

Wisconsin Gubernatorial Candidate Survey on Retirement Issues

Conducted by Protect Our Wisconsin Retirement Security (POWRS)

March, 2018

All Democratic candidates for governor support improving retirement security of Wisconsin workers. All of these candidates favor protecting the successful Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), the public employee retirement program. Governor Walker did not respond to the survey.

POWRS recently surveyed the gubernatorial candidates regarding two topics related to retirement security in Wisconsin. The first asked about the candidates' views on changes to the Wisconsin Retirement System. The second asked about their support for establishing a similar program for private sector employees in Wisconsin. This would be defined benefit a program modeled after, but separate from WRS and paid for by private funds. Legislation has been introduced by Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich of Green Bay to investigate this possibility.

All the democratic candidates responding to the survey support both protecting WRS and creating a similar program for private sector businesses and employees. Governor Walker did not respond to the survey.

POWRS believes ***Wisconsin voters need to know that their next governor cares about retirement security issues and is prepared to act to address these problems.*** This is why we conducted the survey. As voters you need to know where the candidates stand on issues important to you. ***The Full text of each candidate's response is below.***

POWRS is not endorsing any candidate. POWRS is a statewide working group of volunteer citizens working to protect WRS and to enhance retirement security for all Wisconsin workers.

Background: A retirement crisis is unfolding in Wisconsin. Four out of ten of state residents have already or will soon be entering their "golden years" with inadequate financial resources. As of 2015, 41% of Wisconsin's private sector employees (about 928,000 people) work for employers that do not offer *any* kind of retirement plan (AARP; Public Policy Institute). Decades of low-paying jobs, lack of pension access, inadequate company participation in 401(k) programs, rising health care costs, and the inability of average workers to save on their own have created a retirement crisis. Many Wisconsin seniors will live in poverty in the future. This situation will severely impact Wisconsin's economy and strain public safety net programs in the future.

The Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. WRS could be a model for a secure retirement program for *all* Wisconsin workers. But in recent years many "reforms" have been proposed to mess with this highly successful program. Efforts have been made to privatize the program, convert it to a 401k, politicize its oversight, and reduce benefits for public employees. None of these changes would save taxpayers money but would undermine the stability of the whole program.

Survey methods: POWRS attempted to contact via email ALL candidates including Governor Walker. We were unable to contact some because we could not find an email address or the email did not work.

If a candidate's response is not listed in the full on line text, we were unable to contact them or they failed to respond. POWRS makes no judgments regarding these candidates. POWRS is not a large, powerful, or well known group and it may be unfair to read too much into a candidate's failure to respond. You may draw your own conclusions.

Comment on Governor Walker's lack of response: POWRS attempted to avoid being partisan in this survey. As stated above readers can draw their own conclusions from the responses or lack of response. It should be noted however that POWRS started as an effort to push back against Walker's attacks on WRS. Walker and the Republican controlled legislature has repeatedly attempted to weaken, politicize, and privatize WRS. These attacks are documented on our web site at <https://www.powrs.org/publications.php>. The fact sheet "*History of Threats to WRS*" lists these attacks. An in depth discussion of "*Retirement for All*" is at <https://www.powrs.org/retirement-security-for-all.php>.

Candidate Responses in the Order Received

Mike McCabe

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes, I strongly support the concept and have been featuring it in my campaign since last October.

(http://www.governorbluejeans.com/make_state_pension_system_an_option_for_everyone_mike_mccabe_for_governor)

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Yes, I have been aware of the Hansen-Genrich bill for quite some time and do support it. If elected, I will promote the goal of retirement security for all and put the full weight of the governor's office behind the effort to accomplish this.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messaging" with this very successful program? The WRS should remain a defined benefits program. WRS also should remain a public system, and any and all efforts to privatize it must be vigorously resisted. I have proposed allowing anyone in Wisconsin to buy into the public system as a means of creating even greater financial stability for the fund and increasing the number of people with a stake in sustaining the retirement fund and defending it against political attacks. Wisconsin's goal needs to be retirement security for all. Currently, only about one-eighth of the adult population of the state is eligible to participate in the WRS, leaving the system extremely vulnerable in the future to divide and conquer political tactics as most residents in the state pay taxes to support the system but do not stand to receive a benefit from it. Social Security has lasted for more than 80 years because every working American pays for it and everyone is eligible for benefits. Unless the WRS is aligned with the principle that what government does is done for our whole society and not just a few, and becomes a program where everyone pays and everyone stands to benefit, I fear its days are numbered. Pensions are disappearing in the private sector. When many private sector workers had pensions, they supported providing pensions to public workers. But now that most have lost their pensions in the private sector,

