

# 92nd AD Dem hopefuls highlight rural roots

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The three Dems looking to unseat Rep. Treig Pronschinske in western Wisconsin's 92nd AD are highlighting their rural roots ahead of tomorrow's primary.

The winner will go on to face the freshman Republican from Mondovi in the November general election.

In separate interviews with WisPolitics.com over the last few weeks, the Democrats — Rob Grover, Max Hart and Desiree Gearing-Lancaster — all touted their understanding of rural issues.

Grover, a 32-year-old former Trempealeau County jailer, small business owner and farmer, stressed boosting rural economic development as a way to attract young people back to his area of the state.

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Among the issues: access to broadband. As the owner of Winghaven Pizza Farm, he said he has to use satellite internet to run his point of sale system at a cost of thousands of dollars more per year. Still, he also highlighted access to health care, quality schools and aid to help keep people on the family farm.

“When a farm goes under, it really affects the rural community,” he said. “So I want to do everything we can on a state level to keep people on their family farms and keep rural life vibrant.”

Hart, a 28-year-old Jackson County supervisor, noted with western Wisconsin leading the nation in farm bankruptcies in 2017, agricultural issues should be getting more attention in the Capitol.

An ag loan officer at a local bank who owns a herd of beef cows and 100 acres of corn with his mother, Hart also called on the state to do more to increase research and development into dairy products and markets, adding Wisconsin can increase its exports and further trade relations in southeast Asian countries and China.

"I have a really solid pulse on rural Wisconsin," he said. "I know the rural values, I know what we stand for."

And Gearing-Lancaster, 62 and an investigator for family and child services with Ho-Chunk Nation Social Services, noted that being born and raised on a Jackson County dairy farm means she'll be able to "lend a lot of credence" to issues of rural development, among other things.

She also emphasized her support of expanding health care access and affordability, as well as combating the opioid epidemic, an area she said she's currently involved in through her work at the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Gearing-Lancaster, who previously ran for the 92nd AD in 1984 and had worked on Russ Feingold's first U.S. Senate campaign, also highlighted other parts of her platform, including keeping big money out of politics and expanding voters' rights.

On transportation funding, the three all said they have reservations about tolling but were largely open to other options.

Grover said he's skeptical of tolling and has concerns that heightened vehicle registration fees "hits people at lower economic levels harder than it does people that are better off." But he's open to looking at the option as well as a gas tax upper.

And he noted he'd want to look at better prioritizing projects to improve roads in all parts of the state, adding that "rural Wisconsin consistently gets shortchanged" in terms of road money.

Meanwhile, Hart said he isn't a "huge fan" of tolling and said higher vehicle registration fees amount to a regressive tax. While he said it's still an option, a higher gas tax is "the most fair way to do it."

Gearing-Lancaster said she'd be open to looking at a gas tax increase of 5-cents per gallon, while calling upping vehicle registration fees "a possibility" and adding she wouldn't agree to tolling.

She emphasized the solution would be “a combination of things,” and stressed the problem amounts to a “critical need that needs to be dealt with right away.”

On other issues:

\*Constitutional carry: The three candidates signaled they’d be unlikely to support legislation that would allow someone to carry a concealed weapon without first obtaining a permit or going through any training if it comes back around and they’re in the Legislature.

Grover said while he’d have to look at the bill, he generally thinks firearm training is essential; and Hart said he wouldn’t back the legislation.

Gearing-Lancaster also said she wouldn’t vote for the measure, and instead called for implementing universal background checks, eliminating bump stocks and reinstating the 48-hour waiting period.

“I think those are things that just make sense in terms of our culture, in terms of safety,” she said.

Hear Grover’s interview:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/interview-with-rob-grover>

Hear Hart’s:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/candidate-interview-with-max-hart>

Hear Gearing-Lancaster’s:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/candidate-interview-with-desiree-gearing-lancaster>