



Excelsior-Shorewood Sun-Sailor Voter Guide published Thursday, October 16, 2008

Biography

1. Office: State House of Representatives, District 33B, 2 year term.
2. Your name: Connie Doepke
3. Address: 265 Hollander Road, Orono, MN 55391
4. Family: Husband, Mark Doepke, 2 children
5. Education: Bachelor of Arts, Communication, Michigan State University
6. Occupation: Direct Marketing Consultant, 20 years as an executive in the Direct Marketing industry, 10 years as an officer, including officer of a Fortune 500 company.
7. Years lived in the district: 13 years
8. Community/civic involvement: 8 years Wayzata School Board, including Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer; 12 years as a member of Wayzata Citizen's Financial Advisory Committee; and 8-year member of TwinWest Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors since 2007 and Co-chair Business/Education Partnership.
9. Web site: <http://www.ConnieDoepke.com/>

Answers to Issues Questions:

1. TRANSPORTATION -- What should the state government do to solve our transportation challenges? In your answer, please address toll lanes, light rail, bus rapid transit and increased construction to add more lanes.

Road and bridge construction and maintenance need to take top priority. But, we should also continue to explore all other options for future demand. Our state government should support: 1) making sure our leadership in MNDOT and those that make transit decisions are giving us the best results for our tax dollars; and 2) initiating a unified long-term vision for our statewide transportation system.

2. EDUCATION -- Would you support the educational reform measures expected to be proposed by the K-12 Education Finance Division in the House in 2009? Dubbed Minnesota Miracle II, the proposal could bring, on average, a 26 percent increase in revenue to Minnesota suburban districts and flatten the current complicated funding formula. It would increase funding to districts with above-average cost of living numbers, fully fund all-day kindergarten

and the state's share of federally mandated special education costs. Authors say the proposal will allow more options for local school boards in deciding how to use the new funding.

In this district, we have great schools and a supportive community. We have high test scores with costs below average. However, as a former school board member in this district, I know increased government regulations and unfunded mandates are straining the ability of school districts to keep up with the demands for “world class” education. The “Minnesota Miracle II” (HF#4178) appears to provide the ultimate wish list for everyone. However, before I can support it, I need to know what it means specifically in cost and additional taxes for our particular communities – now and long-term. And, why are there no reforms in the bill that link additional funding to improved outcomes – like Q-comp and early childhood education – which this district has embraced?

3. HEALTH CARE -- Health care costs continue to rise and more and more people are being squeezed out of the system or finding that they cannot afford insurance. How can the state address this growing problem? Do you favor creating a state-run program like that in Massachusetts, which requires virtually every resident to have health insurance? Why or why not?

Quality, affordable health care should be available to everyone, especially our poorest children. I support reform that fosters increased competition in a well-informed market place, and flexibility in health insurance purchasing. I do not support either a state-run or a “one-size-fits-all” approach to health care. My experience as a school board member has taught me that when individuals are more involved in their health care purchases, annual costs are significantly more controlled and stabilized.

4. THE ENVIRONMENT -- Protection of the environment sounds good on an election platform, but tell the voters what you would specifically propose for your district and the state to accomplish this.

Lake Minnetonka is our most precious natural resource in this district. I support ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of new invasive species, eradicate existing invasive species, and to improve water quality. I will continue to work with our local experts to protect our lake area for future generations.

5. ALTERNATIVE ENERGY ISSUES -- Should the state government play a role in encouraging investment in alternative-energy businesses that would bring so-called "green collar" jobs to Minnesota? If so, how? If not, why not? Should the state government offer more financial incentives to encourage homeowners to invest in energy-conserving/storing technology? If so, how? If not, why not?

It is important that our State explore all options regarding energy. We need to encourage the private sector to take a leading role. Creating new energy technology will become a positive market force and will create new jobs. Financial incentives should play an important role.

6. JUMP STARTING THE ECONOMY -- In what ways, if any, should the Legislature/state assist in jump-starting the state's economy?

One of the biggest challenges to Minnesota's economic growth in recent years has been a competitive disadvantage due to high tax rates on businesses, causing migration to other states. Our state government needs to review the entire tax code and create a comprehensive system that encourages economic growth and business expansion in order to grow jobs.

7. OTHER COMMENTS -- Is there anything else you would like to add?

I know from my campaigns as a school board member, and from door knocking in this campaign, that people are most concerned about their jobs and their schools. As a former corporate officer and 8-year member on the Wayzata School Board, I have a strong background in both business and education. We need someone at the legislature who understands both – someone who has been on the front lines of both and has made hard decisions in prioritizing and spending. As a former elected official, I have a history of working with legislators from both parties on common ground, smart solutions for the benefit of all. That is why I am running for this seat.