

The League of Women Voters of Dane County, Inc.
Candidates' Answers
Arlene Silveira
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What educational, occupational, civic and community experience have you had that you believe qualifies you for this office?

A parent of an 8th grader, I've been an active participant in Madison public schools for 9 years. I am president of Cherokee's PTO, and past president of Leopold's PFO. Civic involvement includes working with Madison Foundation for Public Schools; steering team member of Madison CARES, the community-based pro-referenda support group; and I currently serve on the MMSD West/Memorial Demographics Task Force. As a business leader, I am Director of Marketing for Promega, with experience as a budget planner, facilitator, negotiator and project manager. I have a MS in molecular biology and a BS in biology, chemistry and secondary education.

What district guidelines should there be for private groups raising special funds for their individual schools, given the unequal ability of all schools in the district to do so?

The opportunity to raise funds to support schools has allowed more parental involvement. However, equity in funding is critical. I'm concerned about the precedent set for privatization of extracurricular activities. This has pitted the arts and athletics against each other. All activities provide students opportunities to develop their potential. I would support a policy where the Board reviews private fundraising over a threshold level to ensure equity but does not dissuade the public from actively supporting schools. We need to ensure that the system for funding public education provides a quality education for all children and is fair to taxpayers.

What role, if any, should user fees have in raising essential funds or in increasing funding for school programs and supplies?

The 1993 revenue caps mean that all districts are facing dire financial straits. Nearly all districts have implemented fees for students in classes and extracurriculars, but without any consistency. As a Board member I'll work to develop sound, specific policy standards for any fees. These will be consistent across the district, and will never inhibit any students' participation because of inability to pay. But this will continue to be a problem until we change the state system of funding K-12 education. I will work to build grassroots support, here and statewide, that will force change at the state level.