

Wisconsin State Assembly Candidate Questionnaire - Districts 24 & 38

Candidates who participated:

24th Assembly District: Emily Siegrist (D)

38th Assembly District: Barbara Dittrich (R), Melissa Winker (D)

- 1. Do you believe the state of our free enterprise system is currently flourishing, on the right track, neutral, being threatened or declining?**

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): Neutral

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): On the right track. We have made a wonderful start with lowering taxes and creating jobs in Wisconsin but I believe we still have further to go. I believe we can cut taxes further as well as continue to roll back restrictions that limit our free enterprise system.

Melissa Winker (D): Neutral. Our country is an excellent growth position, but we are at risk IF we do not consider essential qualities of great communities that enable our economy to thrive.

- 2. Do you believe that tax increases affect job creation? Why or why not?**

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): We have seen in states with high tax rates, such as California, New York and Illinois that tax increases are not the only factor when it comes to job creation. Wisconsin needs to have good roads, quality schools and accessible health care to draw new businesses to our state. For Wisconsin to thrive, we need have companies and individuals pay their fair share of taxes, while also working to address some of the problems our state faces.

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38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): Yes, I believe that tax increases affect job creation. As we increase taxes we limit the amount of capital available to create new jobs.

Melissa Winker (D): I believe that there are several critical elements of a healthy economic environment and we cannot judge economic growth on the single element of taxation.

Communities need the following elements to thrive:

- Confidence and trust in a community and state that supports smart business growth
- Educational opportunities at every level, from assisting with childcare so that parents can be a strong part of the economy to a supportive educational system that trains and retrain a workforce.
- Communities that have strong environmental protections – NOT to inhibit business growth – but to protect natural resources as a commodity that is necessary for human safety, tourism, well-being and community living.

3. Explain how your background will help you to be a successful elected official, representing a broad range of interests and competing demands.

24th District Assembly:

Emily Siegrist (D): In the 24th district we have a wide range of constituents and issues facing our community. People in Glendale have a much different set of problems than do those in Germantown. Overall, my objective as a state legislator will be to focus in providing great constituent services and try to understand all sides of an issue before I vote on it.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): My background includes 13 years in the investment industry, 7 years of family small business ownership, and nearly 16 years in the non-profit world. This experience has provided me with a broad scope of skills and insights that will serve our state well.

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Melissa Winker (D): I bring over 17 years of experience working with the public in our school systems, from Kindergarten to UW-Madison academics. Through my work as a Nationally board certified teacher, I am able to navigate the needs of our communities with the entire human condition in perspective. Business, like testing outcomes, does not exist as the only criteria of a healthy environment and economy. People in our state pursue happiness on many levels from economic, emotional, and social. I will work with these important elements as the foundation of being a representative of our community.

4. Why should members of the Waukesha County Business Alliance vote for you?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): Because it is time for new representation in the 24th. Members of both major political parties have engaged in partisan warfare that has split our state in two. My opponent has voted with Republicans over 95% of the time while in office. I want to provide a fresh voice for residents of the 24th district. I want to work with Republicans and Democrats to solve the issues we face.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): The Waukesha County Business Alliance would find a friend in me as I have that small business and investment experience. I believe in low taxes, fiscal restraint, and free-market trade. I believe that members would find those to be qualities worth voting for.

Melissa Winker (D): I will be a representative that strives to continually listen to the voices of our communities ... collaboratively growing as positive, respectful professional that values expert based information to advance and embrace our neighbors and businesses. Smart business growth in our state needs to consider all aspects of our communities - sustainable practices, efficient transportation, education that prepares our workforce for 21st Century opportunities, incubator opportunities, and innovative practices.

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5. What is one thing that you believe government either does well, or has improved upon?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): I believe that the government has done a good job of focusing on small business development. Wisconsin currently is a leader in small business outlook, which I would like to continue to see as the representative to the 24th.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): Government does well with large infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and law enforcement. At the same time, I believe these are areas that our state needs to continue to improve upon.

Melissa Winker (D): Government has the opportunity to embrace and evolve with movement of ideas and strength of our citizens. We have a responsibility to respect and respond to our neighbors as we continue to progress as growing communities.

6. Do you support the intent and subsequent results of Act 10, which passed through the legislature in 2011?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): No. Act 10 has given many local governments the ability to scale back on employees fringe benefits since 2011. While there have been some savings, we are also facing a shortage of teachers, and other government workers. It is time to end the war on working people like our teachers, nurses, prison guards and other government employees and work together to find common-sense ways to improve Wisconsin.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): Yes, I believe Act 10 began the economic revitalization of Wisconsin

Melissa Winker (D): There are several angles to this question.

Many have questioned the value of unions in today's working environment. It has been shown that when unions are strong – safety, work quality, and wages and benefits increase, not just for union organizations, but also in the private sector. These are critical elements to consider when wages have been and continue to be stagnant in our economy.

A core significant outcome of this legislation is the division it has created among neighbors and friends. The intent of this legislation was to “divide and conquer”, as specifically quoted. The stake holders had agreed to collaborate on key issues but this was not negotiable. Our communities ALL value work that supports their families with living wages and affordable health benefits. We need to collaborate and turn these concerns into real solutions. We can do this – when we work together.

