, sometimes just for operational costs. The vast

majority of those referendums have passed. The people of Wisconsin want their public schools funded. The state should have the same priorities.

The legislature made a mistake by repealing the gas tax indexing statutes in 2005. Since then our roads have deteriorated and the debt service for road construction has more than doubled. We need a sustainable plan to keep our highway infrastructure up to date and in good shape.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

See question 1.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I believed educational funding a top priority in Wisconsin School and increase gas taxes would generate more revenue for our roads and infrastructure need to be repaired it is our Wisconsin residents who will need to use them the most. We need to somehow generate revenue for these purposes.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire

*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?*

**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.

**Eric Larsen (D)**

I would like us to restore gas tax indexing. We might need an additional increase for a short time to catch up for budget shortfalls. I would also like us to look at indexing vehicle registration to the value of the car.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

See question 1.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I believed in increase gas taxes and vehicle registrations are the resolution to the shortfalls in revenues.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire

*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?*

**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.

**Eric Larsen (D)**

There is too much to be done in one budget. I believe all public funds for education should go to public schools. Right now we subsidize private schools through funding for transportation, special education, and school vouchers. We can't change that in one budget without doing severe damage to private schools, but I believe we must bring all that public money back into our public schools.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

See question 1.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I believed building a strong business infrastructure that will attract new workers to Wisconsin and keep our current workers, including job training and re-training for those who have lost their jobs due to business outsourcing.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire

*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?*

**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!

**Eric Larsen (D)**

We can start by increasing public funding for our colleges and universities. We are spending millions to recruit workers from Illinois to work for Foxconn while we have waiting lists to get into some programs at Chippewa Valley Technical College.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

Continue of funding and innovation at our Technical Colleges and Universities.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I believed building a strong business infrastructure that will attract new workers to Wisconsin and keep our current workers, including job training and re-training for those who have lost their jobs due to business outsourcing.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire

*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?*

**Jodi Emerson (D)**

Wisconsin needs to accept the federal Medicaid dollars. It is unfortunate that Wisconsin would refuse money from the federal government that helps our residents. I also firmly believe that everyone needs to be able to be covered under a healthcare plan. Having people without coverage leaves medical providers with huge unpaid balances of people who have no insurance and no means to pay the bill. When medical providers have large bills that are unpaid, it leads to higher costs for everyone. I also believe we need to look at large companies who have full-time workers eligible for Badgercare. By having the state provide health insurance for their workers, this is a large corporate welfare program. Instead of looking at the CEO's and holding them accountable, Wisconsin is too often vilifying the people who are working full-time and are still eligible for such programs.

**Eric Larsen (D)**

We should immediately accept Federal Medicaid money, and put Badgercare on the market for purchase. Long term we must look at how we will provide medical coverage for every citizen. We are the wealthiest country in the world, yet we are one of a very few major countries in the world who do not provide universal healthcare.

**Rich Postlewaite (D)**

We should accept Federal dollars for Medicaid but this issue is difficult at a state level and I believe that eventually it is going to have to be a federal issue.

**Thomas Vue (D)**

I believed if federal funds are available to expand Medicaid coverage for our Wisconsin residents, it should be our responsibility as representatives of our residents to ensure access to affordable healthcare for our people.

**Echo Reardon (R)**

Did not respond to questionnaire