

Dem 19th SD candidates talk education, transpo funding, constitutional carry

Posted on Friday, Jul 20, 2018

Dem 19th SD candidate Dan Grady envisions a Wisconsin where marijuana is legal and governed under a three-tier system, similar to the one that dictates the manufacture, distribution and sale of alcohol.

Grady, a co-founding member of the Wisconsin Homebrewers Alliance who currently works as an accountant, said he'd use the new tax revenue to fund three of his major priorities: health care, schools and roads.

"I think we have a good model there (with alcohol), and I think we can look to other states as to what the correct rates are," he said. "But I think there's too much money to be left on the table for not doing it."

The 50-year-old third-term Outagamie County supervisor is one of two Dems seeking to unseat Senate President Roger Roth, R-Appleton, this fall.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

The other is Outagamie County Dem Party Chair Lee Snodgrass, 49. Snodgrass, who works as a communications director for the Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes, also highly prioritizes education — she's interested in the "K-16" system, she said in the interview — and health care, but also the environment, which she noted is an "economic driver for Wisconsin."

"We need to keep Wisconsin a place where millennials want to come back to," she said. "And part of that is the wonderful natural resources that we have here to take advantage of."

For both candidates, this is their first time running for state office. Still, each has extensive experiencing working on Dem campaigns.

Snodgrass, who's chaired the Outagamie County Dem Party since her term started in January 2017, worked on U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin's first state Assembly race, as well as former U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold's first Senate bid. She also said she's been more recently involved in several City Council campaigns.

Meanwhile, Grady has worked on the campaigns of Feingold, U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl and Outagamie County Exec. Tom Nelson. He also worked on Kohl's staff in Washington, D.C., for four years.

Although both candidates prioritize education, the two have slightly different views on the state's ongoing UW System tuition freeze.

Grady says he'd be likely to support continuing the five-year cap on tuition — if the state backfills it with GPR.

"We can't just keep cutting away at our departments. They've cut all the fat that they can from the UW," he said. "Now they're cutting from the real meat of the university."

But Snodgrass was more hesitant about backing it. While she knocked the freeze as "misleading," she said she'd "be more open to it" if the state funded it.

"How is a freeze going to benefit a family if that child is going to be in school an extra semester or an extra year even, and not be able to complete that degree in four years?" she said. "I think that's a bit of a ploy."

On other issues:

*Transportation funding: Snodgrass says the state should be tackling road funding in a separate bill — not rolled into the budget.

"I think it might be easier to hammer that out," she said.

Snodgrass said tolling is off the table for her. She was more open to raising the gas tax and vehicle registration fees — though she said lawmakers should "use caution" when considering those options and worried indexing the gas tax to inflation could create a burden on certain individuals in the state if it's raised while the minimum

wage remains stagnant.

But Grady said he would support a 5 cent gas tax hike, before again indexing, which pegs the gas tax to the cost of living. He said while he'd consider raising vehicle registration fees, with communities across the state implementing wheel taxes, he'd prefer to look at other funding options — such as legalizing and taxing marijuana to raise more revenue — first.

Tolling, he said, would just “increase the cost of business” as well as the costs for residents.

Snodgrass also said the state should be considering creating regional transit authorities, among other solutions. RTAs are overseen by a board of directors and allowed to operate a transportation system or contract to do so.

The state in 2009 passed legislation to allow the creation of the authorities in different communities. But the Republicans' 2011 biennial budget eliminated the initiative and dissolved the RTAs that had been created in Dane County, the Chippewa Valley in the Eau Claire area and Chequamegon Bay in the Ashland area.

*Constitutional carry: The two also said they would vote against 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.

Both also stressed the importance of and need for firearm training.

And Snodgrass likened the “gun violence health crisis” in the nation to the opioid crisis.

“You don't hear anyone clamoring to put more opioids on the street to combat the opioid epidemic, so I'm not sure why more guns on the street would reduce gun violence,” she said.

Hear Grady's interview:

https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/180718_grady/s-ez56i

Hear Snodgrass':

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/180718snodgrass/s-8iwOa>