In the education world, we have a dramatic decrease in incoming high-quality educators and staff. The single most important element to drive student achievement is a ‘high quality teacher’ in the classroom (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). Without state attention, this will become significantly worse. Education is at the core of our towns and cities.

- 7. Wisconsin is facing a major funding shortfall for transportation infrastructure. What are your ideas to address this issue to ensure that Wisconsin's infrastructure is maintained and we can show that the state is "open for business?"**

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): If we want to build a 21st century economy we need a serious commitment to our transportation system. It is time to index the gas tax to inflation and raise revenues to pay for these projects. I want to end the days of putting transportation projects on the state credit card. By changing how we fund transportation projects, we can make Wisconsin a place which is truly open for business.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittich (R): I believe that Governor Walker made a good start with replacing the head of our WI DOT. While I am against toll roads, I am hearing voters say that they may be willing to have a small gas tax increase to address our shortfall with roads. At the same time I believe there is always more pork we can cut from our state budget.

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Melissa Winker (D): We need to plan for maintenance of our current transportation systems as well as be innovative for an efficient 21st Century model transportation that will accommodate our continual economic growth. We need to make funding decisions – reorienting funds or gas/vehicle surcharges and this should be a community decision. We are an amazing state, built on the shoulders of hardworking Wisconsinites. We care deeply about our families, work, our schools, and enjoying the beauty and opportunity of our natural resources. I will work tirelessly to protect these important Wisconsin values.

8. If elected, what are the top 3 priorities you will have in Madison? Be specific.

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): Fully-funding education so property owners are not footing the bill and operations costs are not placed on ballots each and every year; investing in infrastructure repairs such as fixing our roadways as a commerce issue and completing all existing highway projects; expanding healthcare access to all Wisconsinites by making BadgerCare a public option which would not only reduce costs across the board, but come at no cost to the state.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): 1. Continued economic development & growth with low taxes & a business-friendly culture. 2. Addressing the health care crisis by confronting state government inefficiencies as well as fostering public-private partnerships. 3. Attacking the opioid & mental health crises with prevention as well as police training.

9. What will you do, specifically, to encourage and support economic development in this district and around the state?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): I support giving tax credits to small businesses in order to help them expand their hiring. Additionally, I want to see more tax breaks given to small businesses. We need to create an environment where small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy, are able to hire and expand at a rapid pace. I also want to see antiquated taxes that are a burden on small businesses, like the personal property tax, be fully repealed.

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38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): There are so many things that can be done to encourage & support economic development in this district & the state. Training students down to the intermediate school level for the jobs available will help. Keeping taxes low but getting on top of our roads issue is key. Retaining our Wisconsin companies is also imperative.

10. Knowing that many out-of-state residents who receive higher education in Wisconsin leave, what can the state do better to keep, and employ, those individuals after graduation?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): I support the state partnering with businesses and corporations who wish to provide tuition assistance in return for the student coming to work for them for a period of no less than four years. Not only will this help businesses and given sectors fill the gaps, but also create an environment where students are making a commitment to remaining in Wisconsin for years to come, in turn decreasing the odds of them leaving after they complete their time with the business.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): A healthy state economy is key to retaining college graduates. At the same time, we also need to train students for the jobs that need to be filled. Partnerships between businesses and schools are critical.

11. What policies would you pursue, if any, to ensure that our education institutions continue to meet the needs of our state?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): In the legislature, I would look increase access to our two and four year colleges, while also promoting technical colleges. We have hundreds of jobs across Wisconsin which are going unfilled because we haven't done a good enough job connecting those who are unemployed with job training and then connecting those who are trained with actual job. I would like to see more programs which decreases the cost of attending our education institutions and help out those who already have taken out student loans.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): I believe that we need to continue to closely examine our University of Wisconsin system to assure that the state's job needs are met. Taxpayers are tired of funding majors that result in no practical employable skills.

12. What specifically would you do to increase the labor participation rate among able-bodied adults in the state?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): We need to ensure that those who are able to work have every opportunity to connect with a job. We can't move Wisconsin forward if people are on the sideline. This would include increased workforce development programs and creating a stronger connection between employers in need of workers and those who are unable to find work.

38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): I believe we are well on our way to increasing the labor participation rate. Our low unemployment rates are evidence of such. However, I think we need to improve upon current disincentives to work.

13. What is your opinion on the performance of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and do you support economic incentives such as tax credits to assist business expansion within the state?

24th Assembly District:

Emily Siegrist (D): I support tax credits to help businesses expand within the state, but I am not in favor of the way in which the WEDC has conducted business. We have seen a substantial amount of taxpayer money go accounted for and some incentives that were given did not produce the measurable results that were promised. I think we should return to the days of having a department of commerce that crafts economic policy and recommendations.

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38th Assembly District:

Barbara Dittrich (R): I believe our state has done an excellent job with assurances that tax credits will yield returns that make them well worth our while. However, I also think we need to look at retaining the businesses that have been Wisconsin hallmarks over the years. We want them to remain and thrive as well.