

2026 Nebraska Legislative Candidate Voter Questionnaire

Our Process- Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM), The Nebraska Civic Engagement Table, and Coalition for a Strong Nebraska (CSN) sent out this questionnaire to each legislative candidate via email during the month of September. The responses of those who replied to the questionnaire are printed below exactly as they were answered. The questions were based on general nonprofit awareness and centered on the ongoing budget shortfall. Candidates are listed by their Legislative District. To find your candidates, click here.

Individual candidate responses start on page 2, while you can view each question's response starting on page 36.

Our Questions –

1. What experience do you have with nonprofits and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

2. The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

3. How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

4. Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

5. How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Individual Candidate Responses

District #2

Name: Dean Helmick
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: With decades of military experience, the nonprofit organizations I have most experience working with are the Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). We used these organizations on many of our most difficult challenges.

At the State and Local level, I've had exposure to a number of nonprofits here in Nebraska; from the Children's Museum, Humane Society, Cass County CASA, and others. I understand that there are a number of legal, reporting, and governance requirements for nonprofit organizations.

I support the key role that the nonprofit sector plays across our State.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: First, we must allow hardworking Nebraskans to keep more of the money they earn. This means keeping the individual income tax reduction for all Nebraskans on schedule, while also keeping in place the elimination of state taxes on social security. Next, we must prioritize state spending on the safety and security of every Nebraskan. With this in mind, I will work to control government spending, reduce regulations, and keep an eye on the future.

The best way to stabilize Nebraska's budget is to grow our economy. That means creating more jobs, training our workforce, building more homes for the working class, attracting new businesses, and giving Nebraskans a reason to stay here. My goal is to continually improve Nebraska as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: With the projected budget deficit, every line in the State's budget will be closely scrutinized. Nonprofits will most certainly be impacted.

My commitment to the nonprofit sector is to always listen and work to understand how we ensure fair representation of the underrepresented, disenfranchised, and most vulnerable Nebraskans. One thing I ask every organization, is to help our Unicameral identify and eliminate instances of fraud, waste and abuse. Every dollar wasted, is a dollar that does not reach those in need.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: With the projected budget deficit, there won't likely be any increased spending or growth in this biennium. The State must prioritize spending on the safety and security for all Nebraskans. This includes caring for our most vulnerable. We must also prioritize economic growth. Unless we grow our economy, we will face budget shortfalls every year. Bottom line: we must build and prepare for our future.

I look forward to hearing nonprofit sector ideas on how to strengthen our communities, in the face of our projected budget deficit.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Free and fair elections are at the very heart of our Republic. In the Legislature I will always support efforts to protect election integrity and security. This includes ensuring that those eligible to vote, can; while those who aren't eligible to vote, don't.

District #4

Name: Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek
Email: cindy@cindyfornebraska.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I volunteer with various nonprofits in our community including the Foodbank of the Heartland and Access Period. I have also served as the president of Better Ballots Nebraska and on the board of nonpartisan Nebraska. I know this sector is doing critical work in our neighborhoods to ensure our families have the resources they need to succeed. I want to be a partner with the nonprofit sector when elected to help them do this important work.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: In order to right our ship, we need to look at how we got here. Four years ago, the state had a billion dollar surplus and record high revenues. In response to this, lawmakers, including my opponent, have voted to give over half a billion dollars to trillion dollar tech companies to build data centers and handed hundreds of millions of our tax dollars to out-of-state companies without a clear return on investment. We are now in a structural deficit with a shortfall of over a billion dollars. In order to pay for this deficit, we have cut funding for property tax relief, veterans aid, developmental disability assistance, and funding to support nonprofits. Our priorities are out of wack. We need to reverse some of the shortsighted decisions that have been made over the last four years, work to bring more people into our state to expand the tax base, and eliminate wasteful spending on things like no-bid contracts for friends of politicians.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: Due to the shortfall, we face real challenges, but also have an opportunity to explore new ideas. I will work to protect funding for critical services, including for nonprofits, and eliminate wasteful spending such as tax handouts to data centers or no-bid contracts. Not all of my colleagues will share these priorities, but that is what I will fight for in the Legislature.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We need to fix our structural budget deficit so that we can protect this funding in the long term. That means eliminating wasteful spending and standing strong against attempts to balance our budget by cutting critical services. We need leaders who are focused on working for everyday Nebraskans who are facing these struggles. My opponent has made it clear that he is only interested in working for the ultra-wealthy, the well-connected, and big corporations. I plan to bring fresh leadership that can refocus our priorities on what matters.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I trust in Nebraska's local election offices to keep our elections safe, secure, and accessible. I will stand up to attacks on voter participation. This includes protecting voting

by mail, voting early, protecting our voter data, and opposing efforts that add additional barriers to voting. I will also work to make it easier for voters to cast their ballot through means such as establishing Election Day as a state holiday so that everyone has the chance to participate.