there is great pressure to end them in the public sector as well. The long-term sustainability of the WRS depends on creating far more stakeholders who want to sustain it and are willing to defend it politically.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? Use the governor's appointment power to increase annuitant representation on these boards and address the current imbalance favoring a management perspective over a worker perspective. My mind is open to other ideas and strategies.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? Protect SeniorCare and the Aging and Disability Resource Centers from ongoing attempts to cut their funding or eliminate them altogether, and increase the state's bargaining leverage to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs by expanding BadgerCare and making it a public option for anyone living in Wisconsin.

(http://www.governorbluejeans.com/change_one_word_in_state_law_and_make_badgercare_an_option_for_all_badgers)

Michelle Doolan

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes, and I have no problem featuring that in my campaign.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? I do support this. How I would help this bill along depends on the nature of the opposition to it. Obviously, my goal as Governor is to do what's best for everyone. Taking care of people after retirement is a priority. I think that the idea behind such a bill would be to require that the function of a bill would be communicated in plain language when presented to Wisconsinites. It would certainly keep it a clean bill that way.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messing" with this very successful program? My grandpa always said, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." In the interest in keeping future legislation about solving problems instead of creating more, I think messing with the livelihood of retiring Wisconsin people is a terrible thing to do.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? I would take a look at what's already in place, if anything and fix the gaps through case management and advocacy.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? One of the things that needs to be addressed is making sure aging citizens are safe and well cared for. I want to address the 7,000 plus reported cases of elder abuse/neglect per year in Wisconsin.

Tony Evers

Do you support the concept of “retirement security for all”? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes, I support the concept. With so many employers cutting benefits like retirement we have to ensure Wisconsinites have a path to long-term economic security. However, with large public policy initiatives like this, the devil is always in the details. Ensuring that this program is sustainable and financially sound is critical. Retirement security will be part of my campaign and in particular, I plan on talking about Senator Hansen and Rep. Genrich’s bill throughout this race.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Absolutely 100%. Wisconsin has one of the best retirement systems in the country, if not the world, and we’d be crazy to not replicate this system for non-public sector employees. As we’ve seen over the last several years, large corporations are receiving tax breaks hand over fist – increasing their bottom line while laying off employees and cutting benefits for their workers who actually make them money. If Wisconsin’s employers are not going to take the lead, the state needs to step in and create a system that allows these workers a safe, responsible path for retirement.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility or otherwise “messaging” with this very successful program? One of the main reasons the WRS has been successful is because the Governor and Legislature have not been able to get their hands on it. If something isn’t broke, don’t try to fix it. In an Evers Administration, I can promise there will be no “messaging” with WRS.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of ETF and GIB? To begin with, I fundamentally believe that in state government we must appoint individuals who are knowledgeable policy experts in their fields, rather than appoint political hacks who toe the party line. Thoughtful discussion, respect and commonsense have disappeared from policymaking in Wisconsin. I will return it. Having worked as an educator and then also as management as a superintendent, I know firsthand how important it is to have both sides represented and will continue that practice as Governor.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens?

- Targeted middle class tax cuts
- Reducing student loan debt – most borrowers pay off their debt between ages 40-49, impacting their ability to save more for retirement
- Accept the Medicaid expansion dollars and lower healthcare costs for Wisconsinites
- Affordable housing initiatives
- Adequately fund our roads and schools so communities do not need to tax their residents to pay for critical services like public schools and roads

