

Dignity at Work COALITION Wisconsin

Voter's Guide for Every Working Person 2018

The Dignity at Work Coalition seeks to establish higher standards of respect and equality for all who labor, greater compassion for working families, and to foster community solidarity in the service of our mission. As Election Day draws near, it becomes imperative that we educate ourselves on the urgent issues facing our state and question our candidates on where they stand and how they intend to address these issues. Please use this non-partisan voter guide as a resource to help you learn the issues and pose important questions to your candidates. This guide can be used at candidate forums, town hall meetings, and any other venues where candidates are available for questioning.

dignityatworkcoalition.org/

Child Care

Child care both creates jobs in our state and is an essential support to working families who need all available wage earners to make ends meet. Yet working families struggle to pay the rising cost of child care, which can cost annually as much as in-state college tuition. These working families include child care workers themselves, mainly women who are engaged in one of the poorest paid occupations in the nation (in Wisconsin averaging just around \$10/hour). Current national polling data indicate that 80% of the voting public, both Democrats and Republicans, believe that child care and early education should be a funding priority.

QUESTION: What role do you believe federal, state and local governments have in making early childcare accessible and affordable to working families?

<http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/>

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Almost everyone eventually has to take time off of work in order to care for a new child, a sick family member, or for themselves if they become seriously ill. Most workers do not have access to **paid** family and medical leave at their work, and many of those workers who do have access to **unpaid** leave under the Family Medical Leave Act, cannot afford to take it. Several states have begun to address this issue proactively by creating a state family and medical leave insurance fund into which workers pay a very small amount of money in order to have access to paid family and medical leave. Similar legislation has been proposed in Wisconsin, which is called the Wisconsin

Family Insurance Act.

QUESTION: What is your position on the Wisconsin Family Insurance Act?

<http://www.supportwomenshealth.org/>

Minimum Wage

The average WI worker today is earning only about 40 cents more per hour than the average WI worker in 1979. A large and growing percentage of our state's children live in a home where two parents would have to work 75 hours each, just to bring the family out of poverty. This has enormous impact on health and development of Wisconsin's youth, and on their ability to hope for a better future.

On average across the state, an adult working full-time needs to earn \$11 per hour for a basic life including food, housing, transportation, and healthcare. Two adults need to each earn \$16 per hour to provide these and childcare to two children.

QUESTION: What is your stance on Wisconsin's minimum wage of 7.25 per hour? Do you support an increase and how much? If not, why not?

<https://www.cows.org/data/documents/1799.pdf>; <http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/55>

Wage Theft

When workers are not paid according to wage and hour laws, Wisconsin families suffer, governments miss out on tax dollars, and law-abiding businesses cannot compete. Low wage workers are particularly vulnerable to such violations as being shorted on several paychecks, not receiving overtime pay, or not being paid at all. Nationally, the Dpt. of Labor reports that

stolen wages are double the total amount of street, bank, gas station, and convenience store robberies put together. Various studies show that about 60% of low-wage workers are incorrectly paid every week. Wage claims are handled by the WI Dept. of Workforce Development, and they take months to process. Meanwhile, the worker might lose their housing and overall stability, greatly affecting our communities.

12 states have passed laws to do more to protect workers from theft, while WI just enacted a law pre-empting municipalities from doing more at the local level.

QUESTION: What is your position on measures to strengthen wage and hour laws, such as increases to local or state offices to increase prosecution or speed up investigations?

The Right to Organize

Unions create greater workplace democracy, promote economic equality, and are a key component to economic and social justice. The decline in union density explains today's record level of inequality, ongoing racial disparities, and gender inequities (1). In 2017, non-union workers earned 20% less than workers who were union members: \$829 versus \$1,041 (2). States and Countries with a greater percentage of union members have higher minimum wages, a greater percentage of residents covered by health insurance, stronger social safety nets, and a more progressive tax code. (3) When union membership is high, our families and communities prosper.

QUESTION: What is your position on laws and policies which support

unionization of workers so they may collectively bargain and advocate for safer workplace conditions, family sustaining wages, worker training, and a protected pension?

- (1) Center for Economic and Policy Research
- (2) U.S. Department of Labor
- (3) Economic Policy Institute.

Unemployment and People with Disabilities

The unemployment rate of people with disabilities is much higher than in the average population. For example, the unemployment rate for people who are blind and visually impaired is approximately 70%.

QUESTION: What would you do to address the disproportionality of disability unemployment?

Private Sector Retirement Security

Wisconsin currently has a pension fund for public employees--the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS)--that is viewed as a national model because it is adequately funded, well managed, and has low overhead costs. Private sector employees do not have access to such a consumer-friendly system where they can pool their personal retirement resources. This is particularly important for women, who typically have fewer retirement savings than men and must stretch their savings over a longer lifespan. The Wisconsin Private Secure Retirement Act was re-introduced in the last legislative session as SB320 (<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/proposals/reg/sen/bill/sb302>), which would require the state to

conduct a study to determine the feasibility of the state creating a participant-funded Wisconsin Private Retirement Security Board for private sector workers that is modeled on the current WRS.

QUESTION: What is your position on the Wisconsin Private Security Act, which would provide private sector workers with a retirement system in which they can invest their savings that is similar to the one currently enjoyed by public sector workers?

<http://www.asklearnvote.org/>

Transportation

The need for accessible and affordable public transportation is greater than ever. People who are unable to drive due to disability or age and people who are unable to afford a car rely on public transportation. For all Wisconsin residents, public transportation provides an important connection to jobs, healthcare and other services and entertainment. But 36% of our bus fleet is past its useful life and needs replacing. Many transit systems are facing potential cuts to service territory or route frequency due to lack of funding. The Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission's Keep Wisconsin Moving report recommends a \$36.3 million increase for public transit per year in transportation funding in the state budget.

QUESTION: What is your stance on increasing annual public transportation funding by the recommended \$36.3 million or more?

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