

Q: What are the three biggest challenges faced by your district?

Torhorst: First, I don't think this is 'my' district, this is 'our' district and we all need to work on these issues for them to change. For the last 15 years I have worked collaboratively with many different stakeholder groups and success is always achieved when issues and viewpoints are fully understood by all parties. This district will be electing a Democrat to represent us. That person needs to be able to frame issues so that people with opposing viewpoints understand the different perspectives and be able to work across party lines to chip away at the many issues which the Republican majority will likely take up. This will be a major challenge for this district as we see the values we hold often dismissed.

As it relates to public policy issues, as I've been meeting with residents, I've heard about a lot of issues that are important to them. The two most common are schools and crime.

As the only candidate who lives in the district and the only candidate with a child in a public school in the district, I fully understand the concern about our schools. Scott Walker made one of the largest cuts to public education in our State's history. Layering on top of that, the morale of teachers following Act 10 is low. As a result, we face a serious problem with maintaining the most important economic tool in our state's toolbox – a high quality education system. If elected, I will work hard to restore funding for our education system. I will also work to require voucher schools to have the same outcomes for children as required of public schools. We also need to stop the expansion of funding vouchers statewide and allow teachers the opportunity for full collective bargaining rights.

As we all know, there is not a simple answer to lowering crime. I believe that we cannot attack the problem without addressing illegal guns, police funding and the unacceptably high incarceration rate of African American men.

I think the third issue that I've heard a lot about ties in with the first two - jobs. We need to increase job training for people across the 10th District. I'm proud that when I was Legislative Director for Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele we funded a job training program through WRTP Big Step that took 500 people who were making \$8/hour and now they are working in jobs that pay more than \$15/hour.

More jobs will help lower crime and allow families to stay together, increasing the likelihood that children stay in school and get a strong education. WRTP Big Step is a model we should consider for different sectors of the job market that may not have training programs in place.

Q: What are the three biggest opportunities in your district?

Torhorst: The biggest opportunities we have originate with the strength of our community. My husband, Brian Spahn, was born and raised in Shorewood. Living in Milwaukee for eight years, then spending four years in

Washington, D.C. and now living in Shorewood since 2010, we recognize and appreciate how great a place to raise our family the Milwaukee area is. The entire district's strength is its hard working people. Leveraging our community's assets such as our strong work ethic, our commitment to providing opportunities to our children and protecting our natural resources will serve our district well as we work to tackle the challenges we face and turn them into opportunities for improvement.

Among those challenges is ensuring access to job training. Milwaukee's unemployment rate is too high. We need to get more people trained for jobs that pay family supporting wages in sectors we know will be growing in the future. When we do that it will strengthen the entire district. Families will have more money to spend and that, in turn, will help create jobs and encourage more businesses to locate within the district especially in neighborhoods that have often had a hard time attracting and retaining small businesses.

Another challenge we face is improving on our excellent public schools in Shorewood and working hard to improve Milwaukee Public Schools. Reading about the recent data on voucher schools, I am concerned about what will most likely be a push for a state-wide voucher program in Wisconsin. We need to assess the success of the voucher program. Recent data showed that 75% of families using the voucher program already were enrolled in an alternative to public education. That is their family's choice and shouldn't be funded with public education dollars.

Another opportunity to improve our district is to advocate, as I have for the vast majority of my 15-year career, for the improved lives of women and children. Advocating for equal pay for equal work, full access to reproductive healthcare and the necessary safety nets for families in need.

Q: What are the best short- and long-term policies to improve Wisconsin's economic outlook?

Torhorst: Fundamentally, we need more family sustaining jobs. We should raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 but that is the floor. We should be creating jobs and job training opportunities that allow families to thrive not just survive.

An educated workforce is the best economic policy we can have for both the short and long term. I will work hard to ensure that we have strong public schools, excellent universities and a workforce that isn't burdened by immense debt by seeking education opportunities.

We need to increase funding to venture models, particularly in the biotech sector which Wisconsin has had a long history with but has recently suffered politically-motivated cuts. We should embrace the emerging industry cluster strategy as is happening currently in Milwaukee with water technology.

Q: Do you favor an increase in the minimum wage and/or establishing a

living wage for public sector workers and contractors in Wisconsin?