District #4

Name: Brad von Gillern
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have worked with non-profits throughout my entire life, beginning in youth, college and through my business career. I have sat on,and led numerous non-profit boards including: YMCA; Salvation Army; Scouting America; Downtown Rotary; Rotary Foundation; YPO; Lifegate Church; The Hope Center. Additionally we have supported numerous non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Lydia House, Open Door Mission, and many others.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: We need to continue to find places if inefficient spending, where dollars spent are not providing a return. That return may be financial in some cases, but in the case of the non-profit world, is likely an intrinsic return that may or may not be measurable. Feeding someone provides a return. Providing medical services to indigents provides a return. Educating children, adults and immigrants provides a return.

We also will have to look at some revenue generators such as eliminating some of the most outrageous sales tax exemptions that do not negatively impact working families and every day Nebraskans.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: We need to be considerate of the work that non-profits do, especially as much of that work would fall to government to provide is the non-profit ceased to exist. Cutting support for some organizations could be biting our noses off to spite our face.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely

impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: Each one must be considered individually and as noted above, determine where the greatest return on the state's dollars come from.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Numerous audits by the Secretary of State's office have shown that Nebraska elections are safe, secure and accessible. I know of no immediate dramatic changes that would be required but am open to discussing if there are accessibility matters that I am not aware of.

District #6

Name: Patrick Leahy
Email: patrick@leahyfornebraska.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have served on a number of nonprofit boards and committees in the community including Keep Omaha Beautiful, New Leaders Council, Humanities Nebraska, and more. Additionally, I was the Development Director for the Business Ethics Alliance. No matter the nonprofit, I am appreciative of the hard work people at these organizations do on a daily basis to fill gaps in our community. I will work to ensure the state of Nebraska is a reliable partner for nonprofits in our communities, whether that is protecting programs currently receiving public dollars, ensuring state grant programs and contracts are fair, and we are not imposing unnecessary regulations on individuals and organizations.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: The state is facing a billion dollar shortfall and there is no silver bullet solution. We need to get a little better in a number of areas. For starters, a family making $58,000 a year is paying the same income tax rate as Warren Buffett. We have sales tax exemptions for private jets and huge property tax exemptions for companies constructing data centers, while hardworking people are struggling to make ends meet. These are just three areas where we need to reevaluate our current decisions and priorities. We should also look at areas where we can cut, such as no-bid contracts that haven't had a clear return on investment for our state.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: To be candid, the next session will be difficult for many sectors, including nonprofits. When you are facing a billion dollar budget shortfall, there isn't a painless solution. My commitment is to work to protect critical funding that is improving the lives of Nebraskans and to eliminate wasteful spending on things like handouts to data centers or no-bid contracts. We cannot cut our way out of this deficit by taking critical resources away from our communities. I will be a champion to put the needs of our everyday people first and deliver practical, long-term solutions through a more sustainable, balanced budget.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: The State of Nebraska must be a more predictable and reliable partner to nonprofit organizations. We cannot double down on the shortsighted decisions that have landed us a billion in the hole. We need to take steps to increase revenue slightly and cut spending that isn't improving the lives of working Nebraskans. Nonprofits should not be forced to do it all. The state has a clear role to play and it's time that we delivered on important items such as childcare, education, and veterans services.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Nebraska has safe and secure elections. However, recent history and rhetoric shows we cannot take this for granted. We need to continue to give local election offices the tools and training they need. We must also stand up to attempts we are seeing at the state and federal level to make it harder for Nebraskans to vote. I will always protect mail-in-voting, early in-person voting, and election day voting. It should be easy for Nebraskans to vote and hard for any bad actor to cheat, and those will be my priorities as an elected official.

