

Transportation funding a key issue in 42nd AD GOP primary

Posted on Monday, May 7, 2018

Each Republican candidate vying to represent the 42nd Assembly District prioritizes the state's transportation needs, although some are entertaining stronger action than others.

The candidates' ideas for funding Wisconsin's roadways range from charging out-of-state residents to finding money within current budget constraints.

All four GOP candidates spoke to WisPolitics.com as part of a series of interviews with contenders in special election primaries for the 42nd AD northeast of Madison and the 1st Senate District in northeastern Wisconsin. The primaries are May 15 with a general election June 12.

The Dem candidate in the 42nd AD is Ann Groves Lloyd, a Lodi alderwoman and former UW-Madison academic adviser. Independent Gene Rubinstein is also vying for the seat, though his name won't appear on this month's partisan primary ballot.

>> 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.](#)

Lloyd, Rubenstein and the four Republican candidates are campaigning to replace former Rep. Keith Ripp, R-Lodi, who announced his departure Dec. 29 to take a job in the Walker administration.

Jon Plumer, 63, the establishment favorite from Lodi, told WisPolitics.com he'd be open to considering temporary increases in the gas tax and vehicle registration fees to make necessary road repairs, although he's opposed to any tolling.

"I would entertain an increase in the gas tax if it had a sunset clause," he said. "We have a lot of construction to do at this point. There's a big difference between construction and maintenance. Now we have to spend a lot more money to get

caught up to where I think most people think we should be.”

Darren Schroeder, a 55-year-old farmer from the Town of Columbus, emphasizes local control over Wisconsin roads as part of his campaign, though he, too, agrees lawmakers must address the root of the transportation funding issue. He’s seen the effects of a squeezed transportation budget affect his district firsthand.

“We have nine bridges in our township, and they’re quite costly to replace, and they’re deteriorating. In the last two cycles the state has cancelled bridge aid,” he said.

Schroeder did not commit to a specific funding fix, but said he’d consider a 5-cent increase in the gas tax and raising registration fees. He also mentioned the possibility of tolling out-of-state drivers or drivers who haven’t paid in-state registration.

Colleen Locke-Murphy, a 50-year-old attorney from Poynette with a practice in Jefferson, emphasized road funding as a top issue she’d take on.

“The roads are terrible. And we need to work to fix them. You hear about all these building projects in Milwaukee and in and around Madison. Our rural roads need fixing just as badly,” she said.

She said she’d look at slashing other areas of the state budget to fund road projects, but declined to provide specific programs or services she would consider cutting. She opposes tolling, increases in the gas tax or registration fees.

“They’re already really high, in my opinion, so I’m reluctant to do that, either,” Locke-Murphy said.

Spencer Zimmerman of Janesville, who is 38, has run in past state races as a “Trump conservative.” He argued funding woes could be relieved by building a tollway along the Wisconsin-Illinois border to only charge out-of-state drivers.

“Wisconsin drivers have been paying millions in tolls to build up Illinois roads. I think it’s time to make Illinois start to pay,” Zimmerman said.

He opposes any increases to the gas tax or registration fees.

Beyond eyeing transportation funding as significant issue, the four GOP candidates’

backgrounds and policy stances diverge.

Plumer

Plumer, of Lodi, has some political experience, though not with state office. He has served for about two years on the town of Lodi Board of Supervisors and was recently elected to the Columbia County Board of Supervisors.

He and his wife own a karate school in Lodi, and place an emphasis on being involved in the community, founding an annual Thanksgiving dinner for the public as well as a downtown concert series. Plumer and his wife moved to Lodi in 2008. Before purchasing the karate studio, he worked for Kraft Foods as a route salesman for about about three decades.

Plumer describes himself as a fiscal conservative. Besides transportation funding, he's emphasizing school safety and expanding the bike trail between Minneapolis and Chicago.

Schroeder

Schroeder, a dairy farmer turned cash crop farmer, is the current Town of Columbus chairman. He touts additional leadership experience, such as creating planning and zoning ordinances for Columbia County and logging membership on the Board for the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation.

Schroeder sees his experience in the agriculture industry as an asset in the race.

"Agriculture is the number one industry in our state. I don't think there's much representation at the state level," he said.

Schroeder says he'd like to tackle the intersection of agricultural and environmental and sustainability issues in the state. Additionally, he said he'd work to keep local control of roads and zoning.

Locke-Murphy

Locke-Murphy has logged one failed bid for Jefferson County district attorney.

Beyond pushing to fix Wisconsin's roads, she's also vowing to make sure proper funding goes to rural school districts and that access to clean water is assured.

Zimmerman

Zimmerman is an Air Force veteran and currently works as a limousine driver. He doesn't think being from outside the district is an issue, particularly because of his knowledge of the district from regularly driving a tanker truck there for an agriculture cooperative.

He has a history of running for political office. He has ran failed bids in the 46th, 58th and 99th Assembly districts; for city council in Janesville and Stoughton; and for Dane County Board.

"I've always wanted to serve, and felt I could contribute to the issues," he said.

A top priority for Zimmerman, besides addressing transportation funding, is to impose term limits for state politicians.

He supports an eight-year term limit for state representatives and a 12-year limit for state Senate and all statewide offices.

On other issues:

*Continuing the UW System tuition freeze:

Schroeder said he supports the tuition freeze, and suggests universities should look to their foundations and other sources of support, as well as consider cuts. Locke-Murphy backs the freeze, noting tuition has skyrocketed in recent years, but she doesn't think taxpayers should be on the line for additional university funding. Plumer was hesitant to take a firm position, but added he'd like to see more state residents attend cheaper trade schools instead of university. Zimmerman supports the freeze, and said the UW System should look to further cuts to address fundraising constraints.

*Allowing concealed weapons without a permit:

Schroeder opposes the idea. He underscored his opposition to gun bans, but said the state must have a sound certification system and background checks for gun owners. Plumer declined to offer a definitive response, but said there's "no question" he wants people to be safe. Locke-Murphy, who has a concealed-carry permit, opposes the measure. She says she's a firm supporter of the Second Amendment, but said it's appropriate for those concealing a weapon to have proper

training. Zimmerman said he'd support such a measure, adding he previously received an 'A plus' rating from the National Rifle Association, and that "criminals are going to get guns no matter what."

Hear Plumer's interview:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/jon-plumer-interview>

Schroeder's:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/darren-schroeder-interview>

Locke-Murphy's:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/colleen-locke-murphy-interview>

Zimmerman's:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/spencer-zimmerman-interview>