Dana Wachs

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes. Every Wisconsin worker should have the right to a secure retirement. This means maintaining the strong defined benefit retirement system for public sector workers while advancing similar opportunities for Wisconsin private sector employees. Unfortunately, retirement security for non-unionized private sectors works is out of reach and this must be addressed.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Yes. Since being elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, I have been proud to co-sponsor Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich's legislation that would create a Wisconsin private retirement security plan modeled after the Wisconsin retirement system available to public sector employees. As Governor, I would include such legislation in my first executive budget and aggressively advocate for its passage.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messaging" with this very successful program? Yes. The Department of Employee Trust Funds and State Investment Board have a long history of managing the Wisconsin Retirement System in a strong and stable manner. I support keeping the Wisconsin Retirement System as a defined-benefit program and strongly oppose any efforts to privatize or weaken the Wisconsin Retirement System. We have seen first hand when Republicans have tinkered and "reformed" public pensions in other states. The WRS is the nation's model for public sector retirement programs, and we should keep our hands off public employees' retirement security.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? As governor, I will appoint board members who understand the importance of maintaining stability and opposing efforts that put public employees' retirement money at risk. The number one goal of the management, administration and boards must be to do no harm.

All efforts to strengthen benefits for retirees and participants must be done with their broad input into the decision. Furthermore, I would end the use of outside consulting firms who think they know what is best and look to advance initiatives that tend to advance their interests and perspectives. These consulting firms have a history of promoting reduced benefits, forcing the use of vendors and failing to make retirees and workers aware of important information and rights.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? As your next governor, I will work to ensure economic security for all Wisconsin families. This includes standing up to Congress and President Trump, and protecting Medicare and social security. Republicans in Congress have cut taxes for the ultra rich by raising taxes on people making less than \$75,000 per year and increasing the nation's deficit. In turn, Republican leadership has announced efforts to make changes to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to address the deficit they are creating.

These actions will result in a double whammy for retired individuals in Wisconsin. Wisconsin deserves a governor who will stand up and fight for them against the corruption in Madison and Washington DC.

Tens of thousands of hard-working Wisconsinites lack retirement security and access to a private pension. Many of these Wisconsin citizens are small business owners and workers. The development of a private sector retirement system would help grow our economy, assist Wisconsin small businesses attract workers and help Wisconsin families, farmers and the self-employed save for retirement.

Since being elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly, I have been proud to co-sponsor legislation that would create a Wisconsin private retirement security plan modeled after the Wisconsin retirement system available to public sector employees. The plan would be administered by the Department of Employee Trust Funds and funds would be managed by the State Investment Board. These agencies are the nation's models for public sector pensions and can be unleashed to help workers in the private sector.

Matt Flynn

(1) Yes. All people should be able to save for retirement and not have to worry about how they are going to live when they can no longer work.

(2) I have reviewed the bill and it is well-intentioned. However, I do not want to commingle the public pension fund with private money. I also don't want to task SWIB with managing the additional funds. I do support strengthening private retirement funds and encouraging state supports (read, tax credits) for companies to match employee benefits in private retirement funds.

(3) I support the WRS and will oppose all efforts to weaken it.

(4) I would make sure all board members are looking out for the best interests of the people within the program and avoiding any risks that could damage the funds stability.

(5) By ending Act 10, I would restore public employees right to bargain their pension contribution.

Kathleen Vinehout

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes, of course.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Yes, of course. I am a cosponsor of Senator Hanson's bill. I have worked with Senator Hanson and promoted these ideas for many years.

See: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/proposals/sb302>

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messaging" with this very successful program? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Please see below.

"Wisconsin Stands Alone" in fully funding the state's pension system said a 2012 headline. The Pew Center on States found Wisconsin was the only state of 50 with enough money set aside to meet its obligations to public employees.

As all public employees know, our system is unique. When investments do well, payments to retirees go up and when investments suffer losses (or large fees eat up earnings), payments to retirees go down.

The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) manages the operations of WRS and the State of Wisconsin Investment Board or SWIB manages the WRS investments. The details of how these state agencies operate make a big difference in the health of the pension system and the retirees actually monthly payments.

My vision for Wisconsin's retirement system is to protect the WRS; to keep it healthy and fully funded. I will continue to watch carefully how and what SWIB is doing; to encourage prudent investment practices and avoid high-risk, high-cost practices and volatile markets.

According to the most recent Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) audit, WRS resources available to pay pensions increased by 4.6% in the past year to \$92.6 billion. This is the largest single sum in any fund in state government. For comparison, the entire biennial state budget is a little over \$76 billion.