District #6

Name: Nate Ostdiek
Email: natefornebraska@outlook.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have worked with and for a variety of non-profits over the last several years including building partnerships between Nebraska Diaper Bank, Heartland Bikeshare, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I also served with Conservation Nebraska as an AmeriCorps fellow between 2022-23 and my lovely girlfriend of seven years has completed the Nebraska table policy fellowship program. I've had the opportunity to build partnerships firsthand between the public sphere (University of Nebraska) and community nonprofits and see how many of them operate internally to understand the challenges being faced. Something I want to do is make sure that we're listening to our non-profit sector when it comes to appropriated money and the rules around it. The legislature has a history of earmarking funds for non-profits, only to later make that money inaccessible because of one oversight or another. I will do my best to exercise due diligence and advocate to prevent situations like that. Furthermore, coordinating the public and non-profit sectors makes both more effective, especially when pursuing economic development or public health issues. I hope to engage all parties on relevant cases to ensure we do all we can to solve today's problems and prepare for tomorrow.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: I believe Nebraska needs to significantly cut back on its corporate tax incentive programs, which have cratered corporate tax receipts while contributing only limited job creation and economic development. I will work to modernize our tax code to reflect a more digital, surveillance-based, data-driven economy, without expanding sales taxes on everyday goods and services our community relies on. Instead, we need to close the wide variety of loopholes in our code, from the extraordinary capital gains tax exemption to sales tax exemptions that benefit only the wealthiest Nebraskans. Finally, we should look to restructure our income tax system to be more progressive. Eliminating top brackets was a disaster for the state budget and entirely predictable, especially without revenue triggers to allow for a sustainable transfer.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: This will be a very difficult budget cycle for non-profits, similar to the last several cycles, with high expectations to do more with less. That is not fair and is very frustrating, but we need to keep scrapping for the small wins we can find. That looks like delaying funding sweeps, building good relationships with senators who have the ability to add things to the budget on the floor, and working closely with the fiscal office to have a solid understanding of where money is and isn't, so we can plan more effectively.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: Big question. I see the high cost of housing as a nexus point where many other issues intersect, so doing more to support Nebraskans facing housing insecurity will hopefully have a stronger stabilizing effect on our community. I have several bills I would like to bring that address utility rate classes and costs on that end, but they won't be a silver bullet. We need to keep the most vulnerable in mind and do more to bring their voices to the table, which I hope to help by coordinating testimony and other actions.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Nebraska's elections are safe and secure, and we need to keep them accessible. That means ample access to state IDs, polling places near the precincts they serve, and a state holiday for Election Day. While not all of this policy is at the state level, I will be an advocate for protecting and expanding our democracy.

District #8

Name: Josh Livingston
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have volunteered with several nonprofits and provided legal guidance. I have also served on nonprofit boards and continue to do the same. The nonprofit sector provides a valuable benefit to our community and we, as legislators, should finds ways to benefit from their expertise in our professional capacity as we decide what bills and laws to pass. Additionally, we should use our community roles to lift up the message of nonprofits in order to ensure continuity of their goals but to also ensure ongoing funding.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: Nebraska has to balance its budget. That is not optional, and I think we need to be honest with Nebraskans about the choices in front of us.

First, I would start with the budget itself. Before asking Nebraska families to give more of their hard earned money, we need to earnestly go through state government line by line and

identify programs that are duplicative, ineffective, or no longer serving their intended purpose. We should demand measurable results for the money we spend and look for efficiencies before cutting services that families rely on. These decisions should be based on need more than cronyism.

But responsible budgeting also means recognizing government spending is necessary and is valuable for our communities. We have obligations to provide a quality education for our children, provide comprehensive health care to vulnerable Nebraskans, maintain public safety, and support the communities that make our state work. I would not balance the budget by simply making across-the-board cuts and hoping someone else absorbs the consequences, I would insist that we take an intentional approach to spending and budgeting; the same way we as Nebraskans have to do in our every day lives.

We also need to be careful about continuing to reduce revenue while simultaneously trying to fund those priorities. Nebraska has already enacted significant tax reductions, and the state's own forecasts have shown how changes in revenue can create substantial budget pressure. In February 2026, for example, the forecasting board reduced projected FY2026-27 revenue by $175 million.

