



# 2008 AARP Voters' Guide

## State Senate District No. 22

How to use the AARP Voters' Guide:  
Here's how this Voters' Guide works. AARP asked key questions about issues important to our members and their families of each major candidate for this race. Each candidate was allowed up to 125 words to answer each question. AARP did not edit or modify those answers. The candidates were asked to check the support or oppose circles. The candidates may have chosen not to check a circle.

AARP has provided a summary of our position for each of the issues.

- Pass this guide on to friends and family.
- Share your views with the candidates.
- Ask for clarification from any candidate whose answer seems unclear.

Be sure to vote on November 4.

[www.aarp.org/elections](http://www.aarp.org/elections)

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**Vote.**

### Inside:

Legislative Priority	2
Health Care Reform	3
Health Care Cost	4
SeniorCare	5

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## Legislative Priority

### Question:

*What will be your top state priorities if elected, and how will you work to break the gridlock to get things done on these issues?*

#### AARP POSITION

AARP believes that providing quality, affordable health care and improving lifelong financial security should be top legislative priorities. AARP surveys show that Wisconsinites are worried about their health and long-term financial security. They fear the future will not be as prosperous for their children and grandchildren. They face competing demands: affording health care, saving for retirement, sending children to college and supporting aging parents.

Increasingly partisan political gridlock stands in the way of the ability to solve major issues. Wisconsinites want results from elected leaders, not promises without action. It's time for individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations, and government to come together to find solutions.

CANDIDATE:  
**BENJAMIN LEE BAKKE**  
REPUBLICAN

Candidate chose not to respond.

CANDIDATE:  
**ROBERT WIRCH**  
DEMOCRAT

Health care reform and tax fairness. I voted to make the social security tax cut a reality and authored a law to begin exempting retirement income from state income tax. We have to reform health care with a plan like Healthy Wisconsin to reduce costs.

In the past, we've had gridlock in large part precisely because we've tried to get things done on issues vital to AARP members. For example, Democrats proposed SeniorCare and this caused gridlock because it took time to get Assembly Republicans to go along with this common sense program. I don't put party policy ahead of good public policy and I will continue to do what I can to persuade other legislators, of each party, to do the same.

# Health Care Reform

## Question:

*How would you reform the health care system to make it a quality system that is affordable and accessible for every Wisconsinite?*

### AARP POSITION

AARP believes that all Wisconsinites deserve affordable, quality, and accessible health care. An individual's health care costs, including premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs should be limited to between 5% and 10% of income. In an AARP Wisconsin survey, 69% of respondents age 50 -64 said the healthcare system is in a "state of crisis" or has "major problems." Those who have insurance and those who are uninsured respond similarly to this question. Over half of all respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported healthcare coverage for all Wisconsin residents.

Three quarters of Wisconsinites age 50-64 without health insurance, are working. Half of Wisconsin's uninsured workers are self-employed or work for small employers. Many Wisconsinites are underinsured, paying too much for inadequate coverage.

CANDIDATE:  
**BENJAMIN LEE BAKKE**  
REPUBLICAN

Candidate chose not to respond.

CANDIDATE:  
**ROBERT WIRCH**  
DEMOCRAT

I voted for Healthy Wisconsin and I am willing to vote for any plan that will provide the same access to quality, affordable care as embodied in Healthy Wisconsin.

The problem we have now is that our health care system simply isn't economically sustainable and we need to move forward with Healthy Wisconsin, or a plan based along similar lines, in order to guarantee that health care will be accessible and affordable for all Wisconsin residents.

## Health Care Cost

### Question:

*How do you propose to rein in the cost of health care while maintaining or improving the quality of and access to health care?*

#### AARP POSITION

Across Wisconsin, individuals and employers are telling us that they can't afford health care; cost sharing is increasing and benefits are shrinking.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, health insurance premium costs nationwide have increased a cumulative 78% between 2001 and 2007. In an AARP Wisconsin survey, over eight in ten respondents said that making healthcare more affordable for all residents is extremely or very important.

AARP supports benefit packages that provide necessary care including chronic disease management, prescription drug coverage, prevention and wellness, mental health services. AARP also supports stronger oversight of the insurance industry.

AARP believes information technology, such as electronic medical records, would result in better, more efficient care, fewer mistakes and, ultimately, lower costs.

CANDIDATE:  
**BENJAMIN LEE BAKKE**  
REPUBLICAN

Candidate chose not to respond.

CANDIDATE:  
**ROBERT WIRCH**  
DEMOCRAT

I believe that we need to pass a proposal substantially similar to Healthy Wisconsin. We also need to dispense with the partisan political rhetoric and adopt the hospital assessment so we can capture a greater share of federal funds and increase the amount of money hospitals receive for reimbursement, this will then enable hospitals to reduce costs for patients that have other insurance or pay out of pocket.

## Senior Care

### Question:

*Do you support or oppose the continuation of SeniorCare at current benefit levels? How would you ensure the SeniorCare program continues beyond December 2009?*

#### AARP POSITION

AARP Wisconsin and others are working on a plan to improve SeniorCare and provide an even more meaningful benefit to most participants of the program. The plan will be cost neutral to the state and will need legislative approval. According to a recent AARP Rx Watchdog Report, the cost of prescription drugs rose by more than 50%, on average, between 2002 and 2007. In Wisconsin about 100,000 Wisconsinites age 65 and older get help with the cost of their prescription drugs through SeniorCare. However, SeniorCare's future is uncertain because federal funding for the popular program will end in December 2009.

CANDIDATE:  
**BENJAMIN LEE BAKKE**  
REPUBLICAN

Candidate chose not to respond.

CANDIDATE:  
**ROBERT WIRCH**  
DEMOCRAT

I support the continuation of SeniorCare and I am open to any modifications that improve the plan.

Democrats, myself included, created the SeniorCare Prescription Drug program in keeping with the progressive tradition. That includes being open to change when suggestions to make something work better come along. My hope is that a new administration and Congress will recognize that SeniorCare is the best prescription drug program in place at any level of government or in any state and turn it into the national model. If we wind up with an administration that attempts to kill SeniorCare like the Bush Administration, then we will have to work again with Congressman Obey and Senators Kohl and Feingold and Reps. Baldwin, Kagen and Kind to continue funding.

*Whether it's fighting for affordable health care or working to ensure retirement security for all Americans, we can't do it without you. Sign up for free email updates and action alerts from AARP. We'll keep you informed about what's really going on in the White House, Congress, and your state legislature. Visit [www.aarp.org/elections](http://www.aarp.org/elections) or fill out the form below.*

## Thank you for participating in the **AARP 2008 Election Project!**



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FIRST NAME	INIT. LAST NAME
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
ADDRESS	APT. #
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Office of Voter Education  
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**About the AARP 2008 Election Project:**  
AARP has launched the nonpartisan 2008 Election Project, and with your help we can make sure our voices are heard. We don't endorse any specific candidate or party. We just care about issues and with your help we'll make sure candidates take clear stands on the issues so people can make choices that reflect what's important to them.  
Visit [www.aarp.org/elections](http://www.aarp.org/elections).



*If you are not registered to vote, go to [www.aarp.org/makeadifference/politics/](http://www.aarp.org/makeadifference/politics/) and look under Tools for a form to fill out and send to your local voter registrar (the address will be there). Go to the same website if you need an application for an absentee ballot or to find out if your state allows early voting and what dates that will occur.*

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## Voter Information Inside

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