



ARRM

Section #1: About Yourself

Your Name: Dan Sparks
District you are running in: SD 27

Question #1: Please provide a short background about yourself.

I'm a lifelong resident of Austin MN where
I live with my wife, Andrea, and four children.
I have been honoured to represent district 27
in the senate since first being elected in
2002.

Question #2: What do you hope to accomplish by running for office? What will your main priorities be at the Capitol if you are elected?

We need to continue our work on access to
quality, affordable health care, improving education
and invest in needed Transportation infrastructure.

Question #3: What experience or connections, if any, do you have to the disability community?

I'm grateful for the connections and steady, open
communications I have with the disability community
in Senate district 27, their providers and
representatives at the Capitol.

Section #2: Our Workforce Crisis

Question #1: Our industry is facing a workforce crisis. There are simply not enough people to provide the direct care needed for people with disabilities to lead independent lives. Given that the overwhelming majority of funding for disability services comes from the government, and low wages are a driving force behind high rates of staff turnover, what ideas would you offer for helping to create a livable wage for our direct support professionals and caregivers?

I have supported and voted in favor of funding to support care providers and will continue to do so. I have also sponsored legislation to support education and training and encourage those in the field to practice in rural areas where their help is greatly needed.

Question #2: As technology continues to become a bigger part of everyone's lives, there are numerous products that can be used by individuals with disabilities which offer them increased independence, including things as simple as apps on cell phones and tablets. Some technology can supplement staff while others can substitute for staff. Would you support the use of public dollars to increase the availability and use of technology?

I would certainly support this use of funding from the state. I have been a strong supporter of funding technology to improve people's lives.

Section #3: The Sustainability of our System

Question #1: Minnesota's Olmstead Plan includes a broad series of key activities our state must accomplish to ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working and enjoying life in the most integrated setting appropriate for their needs. In 2015, a set of very ambitious goals and benchmarks were finalized and approved by the Minnesota courts to help ensure that the intent of the Olmstead Plan is realized. What is your role as a legislator to oversee and ensure that those goals are met?

Legislators need to be diligent in making sure the state is living up to its responsibilities and providing the necessary funding to accomplish those objectives

Question #2: Affordable housing is an issue for many people in Minnesota. A cornerstone of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan is the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to live as independently as they choose. As a legislator how would you strategically expand availability of affordable housing with accessibility features for Minnesotans with disabilities?

I will working with my senate colleagues and Governor Dayton, in collaboration with the disability community to develop solutions to this issue and see them enacted.

Question #3: Our industry has seen an influx of "unfunded mandates" - items that cost providers additional money without subsequent compensation, such as the increase in minimum wage, the Affordable Care Act, increased regulatory fees and the new Department of Labor Overtime Rule to name a few. When the government adds a new mandate what is its responsibility in supporting government funded businesses to pay for those mandates?

I agree. All of these things should be good for workers and individuals but they don't benefit people without proper funding.