As such, just a small skim can amount to a serious amount of money. Which is why, as Co-Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Audit Committee I have, for years, grilled SWIB officials on the use of high risk investment practices with high management fees. These high fees take away from the earnings used for retirees.

In addition, I have become increasingly disturbed by the attitude of ETF with regard to oversight of WRS. Auditors have found errors in ETF's financial reporting process. In the 2016 audit of WRS, problems were found with cash reconciliation, and internal controls over financial reporting. In 2017, auditors found some improvement, but still reported a significant deficiency in internal controls. This is "auditor-speak" for saying the way ETF does business does not include a system for catching errors. In this case, the errors were related to the review of accounting standards to make sure their work was

accurate.

This concern of mine might seem a little wonky, but it is very important that the work of ETF be accurate. Just a small mistake on \$92 billion can be very expensive. For example, the error mentioned in the September 2017 audit report of WRS was overstated by \$609.8 million (LAB Report 17-17, p. 7).

I am increasingly concerned about risky investment practices by SWIB. For example, in an audit released about a year ago, certain expenses, including those for internal investment management are higher at SWIB than in its peers. (LAB Report 16-15, p.33).

Regarding externally managed investments, investment expenses have increased even though the amount of investments contracted out have fallen. In other words, retirees are paying more to external investment managers even though these external managers are overseeing less funds.

More than half of this increase, since 2011, can be attributed to fees paid to hedge fund investors. Hedge funds are those very risky instruments that led, among other factors, to the Great Recession. SWIB began investing in hedge funds in 2011. SWIB has steadily increased the dollars invested in hedge funds for a total of \$3.3 billion in Dec. of 2015. The fees paid to hedge fund managers in 2015, totaled \$57.1 million at a time this part of the portfolio returned a one-year investment return of 0.6 percent, compared to an expected benchmark of 2.6 percent! **I can't think of any other part of state government that would pay \$57 million for such meager performance.**

In summary, we must avoid high-cost, high risk investments. We must oversee the work of WRS and SWIB making sure their practices are understood and transparent to all. We must carefully check their work through audits. Which is why I recently advocated for, and the Audit Committee agreed, to conduct a performance evaluation of the work of ETF at a recent meeting.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? First, we need an independent management and program evaluation audit of ETF. I, and others on the Audit Committee, have advocated for and gotten approved of an audit by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (see above). We will know more about the management and functioning of ETF when this audit is complete in early 2019. As a candidate for Governor, I pledge to fully implement the recommendations of the nonpartisan Audit Bureau in the management and operation of ETF.

The governor appoints the Group Insurance Board. The roles are defined by statute. There is some flexibility on the background of the GIB but they must also meet the requirements defined in the law. They are all two year terms except the ex-officio members. So this appointment will be something the new governor would do very soon. I would instruct my secretaries to be mindful of the background of all members they appoint and work, as much as possible, to include annuitants on the board.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? Health care is an obligation we all have to each other in a civilized society. Dealing with the uncertainty around health care is a key challenge facing all those who chose, or are forced through circumstances beyond their control, to retire before eligibility for Medicare.

Health care for all is my passion. In my first six months in the Senate I joined two of my Senate colleagues to create Healthy Wisconsin. This program would have covered all in Wisconsin and saved over a billion dollars.

There are many policies Wisconsin could take up to lower health costs and increase availability for all. As Governor, Health Care for All is on the top of my list of priorities.

Kelda Roys

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Yes, all workers - public, private, nonprofit, and non-wage workers -deserve a secure retirement after a lifetime of work. Under Walker's Wisconsin, the WRS is a weapon to divide people and attack public workers. When I am governor, all Wisconsinites will benefit from our excellent publicly managed pension funds, whether as direct participants, or indirectly because of the economic and social benefits of increasing access to retirement security. I have and will continue to make this issue one of the highlights of my campaign to restore opportunity and fairness to Wisconsin. I will make our state the best place to raise a family and grow a business, and ensuring retirement security for all is a key part of that vision.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Yes. I would put this proposal into the budget along with funding to ensure that it would be well administered. I would also highlight this in my major addresses (inaugural, budget, and state of the state) as I am doing during my campaign.