Finally, we need to think beyond the next biennium. We cannot repeatedly use one-time transfers, reserves, or temporary fixes to solve an ongoing structural problem. We need a sustainable budget where recurring revenues support recurring expenses.

My approach would be simple: eliminate waste, demand accountability, protect essential services, make decisions based on outcomes rather than politics, and make sure our tax and spending policies are sustainable for the long term.

Nebraska families have to live within their means. Their state government should do the same.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: As we have seen time and again, nonprofits are often the first cuts that are made. This often sets a dangerous precedent because in many ways our values are demonstrated through the nonprofits we support. During a budget shortfall, it is inevitable that cuts are going to happen but we should avoid taking the easy route and simply cutting the programs that support the most vulnerable. I will always be an advocate for funding nonprofits to the extent feasible within our budgetary restrictions and I will ensure that any cuts that are considered are not done simply in the name of efficiency.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We cannot continue to cut necessary services and benefits to Nebraskans and expect that they will not continue to struggle. While nonprofits should not be expected to replace the responsibilities of state government, they are an essential partner in making sure Nebraskans have access to the services they need.

The reality is that when the state cuts funding, the need does not disappear, it simply gets shifted somewhere else. Nonprofits are then asked to serve more people with fewer resources, and eventually they reach a point where they simply cannot keep up and we end up losing out on the expertise and benefit of community partners.

We need to make sure that our budget decisions account for the real-world consequences of those cuts. That means protecting essential services, adequately funding programs that help people remain stable and independent, and working directly with nonprofits to understand where the gaps are occurring.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: We have mechanisms in place right now to keep Nebraska elections safe, secure, and accessible. Frankly, some of the efforts being undertaken in the name of "safety" can become overt efforts to disenfranchise eligible voters.

As with most things, we need guardrails to ensure that everyone is operating within the same rules and that our elections are protected from interference and tampering. But those rules should never be weaponized to make it harder for eligible Nebraskans to participate in our democracy.

We should be looking for ways to expand access to the ballot while maintaining appropriate safeguards against fraud, interference, and other attempts to undermine our elections. Nebraska's election officials already have extensive security and verification procedures in place, and we should continue to support those systems and the people responsible for administering them.

Overwhelmingly, the evidence has demonstrated that our elections are secure. We should take legitimate security concerns seriously, but we should also be careful about creating a problem where one does not exist. Constantly undermining confidence in our elections

does not make them more secure, it can make people less confident in the democratic process itself.

Our responsibility is to protect both the integrity of the ballot and the right of eligible Nebraskans to cast it. We can, and must, do both.

District #12

Name: Christy Knorr
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have had nonprofits that have helped me at different times in my life. I think it is important to protect the nonprofit sector. I will advocate for them.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: The budget needs to be reviewed line by line to make sure we know where every cent is going. I think we need to look at all of our spending and have honest conversations around ways we can save money while protecting essential services and social safety nets.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: I do believe nonprofits will see cuts. I will advocate to try to keep those cuts from happening.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We are going to have to get creative. I will have everyone involved sit down at the table to come up with solutions.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Elections in Nebraska are safe, secure, and accessible. I will oppose anyone trying to take away mail in ballots, early voting, or anything else that will disenfranchise Nebraska voters.

District #14

Name: Bill Bowes
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: Here is a list of groups I have worked with:

Legacy Veterans Garden, 2008-2010 – a project to develop a plant and flower garden at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in Bellevue.

United Way Community Investment Review Team, 2012-2019 – Led a team in reviewing grant applications for United Way funding Nebraska 117, 2023-present – A nonprofit formed to assist foster parents through respite care, home modifications, and counseling Nonprofits play a crucial role in providing goods and services to those in need and in providing for an improvement in the quality of life in communities. As a State Senator, I plan on supporting nonprofits by: helping eliminate government red tape, providing letters of support whenever possible or needed, acting as a proponent when a nonprofit is seeking funding from a funding organization, and assisting with state and federal grants.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: The long-term answer to our budget issue is to grow the state by creating a climate where our young adults stay after high school or college, where existing businesses can flourish, and where Nebraska is recognized as having a business-friendly tax structure. In the short-term, we need to control government spending by increasing transparency and accountability in how public funds are spent, as well as making sure we are funding projects and organizations that contribute to making our state better.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: In this upcoming budget process, it will be difficult to increase funding for any state department. I hope to maintain necessary services at current funding levels. If a nonprofit can provide data showing its effectiveness in its area of expertise, I will advocate for continued funding.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely

impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We meet those needs by improving the economy of the state. We want employers to provide good-paying jobs to all Nebraskans who can work. This will help lift them out of poverty and will provide a needed sense of pride and dignity. For those who cannot work, we will provide a safety net that will meet their basic needs. It is this group that will be significantly and positively impacted by many nonprofits. Foundations and other charitable groups should help provide funding when state government is limited due to our budget situation.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I believe we have a good election process in Nebraska now. We always need to remain vigilant in protecting our system and should continuously review procedures to prevent fraud.

District #14

Name: SuAnn Witt
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: Throughout my career in public education and service on the Papillion La Vista Community School Board, I have worked with community organizations and nonprofits that support educators, students, and families. These organizations often reach people in ways the government cannot, but even so they need reliable partners in state government. When I am elected as a senator, I look forward to listening and collaborating with nonprofit leaders and including them in policy discussions because you are often the individuals with the boots on the ground and it is important to hear directly from your experience. We need to work to maintain resources for nonprofits that help you better serve Nebraskans.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: Nebraska needs to start taking a proper long-term approach to the budget. Recent tax policy decisions have reduced our state's revenue while the cost of everything including groceries, education and healthcare continue to rise. We should carefully review state spending, eliminate waste, and make sure programs are efficient and producing results. However, we cannot balance the budget through cuts that shift costs onto local taxpayers,

nonprofits, and families at a time when people are struggling with the cost of living. In the legislature, I will oppose increasing sales taxes on goods and services that everyday people rely on. These taxes would only place a greater burden on working class Nebraskans and stagnate our economy. We can not repeat what we know does not work. Tax exemptions for billion dollar corporations and out-of-state companies have put us in this situation, while hardworking people see no relief. I will promote economic relief for our middle-class, while supporting policies that promote economic growth that strengthens our revenue over time.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: Budget decisions should factor in the value of nonprofits and the consequences families would face if those services disappeared. Nonprofits are usually the first organizations affected by budget cuts, even though they are already being asked to meet growing needs with limited staff and resources. Cutting their funding does not eliminate the need; it simply shifts the burden and makes the problem more expensive later on. I will make sure nonprofit leaders have a voice early in the budget process, push for timely state payments, and oppose cuts for critical programs.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We cannot expect nonprofits to do more with less or to replace the responsibilities of state government. We have to get our priorities straight, and my priority will always be to work for our hardworking people and put everyday Nebraskans first. Those who are struggling need a leg up until they can get back on their feet. One of the most important things we can do to accomplish this goal is to establish collaborative partnerships. When information is shared freely, we are better able to identify the gaps and meet the needs of struggling Nebraskans. Our state can do more for everyday Nebraskans and help them thrive, not just survive. I look forward to working with anyone and everyone willing to collaborate on this goal when I am elected to the legislature.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: We need to protect our elections as much as possible. The establishment of trust in our election process is imperative to the success of the democratic process. We must also fight against partisan interference in our elections every step of the way. This behavior only serves to sow distrust and disincentivizes voters from participating in the process. We

need to listen to the experts when we are evaluating changes to the process so that we are not disenfranchising voters. I would hold the line against any threats to the democratic process because our election in Nebraska should always be safe and secure.

District #16

Name: Ted Japp
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: My adult son has severe autism and has been assisted in various ways by several nonprofit group homes and agencies, including the Autism Center of Nebraska and Omni Behavioral Health. I have been consistently involved with many different churches and their affiliated agencies as well as different Cities' Chambers of Commerce.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: In a perfect world there is sufficient funding for all the worthwhile groups and the causes they support. Much like individual families sitting around the kitchen table working on a household budget, the Legislature will need to identify and prioritize the areas most important at this time and adequately fund them.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: I don't have a clear picture at this time how much nonprofits will be impacted. A better understanding of the amount of shortfall and where the public dollars have gone in the past will be helpful to determine what impact may occur. Generally speaking, working to prevent additional hardships on those already impacted by way of impairment, disability, or extreme poverty, should have priority status in budgeting.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: I don't think there is a lack of resources among Nebraskans and the people of the Midwest. We need to continually appeal to those with the financial wherewithal to generously donate to great causes and appeal to those with free time to volunteer where

needed. An advanced civilized society owes it to those far less fortunate to help and assist them in time of need. It is important for constituents to appeal to their senators for aid.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I believe paper ballots and photo IDs are necessary for safe, secure, elections. We should make certain only U.S. citizens vote. If the few people without a photo ID need one, the State of Nebraska should provide one. No eligible voter should be excluded from our elections.

