

# Raasch, Sortwell vie for 2nd AD GOP nomination

Posted on Friday, Jul 27, 2018

Dean Raasch in 1987 was 19-years-old and faced a rare and vicious form of leukemia that meant he had a nine-out-of-10 chance he wouldn't live past five years.

The state of medical research in the late '80s offered Raasch one hope to prolong his life — a bone marrow transplant. Raasch received a transplant in Minnesota after his freshman year of college.

Even with a transplant, the survival rate for his age group was just 25 percent over two years.

But 31 years since his diagnosis, Raasch has beat his leukemia and is running to represent the 2nd Assembly District in northeastern Wisconsin with a focus on making healthcare more accessible and affordable.

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“It's changing at the federal level, and when that change happens at the federal level, we have to be ready at the state level to implement new strategies and new ideas to help really strengthen the health insurance programs that we have,” Raasch said in an interview with WisPolitics.com this week about his candidacy.

The 50-year-old De Pere Republican is currently a food and beverage director for a senior center and a member of the De Pere City Council. He faces self-described “Rand Paul Republican” Shae Sortwell in the Aug. 14 primary.

On healthcare, Raasch said he opposes a single-payer system as well as making BadgerCare a public option.

But what he does support is a return to a high-risk insurance pools that Wisconsin and more than 30 other states offered before the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. He argues bringing back those pools would allow people with pre-existing conditions to be adequately covered, and would likely reduce premiums for other health insurance consumers.

Raasch also said he supports the law Gov. Scott Walker championed earlier this year that provides \$200 million to stabilize the state's ACA market and hold down insurance premiums. He also wants the state to consider looking at Obamacare's 1332 waiver that would allow the state to set up additional risk pools.

Raasch believes his experience as a licensed insurance agent and cancer survivor allows him to see the benefits and drawbacks of changes to healthcare at the federal and state levels.

Raasch's opponent, 32-year-old Sortwell, works at a chemical company in Two Rivers and is running on a platform of limited government and preserving liberty. Sortwell is also an Army veteran who spent nine years in the Army Reserve chemical corps and currently serves as a member of the Gibson Town Board.

He says his conservative ideas have led to him receiving an endorsement from Young Americans for Liberty, which he says has been canvassing before the primary.

"Too often legislators want to look for that sexy bill ... rather than looking and finding out what isn't working right now, even if it's something smaller that not everybody cares about," Sortwell said.

His staunch opposition to government overreach has led him to call out easing levy limits for local schools without taxpayer approval.

It's also led him to draw attention to the effects of what he considers unnecessary government overreach in his region, such as a state law he says requires local harbors to treat what they dredge from Lake Michigan as hazardous waste.

On transportation, Sortwell said he would support a 5 cent increase in the gas tax if it was offset with an equal reduction in the state income tax or elsewhere. And he believes the state should lower its minimum markup on gasoline prices, which he

says could create more room for a potential gas tax increase.

“We fund a large part of our transportation out of the general fund,” he said. “I think that if you’re using the roads, you should be paying more for fixing the roads.”

He said he’s opposed to increases in registration fees, but is open to tolling, although he believes it’s not an option that makes much sense for the state since it isn’t a transportation hub like neighboring Illinois.

Raasch, who at one time started a trucking company, said a gas tax boost should wait until there’s further scrutiny over how transportation funds are being allocated in order to prevent wasteful spending.

“Before we do any increases in the gas tax or talk about toll roads, we’ve got to look at how we’re spending the money first,” Raasch said.

Raasch said he’d consider increases in registration fees with a priority on addressing the fee structure for electric vehicles.

On other issues:

\*Using potential revenue from online sales tax collection to reduce taxes elsewhere: Both candidates say they support reducing taxes elsewhere given additional tax revenue from remote online sales tax collection.

\* Continuing the UW tuition freeze: Both candidates support continuing the tuition freeze and both argue the funding to support it should come from within UW System and not from additional state revenue.

\*Backing constitutional carry: Sortwell said he supports the measure, and Raasch said he is leaning toward supporting it.