Torhorst: I will fight hard to increase the minimum wage for ALL Wisconsin workers. A patchwork approach only makes it easier for some communities or interest groups to say no as was evidenced with the smoking ban debate from a few years ago.

We have the majority on our side. Seventy-six percent of people agree that we should raise the minimum wage according to a recent UWM poll. But we need to get people energized and involved. This is an issue we can and must win.

Q: Do you favor expansion of the school choice program in Wisconsin?

Torhorst: No.

Q: What is your position on gun control versus the right to gun ownership?

Torhorst: We need to strengthen the gun laws. We need to close the loophole that allows people to buy guns without a background check. We need to increase the penalties for felons who use guns and people who use firearms in an unsafe and illegal manner.

I come from a hunting family. I respect Wisconsin's tradition of hunting, but people don't buy semiautomatic weapons to hunt deer. We need gun laws that address urban concerns.

Q: What is your position on requiring voters to show a photo ID?

Torhorst: The ability to vote is an absolute right. We should not put up barriers to a person's right to vote. Especially when those barriers disproportionately affect different segments of our community.

Q: What is your position on abortion and birth control?

Torhorst: As a Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin Board member I believe women are able to make the decision on when and if to have a family. Wisconsin is stronger when people are able to make informed, responsible decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

Q: What actions should the governor, attorney general, and legislature take on gay marriage and other LGBT rights in response to recent court decisions?

Torhorst: The Attorney General and Governor should not have appealed Judge Crabb's recent decision. Regardless of how things work out in the courts, we need to pass legislation to repeal the ban on gay marriage.

Q: What changes, if any, would you advocate regarding mental health, suicide prevention, and nonviolent crime?

Torhorst: We need to increase funding for mental health and continue to look at best practices for patient treatment.

There is overwhelming evidence that programs that keep nonviolent criminals out of jail has better outcomes for the individuals and is much better for the community. There are great examples, including in Milwaukee County, of programs and special courts that provide much better outcomes. We need to look at those and model them across the state.

Q: What is your position on Act 10 (prohibition of collective bargaining by public-sector unions)?

Torhorst: We need to restore collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers. Like Mary Burke, I believe we need to repeal the vast majority of Act 10.

Q: What tax reform, if any, would you advocate?

Torhorst: Our tax system is fundamentally broken. We have too many loopholes and ways people and corporations can game the system.

We must have a tax system that does not perpetuate further income disparity. In the wake of the recent changes to the tax code, I think we need to reexamine what was approved and undo the tax breaks for the wealthiest across Wisconsin. The middle class and people living in poverty should not be forced to carry such a high share of the taxes.

Q: Do you support retaining the county executive governance model for Milwaukee County or should the county be allowed to move to a county administrator model?

Torhorst: I have concerns about moving to an administrator model but I would not rule it out. If we had that model for most of the past decade, it would have meant Lee Holloway would have been in charge of Milwaukee County. I saw first hand how he abused his power and mistreated employees, especially females.

I also believe in a strong system of checks and balances, having an elected County Executive means neither the County Board, nor the County Executive gets to make large policy decisions on their own.

Should Wisconsin accept federal funding for Medicaid/Badgercare?

Torhorst: Yes, absolutely.

Q: What policies, if any, would you advocate to address the rate of incarceration in the state, particularly among African American males?

Torhorst: Education. African American men in their 20s and early 30s without a high school diploma have an incarceration rate of 40 percent. We need to address the historic cuts to education and MPS, in particular, Scott Walker made. For those who are already in our criminal justice system, we need to provide GED and job training while they are incarcerated.

We should also consider looking at evidence-based community health programs such as modeling the Nurse Family Partnership model that has outcomes that contribute to preventing child abuse, reducing juvenile crime and increasing school readiness. Breaking cycles of violence is critical to reducing incarceration.

Q: What are the main environmental challenges facing Wisconsin, and what should be done to address them?

Torhorst: We need to balance the growth of industry with protections for Wisconsin's environmental treasures. Under the Walker administration, Wisconsin has tipped the scales too far in favor of industry. In southeastern Wisconsin we are much more focused on the Great Lakes, but we need to work with our outstate partners on mining and wetlands to have a healthy ecosphere.

Tia Torhorst Campaign's Facebook page:
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