I am a major proponent of this idea for several reasons - first of all, I want to strengthen the WRS. One of the most important ways to strengthen a successful program is to increase the constituency that benefits from it, so it is less vulnerable to attack by politicians seeking to "divide and conquer," pitting public workers against other workers. Secondly, it makes economic sense for our state, in spurring innovation and helping small businesses. As a small business owner myself, I could never put together the kind of excellent pension system that large employers like the State of Wisconsin can, but I want to be able to compete with big employers for talent, and allowing employers to buy in to a mirror WRS is a great way to level the playing field. We also know that would-be entrepreneurs are stifled because they will leave their health insurance and retirement benefits behind if they leave their employers to strike out on their own. To encourage innovation, we should allow individual workers to buy in as well, making WRS a fully portable pension that workers can pay into as they like and receive commensurate benefits.

A side-by-side fund that individual workers or employers could buy into, structured similarly to the WRS and managed by our skilled public employees, is a great idea for Wisconsin. It would help grow our economy by empowering workers and small businesses, while increasing political support for keeping the WRS strong, solvent, and independent of political interference.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messing" with this very successful program? Yes, I support preserving the WRS in its

current form and would work to create a mirror WRS for non-public workers and employers. As a participant in WRS, I have a vested interest in keeping it strong and well run. I oppose attempts to weaken, change, privatize, or otherwise play with, the WRS. It is one of the most important recruitment tools the state has to attract and retain employees, especially post-Act 10. I also oppose efforts to change the multipliers or otherwise deprive people of the earned benefits they are expecting, even those proposals that affect younger workers who are not retired. I also would oppose any attempt to open up the fund and raid it for other purposes.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? I support adequate representation of annuitants on both boards, and I applaud the work of POWRS in holding these groups accountable to the needs of those whom the plans were meant to serve: the workers and retirees. I would only appoint people to positions of power who will act in the long-term best interest of the public, the workers, and the retirees - not big businesses, consultants, data brokers, hedge funds, right-wing think tanks, or any other entity that seeks to distort the state pension and health insurance systems for their own gain. I opposed the current governor's proposal of the state to self-insure, for instance, and would make sure that any of my appointees supported the right of workers and retirees to high quality affordable health insurance and a safe pension.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? Retirement security is best addressed by making sure we allow all Wisconsinites to succeed and thrive economically throughout their lives, building wealth and being able to access opportunities - financial and otherwise. I support increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hr, indexing it to inflation, and allowing local municipalities to set their own wages and other employment security policies. I will work to guarantee universal affordable childcare and early childhood education, because working parents often pay more for childcare for their young children than they would pay in college tuition. I support making the first two years of higher education at all public technical schools and colleges tuition free, as well as the plan to make the University of Wisconsin tuition free for families earning less than the median income in Wisconsin. I will allow low-interest refinancing of all student debt and stop predatory lending by for-profit institutes, because the massive and long-term burden of student loans keeps people from being able to purchase a home (the equity in which is a huge driver of retirement security) or make contributions to their own retirement savings. I will crack down on predatory lending generally, which particularly threatens people on fixed incomes, including retirees. I support healthcare for all and expanding Badgercare eligibility by making it a public option for those purchasing insurance under the ACA - lowering rates and costs for families, and ensuring that they do not face economic disaster when a healthcare crisis strikes. I will restore Wisconsin's Equal Pay laws and work to close the gender and racial pay gaps in Wisconsin, which mean that in the aggregate, women and people of color have less retirement security than their white, male counterparts. I would stop mass incarceration, because imprisoning people with little justification and long sentences hurts their economic well-being as well as that of their families and our communities. By using diversion, treatment, restorative justice, and other alternatives to incarceration, we can keep people in the workforce and contributing to their families' economic security and their own eventual retirement.

I have many other policy initiatives to help increase economic security, and thus retirement security, for all Wisconsinites, and I welcome your ideas and those of others, as well.

