

2016 Public Education Voter Guide

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The following candidates were asked to answer the same five questions on the topic of public education.

These candidates responded by press time: Dan Feyen (Wisconsin Senate District 18), Mark Harris (Wisconsin Senate District 18), Gordon Hintz (Wisconsin Assembly District 54901), Russ Feingold (U.S. Senate), Sarah Lloyd (U.S. House of Representatives).

These candidates did not respond by press time, despite several attempts to contact them: Jordan Hansen (Libertarian, Wisconsin Assembly District 54), Ron Johnson (U.S. Senate), Glenn Grothman (U.S. House of Representatives), Michael Schraa (Wisconsin Assembly District 53).

The full text of these responses and candidate contact information can be found at our web site, <https://supportoshkoshstudents.org>, or on our Facebook page, <https://facebook.com/supportoshkoshstudents>.

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Dan Feyen

Dan Feyen	
Race	Senate District 18
Current occupation	Press & Bindery Coordinator
Party affiliation	Republican
Major endorsements	Current State Senator Rick Gudex, Rep. Tyler Vorpapel, Dodge Cty DA Kurt Klomberg, Wisconsin Right to Life, NRA
web site	http://www.feyenforsenate.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	Our current school funding formula was created in an era that did not have to account for population decline in rural areas and the declining enrollment that accompanies it. Today, the drop in numbers of students educated in rural areas is leaving those school systems in times of financial hardship. Conversely, students in poor, urban areas have seen few improvements in their schools despite decades of politicians trying to turn things around for poorly performing institutions. I think it's important to look at all available solutions to this issue: charter schools, voucher schools, virtual schools, school district collaboration, public-private partnerships, different funding schemes, and anything else that arises.
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	I believe that local control is very important in education as each community within Wisconsin is unique and only the members of each community can decide what is best for their youth. However, I also think it is very important to ensure that Wisconsinites are not overburdened with taxes. I believe a reasonable cap on levy limits allows school districts the freedom to ask communities for support in funding their educational system while still ensuring there is a failsafe to ensure that taxes are kept low enough to not overstrain working families.
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	Yes, I do support the Wisconsin voucher schools program. I believe it is a parent's right to secure the best possible education for their child, and if they feel their child would be better served in a private school versus a public school, I support their decision. Additionally, choice schools do not have a large, negative financial impact on school funding as some may claim. 3.2% of Wisconsin students use the voucher program, a very minimal percentage of our total school population; only 2.2% of educational funding in Wisconsin is spent on school choice. Additionally, a school may claim a student for funding purposes for 2 additional years after they enroll in the voucher program, giving schools an adequate amount of time to adjust their financial plans to account for voucher students. And finally, it costs between \$5183 and \$5829 LESS, depending on grade level, to educate a student in the voucher program than in a public school.

Dan Feyen

4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?

To say that the legislature is anything less than supportive of Wisconsin universities and their students would be inaccurate. However, education is an investment that must be taken seriously by all parties involved. Government meddling in higher education has led to the ballooning costs that we see today. I have a son who is currently attending UW-Madison and a daughter who is a senior in high school and currently applying to institutions in the University of Wisconsin system therefore I realize how vital colleges and universities are to the future of our state. But I don't believe that throwing money at the issue of higher education costs. Parents and students need to be more conscious consumers; universities need to be more frugal spenders; legislators need to be careful watchers to assist where possible and right wrongs where necessary.

5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?

Yes, I do support extending the tuition freeze. The cost of higher education is ballooning and hardworking middle-class Americans bear the brunt of universities' exorbitant spending. At some point the institutions that enroll students need to take responsibility for the costs they're passing on. The university system in Wisconsin still receives more than adequate funding to provide a world-class education to our children.

