



League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund
SPRING 2009 WISCONSIN VOTERS' GUIDE

Election Day: Tuesday, April 7, 2009

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund (LWVWIEF) has surveyed the candidates for **Wisconsin Supreme Court** (*pages 2-3*) and **State Superintendent of Public Instruction** (*pages 3-6*) in the 2009 Wisconsin Spring Elections. This Voters' Guide has been prepared in advance of the February Primary Election. It contains verbatim responses from the candidates, listed in ballot order. Candidates were asked to keep all answers under 100 words but were allowed to run to the end of a reasonable-length full sentence following the 100 word mark. "No Reply" is noted for candidates who did not respond to the League questionnaire.

Please share this Voters' Guide. Permission to copy and distribute this Guide is granted provided that no candidate's answers are altered in any way, that equal treatment in the duplication of the responses to any question is afforded all candidates, and that the LWVWIEF is acknowledged. Please write to the LWVWIEF with any questions concerning this permission. **No portion of this Voters' Guide may be duplicated for campaign purposes.**

The League of Women Voters does not endorse individual candidates or political parties. We encourage citizens to learn about the candidates and issues by accessing print, broadcast, and cablecast media, libraries, websites and by attending debates and forums throughout the election period. Visit our on-line voter information at www.lwvwi.org.

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VOTING IN WISCONSIN

Qualifications: U.S. citizenship, 18 years old by Election Day and residence in your voting district for at least 10 days prior to Election Day are required to vote. Residence in a district for fewer than 10 days immediately preceded by residence elsewhere in Wisconsin, allows you to vote in the former district by absentee ballot. Absentee ballots are available at each municipal clerk's office. For more information, contact your local clerk, visit the LWVWI website at www.lwvwi.org or visit the Government Accountability Board website at <http://elections.state.wi.us/>

Election Day Voter Registration: You must be registered in order to vote. You may register at your municipal clerk's office until 5:00 p.m. the day before the Election, or you may register at the polls on Election Day. You will need to provide proof of residence in the form of a Wisconsin driver's license or Wisconsin identification card with your current and complete name and address, a utility bill, or a pay stub with name and address clearly stated. Alternately, a qualified voter from your municipality can serve as your witness to verify your address. You will also have to provide a Wisconsin driver's license number or Wisconsin State ID number, or if you don't have one of these, the last four digits of your social security number. If you have never been issued a Wisconsin ID or social security number, a voter ID number will be assigned to you.

WISCONSIN SUPREME COURT

The state's highest court is composed of seven justices and is located in the State Capitol. The Supreme Court may review cases decided in any lower court or may hear original actions. The Supreme Court has administrative and regulatory authority over the courts and the practice of law in the state. The justice who has served the longest continuous term serves as chief justice unless he or she declines the position.

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justices are elected in statewide non-partisan April elections to a 10 year term beginning August 1. In the event of a vacancy, the governor may appoint a justice until an election can be held. A justice must have been a licensed attorney in Wisconsin for the five years preceding election to judicial office. Judicial candidates may not be members of political parties and may not make promises or commitments on any case, controversy or issue that may come before them if elected. Once in office, a justice may not hold or campaign for any non-judicial public office during the term for which he/she was elected, even if he/she resigns from judicial office. The salary for a Supreme Court Chief Justice is \$145,414 and for a Supreme Court Justice is \$137,414.

Questions posed to the candidates:

1. What educational, professional, civic and community experiences have you had that you believe qualify you for this elective office?
2. Describe in lay terms the duties of a Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice. What types of cases are heard by the court?
3. What legislative or procedural changes might improve the operations of the court?
4. Wisconsin has experienced two Supreme Court campaigns with record expenditures. What reforms to the current campaign finance rules would you support? How would you as a Supreme Court Justice advocate for the independence of the courts?

THE CANDIDATES

Judge Randy R. Koschnick

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No Reply



Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson (Incumbent)

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1. I have been chief justice of the Supreme Court since 1996 and a Justice since 1976. I practiced law in Madison and taught at both Marquette and U.W.-Madison law schools. My law degree is from Indiana University and my doctorate of law from UW-Madison. I served as president of the Conference of Chief Justices and as chair of the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence, and am on numerous boards to improve the administration of justice. I have visited every county in the state numerous times. Judges must understand people's perceptions of the system, so we can improve it.

2. The role of the Supreme Court is to decide the legal questions brought to it. The Supreme Court ensures that the statutes and the Wisconsin and U.S. constitutions are applied in each case. A good justice has the ability and discipline to interpret the legislature's language and intent in light of the constitutions, the legal precedents, and the facts of the case. That ability, exercised impartially, fairly and independently of any agenda is essential to the job. The court hears cases presenting issues of state-wide importance in a wide variety of subjects, from auto accidents to zoning.

3. The Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court is the chief executive officer of the entire state judicial system. As chief justice I have initiated numerous programs to improve access to justice and the effective, efficient administration of justice. In these tough economic times we continue to do more with less. Our programs include computer technology and case management, assistance to unrepresented persons, videoconferencing to reduce costs and increase public safety, court interpreters, aid to veterans who suffer from substance or alcohol abuse or mental illness, mediation for lenders and borrowers in mortgage foreclosures, and drug and alcohol abuse courts.