Mahlon Mitchell

Do you support the concept of “retirement security for all”? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? I do support the concept of “retirement security for all”. Over the past twenty years we have seen the fall of private sector pensions, and attacks on public sector pensions. As we look out over the next twenty or thirty years, we need to reform how our retirement systems operate. We should hold private entities accountable for providing retirement security, and work to expand what the government offers. I am definitely willing to have this as part of my campaign. Our older generations are being left behind, and we need to step up to support them. As Governor, I will work diligently to increase retirement options for our workers.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich have provided the blueprint to recommending parts of the issue of retirement security for workers. Our state has one of the best public sector pension systems in the country and could easily set up and run a system for private sector employees. As our state gets older we need to provide more options for those workers nearing retirement. When I am Governor, I will sign this legislation and work to ensure that it is successful.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility or otherwise “messaging” with this very successful program? I support keeping the Wisconsin Retirement System as it currently stands. Why alter what is working better than other systems throughout the country. In the past our current administration proposed to make serious changes to the system, which would have resulted in a weakened retirement system. As Governor, I will oppose efforts to change the WRS into a 401k plan or anything else which would radically change the system. We need to continue to support the WRS, and not look to it as something that needs serious changes.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of ETF and GIB? I am willing to guarantee that Wisconsin Retirement System annuitants have a seat at the table for both the Department of Employee Trust Funds and the Group Insurance Board. Workers, and those who have retired deserve to have their voice heard. Our current administration has proven that they will cut out representation for workers. This is unacceptable. As Governor, I will support representatives of current worker and those who are currently receiving WRS benefits to continue to have a voice in regards to WRS meetings.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? As Governor, I would look to continue to support our workers and those getting close to retirement by supporting the Wisconsin Retirement System, and oppose any efforts to weaken it. I would also look to expand health care options for all residents which would help our retirees see increased retirement security. We need to provide health care options for those at or nearing retirement so that they don't have that financial burden. I would also look to raise the minimum wage, which would help workers throughout Wisconsin. With a raised minimum wage, our workers have more money to put away for retirement, or health care. Overall, I plan on being a champion for our workers here in Wisconsin and will never turn my back on those who have spent their life working here in Wisconsin.

Andy Gronik

Do you support the concept of "retirement security for all"? Are you willing to feature it in your campaign? Every working Wisconsinite deserves a secure retirement. I am already emphasizing retirement security and services for elderly Wisconsinites in my campaign by advocating for the protection of the Wisconsin Retirement System and the state-run SeniorCare program, supporting the strengthening of Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare.

Do you support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model? What would you do to help this bill become law? I do support the efforts of Senator Hansen and Representative Genrich to create a pension system for private sector employees based on the WRS model and have already expanded upon this thinking in my campaign. A concept I am advancing is mirroring the current WRS infrastructure to benefit from current management and to keep startup costs low.

The WRS is one of the best public employee retirement plans in the nation. It is 100% funded, provides good benefits, and costs taxpayers very little. Do you support keeping the WRS in its current form as a defined-benefit pension program? Will you oppose efforts to weaken it by excluding some eligible employees, increasing the retirement age, changing eligibility, or otherwise "messing" with this very successful program? I would honor its current structure of eligibility. I would also explore the feasibility of offering members the ability (at their sole discretion) to invest a minor percentage of their monthly pension contribution (say 5%) into a new fund advancing business startups in Wisconsin. This would allow investors the potential of a higher rate of return with a sliver of their retirement funds and also help to spur new business growth throughout Wisconsin.

What are you willing to do to assure that WRS annuitants are fully and fairly represented in both the management and administration of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) and the Group Insurance Board (GIB)? I'd make sure these programs are operated with transparency. I'm also willing to explore other safeguards but specific recommendations require more study.

What other public policy or legislative initiatives would you pursue to bring retirement security to the greatest number of Wisconsin citizens? I am advancing plans to recruit young people back to our state. We have an aging population and our youth is leaving for jobs outside the state. This presents an economic cliff to Wisconsin that has dire short-term and long-term consequences. To ensure retirement security in real terms, we have to replace the revenue coming off the books as people retire with the new revenue from young people contributing to the economic growth of Wisconsin.

One of many plans we are advancing is recruiting young graduates back to our state by helping them payback their student debt. We are going to invest in public private partnerships that create 21st-century living and work environments throughout the state needed to attract young people to live there. When I'm governor, we're going to stop telling millennials that "they don't work right," and, instead, invite them to help be the architects of our future.

See previous answers and visit my website.