Mark Harris

Mark Harris	
Race	Senate District 18
Current occupation	Winnebago County Executive
Party affiliation	Democratic
Major endorsements	
web site	http://www.harrisforwisconsin.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	The state funding formulas for K-12 schools should help to provide quality public education for all children. Currently however underfunding for public education has created a situation where operational referendums are necessary to supplement state funding. This will inevitably create an environment where some areas will be adequately funded but areas where voters are less likely to pass a referendum will struggle. Wisconsin has been reducing the share of public university education costs that are paid by the state for many years but that process has been greatly accelerated in the last few years. State funding for education costs at UWO has dropped from 57.5% in 1987 to 33.3% in 2012 and it is about 16% today. This has dramatically increased the costs paid by students and their families.
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	School revenues have generally been controlled by the public through referendums and by the state by funding formulas. The funding should improve but control of property tax and state aid should remain with the public and with the state respectively.
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	The voucher programs should not be expanded and probably should be rolled back. When our primary education system responsible for a quality education for all students is not being adequately funded, funding should not be diverted to a second system.
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	I believe the primary focus should be sufficient access and that the state should be funding at least 25% of public university education expenses.

Mark Harris

5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?

The tuition freeze is only acceptable if the state provides additional financial support. Like any price freeze a tuition freeze will inevitably result in an erosion of quality or access. It may also drive up the real cost of a degree by making it difficult to complete required courses in four years.

Gordon Hintz

Gordon Hintz	
Race	Assembly District 54
Current occupation	incumbent State Representative, 54th Assembly District
Party affiliation	Democratic
Major endorsements	Wisconsin Education Association Council, American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees Council 48 and 40, National Association of Social Workers, Iron Workers Local 8, Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice Wisconsin, League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter, Clean Wisconsin, U.S. Senator Russ Feingold, Winnebago County Executive Mark Harris
web site	Hintzforassembly.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	Historically, a bipartisan commitment to supporting public education led to Wisconsin being a national leader in economic opportunity and outcomes for our kids. Our quality public schools and universities are the reason why people chose to move to or stay in Wisconsin to raise a family. Yet, at a time of relative prosperity at the national level, Republicans in the Capitol have cut funding for our public schools, universities, and technical colleges by over \$2 billion. These cuts were not a decision made because of economic driven fiscal difficulties, but because Republican leadership has placed priority on directing resources towards regressive, expensive tax cuts that have cost hundreds of millions of dollars and overwhelmingly benefit wealthy individuals. Furthermore, due to partisan politics the majority party has also rejected a \$300+ million from the federal government for BadgerCare that would have allowed us to in turn direct those resources to our public schools. As we have seen here in Oshkosh, the investment in public schools that is the constitutional responsibility of the state government is increasingly being funded on the backs of local property taxpayers through referendums. Our local schools should not have to go to referendum just to fund basic operating expenses. At the same time, taxpayer funding of private schools has exploded, despite the fact that 75% of that money goes to people who were previously paying private school tuition on their own. Simply put, funding for education both in our community schools and public universities has not been a priority for Governor Walker and Republican lawmakers in Madison over the last five years. We are already beginning to see the impacts at these institutions, but the full effects of these decisions won't happen overnight. State lawmakers must prioritize funding for public education in Wisconsin again, or we will continue to see decreased economic opportunity for our children, families, and communities.

Gordon Hintz

2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?

Revenue limits were established in response to skyrocketing property tax increases of the late 80's and early 90's. At the time, revenue limits were established with an agreement that the state would provide 2/3s of the funding for public schools in the state. Districts have increasingly struggled as state funding has declined below that 2/3s commitment but revenue limits have remained in place, and in recent years, have not increased. Wisconsin property taxes are high, and revenue limits can be effective at limiting their growth, but only if adequate funding is provided by the state to meet the needs of students. But there are problems with the current revenue limits. The current revenue limits were established in the 1990s and are unfair to fiscally responsible districts that had lower spending at the time they were established. This has been part of the problem the Oshkosh Area School District has faced for years. The current education formula the state uses was originally designed to be in place for around three to five years. It has now been in place for more than 20 years and does not recognize the changes that have taken place in most districts over that time.

3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?