4. My support for public campaign financing for the election of Justices is longstanding. In December 2007 the six Justices and I signed a letter to legislators and the governor supporting realistic, meaningful public financing for Supreme Court elections, asserting that judges must not only be fair, neutral, impartial and non-partisan but also should be so perceived by the public. I have advocated for judicial independence, that is a fair, impartial, neutral and non-partisan judiciary accountable to the people, in numerous speeches and writings in this state and across the country and have participated in many conferences on the topic.

WISCONSIN SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction is a non-partisan constitutional officer. The Superintendent is the head of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which is charged with providing direction and technical assistance for public elementary and secondary education in Wisconsin. It offers a broad range of programs and professional services to local school administrators and faculty. The Department distributes the state school financial aid and administers federal aid that supplement local tax resources, improve curriculum and school operations, ensure education for children with disabilities, offer professional guidance and counseling, and develop school and public library resources. The term of office of the State Superintendent is four years and current salary is \$122,516.

Questions posed to the candidates:

1. Describe your educational, occupational, civic and community experiences that qualify you for the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
2. What do you see as the major strengths and weaknesses of Wisconsin's current school funding system and what changes would you recommend to ensure equal educational opportunity for children in Wisconsin?
3. As State Superintendent, what will your priorities be in working with the incoming administration in Washington around educational policies such as No Child Left Behind and funding for mandated programs?
4. Would you be in favor of expanding the school voucher program, and should private schools serving publicly-funded voucher students be held to the same standards (e.g., staff qualifications and standardized testing) as public schools?

THE CANDIDATES

Rose Fernandez

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1. I am a former pediatric trauma nurse and senior administrator at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, a world-renowned academic medical center. I'm also the former president of a parent-teacher-administrator coalition that fought for a bipartisan compromise which kept public schools open to serve thousands of kids. My perspective as a mother, a nurse, an administrator and a small business owner make my focus the public school children of Wisconsin. Since I am not beholden to any political party or special interest, voters will know that my only concern is preparing students for the next stages in their lives.
2. Governor Doyle has vowed to address the school funding formula so that inequities that exist will be remedied. We cannot, however, return to the fights of the 1980s where, without cost controls,

mediation/arbitration awards led to skyrocketing property taxes and created a situation where schools and taxpayer advocates were at odds with one another. I believe good teachers should be rewarded and bad teachers should be let go, no matter how long they've been around. Any reforms in funding should move toward the establishment of a locally-administered merit-based compensation system that promotes and rewards quality, work ethic and achievement.

3. President Obama's choice of Arne Duncan to lead the Department of Education should be reassuring to people of every political persuasion. A results-oriented reformer, I believe Duncan will work to see that federal education policies assist, but do not burden local school leaders. Tying aid to achievement is a laudable goal, but we cannot measure achievement solely on the performance of standardized testing. Because I am not a partisan, and not a part of the petty turf battles of the past, I believe I can foster a great relationship with any Administration from day one.

4. I am a supporter of parental options in education. I believe education is the civil rights issue of this decade. I do believe any recipients of public monies must be accountable to the taxpayers. Unfortunately too many people who opposed vouchers from the onset are determined to kill the program through regulation. I believe the current cap on enrollment should be lifted and we should work collaboratively to ensure that children receiving vouchers learn, grow and achieve. I am less concerned about where the learning happens than I am THAT the learning happens.



Tony Evers

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1. I have served the students of Wisconsin for over 34 years. Since 2001, I have been Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction. From 1992 to 2000, I was the chief administrator of Cooperative Educational Service Agency 6, serving 42 school districts in east central Wisconsin. Prior to this position, I was superintendent of the Verona and Oakfield school districts, and was a high school principal, elementary school principal, teacher of gifted and talented children, and technology coordinator in Tomah. Additionally, I was a curriculum auditor in states across the U.S. and served as the national president of the Deputy State Superintendent Leadership Commission.

2. While our finance system has withstood constitutional challenges, it has significant flaws that have locked in inequalities that threaten our children's birthright to a quality education. Our present national economic distress will prevent wholesale changes, but we must redouble the effort to maintain our commitment to 2/3rds funding while beginning the process of creating flexibility in revenue controls to return control to our local communities. We need to consider tying state aid to community income rather than property value. It is critical to change the system to create sustainable and accountable investments for future generations.

3. In my present role of Deputy State Superintendent, I have been directly involved with national efforts to change No Child Left Behind (NCLB). We must never waver from our goal to close achievement gaps. However, as State Superintendent my priorities for changing NCLB will be to create a new Wisconsin-based accountability system that relies less on the one-shot standardized test that is used to punish schools to one that embraces multiple assessment tools that measure true student growth. Furthermore, we must expect more financial commitment from Washington to assist our schools with the enormous data collection requirements that have been imposed on them.

4. For the past 7 years I have had direct leadership responsibility for the DPI's operational management of this publicly-funded program, which included bringing together leaders in the Milwaukee community to enact landmark accountability legislation. I do not support the expansion of the state's voucher program, especially since the statutorily-required effectiveness study by an independent group is not yet complete. I believe the voucher program should be made more transparent; and as such, I would support accountability measures such as participating in the state testing program and other quality control measures such as ensuring the quality of the teachers.