I recognize that many parents choose to send their children to private schools, for a number of reasons, and certainly respect their choice to do so. However, this choice should remain funded through private means, and should not be at the expense of our public school system. At a time when Republican leadership in the Capitol has chosen to dramatically limit the amount of money set aside for education, I strongly believe that the best use of those limited resources is not to provide vouchers to parents who were already paying for private school on their own. In Oshkosh and statewide, 75% of voucher recipients were already paying to attend private school before they received a voucher. Everyone in a community benefits when the public education system is strong, regardless of whether they have children in public schools or not. Investing in public schools and public infrastructure makes our communities stronger. Even worse, Republicans expanded taxpayer funded vouchers in the 2015-17 budget without providing funding that had paid for previous voucher expansions. As a result, public school districts will lose state aid, but will be allowed to increase local property taxes to offset the lost state aid. So local property taxes are now paying for private tuition at private schools primarily for students who were previously paying that tuition on their own.

Gordon Hintz

4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?

Wisconsin's long term prosperity is inevitable linked to a strong and flourishing UW System. Therefore the damage of recent cuts to the UW System is startling. In the 2015-16 school year, per student support from the state's general fund for operations (not including debt payments) was \$4,494. In comparison, the 1999-00 school year the number was a thousand dollars more, or \$5,494. These decisions have made our renowned universities less accessible and less affordable. 39 states increased funding for their universities in their 2015 state budgets. Despite additional revenue, Republicans chose to cut our university system while providing \$176 million in tax cuts in one year to less than 2,300 tax filers, all who earn more than \$500,000 a year. It is about priorities. The UW System has always been a main economic driver in our state, infusing over \$15 billion into our economy each year. UW System's current and past budget requests represent a bare minimum request. After years of cuts, this request must be granted, but we should be doing better than the bare minimum for Wisconsin's number one job creation engine. Economists project that by 2020, 65% of new jobs created will required a college degree.

5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?

While I am a strong supporter of college affordability, it is important that any continuing tuition freeze on the UW system be accompanied by additional state funding support. balanced with state funding. A tuition freeze is not helpful to our university students when they are paying a higher price in terms of larger class sizes, fewer courses, and long graduation times. Taking an additional year to graduate costs a lot more than a 3% tuition increase. The Governor and Legislature should give more consideration to allowing individual campuses more control over their resources and budgets, and should adequately fund higher education in Wisconsin instead of slashing it. A tuition freeze with cuts in state funding provides less value to our students and our state.

Jordan Hansen

Jordan Hansen	
Race	Assembly District 54
Current occupation	student, UW Oshkosh
Party affiliation	Libertarian
Major endorsements	
web site	http://electjordanhansen.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	[did not respond]
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	[did not respond]
5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?	[did not respond]

Russ Feingold

Russ Feingold	
Race	U.S. Senate
Current occupation	former U.S. Senator
Party affiliation	Democratic
Major endorsements	Julie Gordon (Winnebago County Supervisor), Larry Lautenschlager (Winnebago County Supervisor), Mike Norton (Winnebago County Supervisor), Caroline Panske (Oshkosh City Council), Thomas Pech (Oshkosh City Council), Robert Warnke (Winnebago County Supervisor), Aaron Wojciechowski (Winnebago County Supervisor), AFL-CIO, American Federation of Teachers-Wisconsin, Wisconsin Education Association Council, League of Conservation Voters, Council for a Livable World, National Organization for Women-Wisconsin, WI Citizen Action, Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Sierra Club, Alliance for Retired Americans, Working Families Party
web site	http://russfeingold.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	Supporting Wisconsin’s public education system is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of our states. Every student deserves access to a high-quality public education and every young person who is willing to work hard to earn a degree should be able to access higher education. At a federal level, there is more that can be done to make sure that local districts have the resources they need. I previously sponsored the Teachers at the Table Act to create a Volunteer Teacher Advisory Committee to provide input to Congress. I also sponsored bipartisan legislation to make educational access more equitable by improving school breakfast programs and successfully fought to expand Pell grants. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to education. Local control over the day-to-day classroom experience of our students helps to ensure that children get an education tailored to their unique needs and talents. In order to fully realize the Wisconsin Idea, we must continually work to make sure that our public education system is well-funded, well-resourced, and supported by lawmakers.
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	I am a strong supporter of local control over education and I am open to proposals for how we can ensure consistent, robust funding for local school districts.

Russ Feingold

3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?

No. I believe that we can more effectively and equitably support Wisconsin students by providing adequate funding for local school districts, many of which have been hit hard by budget cuts.

4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?

It's time to put an end to the era of cuts to the UW System, which is one of Wisconsin's most treasured institutions. We must also make college affordable to all students who are willing to work hard to earn a higher education degree. I believe that lawmakers, schools, and communities should work together to create a system that allows students to graduate from Wisconsin's public universities debt-free.

5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?

I'm open to any steps to make college more affordable for students at Wisconsin's public universities. However, Wisconsin cannot afford to continue shortchanging the UW System in its biennial budgets. I believe that a more comprehensive solution is needed to address the fundamental issue of college affordability and student debt. That's why I support proposals to tackle the student debt crisis by allowing student loan refinancing.

Ron Johnson

Ron Johnson	
Race	U.S. Senate
Current occupation	incumbent
Party affiliation	Republican
Major endorsements	
web site	https://www.ronjohnsonforsenate.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	[did not respond]
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	[did not respond]
5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?	[did not respond]

Sarah Lloyd

Sarah Lloyd	
Race	U.S. House of Representatives
Current occupation	dairy farmer
Party affiliation	Democratic
Major endorsements	
web site	http://lloydforwisconsin.com/
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	I believe that pre-K education can provide critical short and long term cognitive benefits and leads to stronger students in grade school. It is especially important in rural areas, like the 6th Congressional District, that public options are available to parents who seek to take advantage of pre-K education. The role of the state should be to ensure that every community has both accessible options for this crucial stage in educational development.
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	I support returning the control of public school revenues to the local school boards. It is no secret that communities with high quality education are the kind that attract businesses, produce better work forces, and provide many other means of economic growth. Stronger schools lead to stronger communities. I think it should be up the communities, not the state, to the decide how much they want to invest in their education.
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	I do not support expansion of school voucher programs. Voucher programs do not show improved student performance when weighted for socio-economic class and race. Furthermore voucher programs lack accountability in many cases. Some states and municipalities have lost millions of dollars to some of the fraudulent private institutions that seek to take advantage of the system. I will fight to keep public funding in public institutions.
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	I believe that both the state and federal government have an obligation to provide quality education options from pre-K all the way through post high school education. Post-secondary education is becoming more and more essential to training for today's workforce. It is important that states take the steps necessary to make sure that public universities are accessible and affordable to all, while at the same time maintaining the resources they need to prepare students for the next step in their careers.

Sarah Lloyd

5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?

Yes, I support the tuition freeze because it allows college tuition to stay in check after a period of rising far above inflation. I think it is important, however, that the state meets its obligation to this system by providing proper funding for state schools and ensure that a decrease in tuition does not translate to a decrease in the quality of education and opportunity for students.

Glenn Grothman

Glenn Grothman	
Race	U.S. House of Representatives
Current occupation	incumbent
Party affiliation	Republican
Major endorsements	
web site	http://www.glenngrothman.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	[did not respond]
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	[did not respond]
5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?	[did not respond]

Michael Schraa

Michael Schraa	
Race	Assembly District 53
Current occupation	Incumbent
Party affiliation	Republican
Major endorsements	
web site	http://www.michaelschraa.com
1. How can the state, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through university?	[did not respond]
2. Do you support returning the control of public school revenues to local school boards? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
3. Do you support the continued expansion of school voucher programs in Wisconsin? Why or why not?	[did not respond]
4. How much support should the state of Wisconsin give to students at public universities?	[did not respond]
5. Do you support a tuition freeze for the Wisconsin public universities? Why or why not?	[did not respond]