District #20

Name: John Fredrickson
Email: hello@johnfornebraska.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I am a clinical social worker by trade, and have worked in various nonprofits throughout my professional career. I am also proud of the collaborative work I have done with the nonprofit community of Nebraska during my first four years in the legislature. Should I be reelected, I would continue that strong, collaborative relationship.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: In 2023, we passed significant tax cuts when the state had the budgetary surplus to absorb them, without pairing them with a plan for what happens when revenue slows down (for example, budget circuit breakers and connecting economic incentives to performance).

The tax cuts did not lead to the promised revenue performance and now the bill is due.

In terms of balancing the budget, we need to review exemptions and incentives that no longer serve a public purpose before we touch anything that hits working families. We need to protect the services that make this state worth living in: roads, schools, the workforce pipeline, and mental health and Medicaid. This necessary and cost-saving infrastructure is usually first on the chopping block in a budgetary crisis, but it is the last thing Nebraskans can afford to lose.

Governor Pillen has ordered a 5 percent cut across state agencies instead of a special session. That buys time, but it doesn't fix the structural problem.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: Nonprofits are often some of the first that are considered for budget cuts. This is an unfortunate reality that I do not agree with, and I have fought against these cuts during my first term in the legislature. I have also voted red on the budget the last two years due to the proposed cuts to essential services and resources for Nebraskans.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: Funding needs to be restored to levels where needs are met effectively and efficiently.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I will continue to advocate for access to voting for all eligible voters. I will fight against efforts to disenfranchise Nebraskans from voting, whether that is efforts to cut back on mail-in voting or other unnecessary requirements for voting. We have a proud history of secure, safe, and accessible voting in Nebraska - we should not make it harder for Nebraskans to make their voices heard.

District #20

Name: Chris Anderson
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have extensive experience with nonprofit organizations as a volunteer leader. I currently serve on the National Philanthropy Council of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, and I previously served on the boards of directors of the Boys and Girls Club of Cedar Rapids, Junior Achievement of Northern Louisiana, and Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Museum. Those organizations span youth development, economic education, science education, and health, and I understand from the inside how nonprofits are governed and funded and what they answer for to donors and to the communities they serve. I would bring that experience to the Legislature in supporting the sector. I would start by bringing nonprofits into the legislative process early, before bills are written rather than after, because they know what is working in communities long before a statute does. I

would work to make state grants and contracts predictable and paid on time, with reporting requirements proportionate to the size of the award, because late payments and shifting paperwork can cripple a small organization and pull staff away from the mission. Furthermore, I would support fair funding of the real cost of delivering a program, including the administrative work that keeps it running. I would also pay attention to the nonprofit workforce, especially in rural Nebraska, where it is hard to recruit and keep skilled staff. Nebraskans should be able to take part in civic life, and I support the ability of nonprofits to educate the public, register voters on a nonpartisan basis, and speak to lawmakers within the law, regardless of who is in office. Because I put a high value on evidence, I would encourage nonprofits and the state to share data on what works so that proven programs can grow, and I would keep state policy friendly to charitable giving and volunteering.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: Undoubtedly, I think our budget problem is more about discipline than it is about revenue. We promised income tax relief and property tax relief at the same time without a clear action plan to pay for both, which has left us with patching holes instead of fixing the root cause. Indeed, the first thing I would tackle is the property tax relief funding mechanism itself especially because nobody at the 12,000 doors I've knocked on my campaign trail has been a product of it. Fiscal analysts have called it a bucket with a hole in it, and you can't build a stable budget on something that leaks by design. Along with that, I staunchly would protect the 2023 income tax cuts, because they help Nebraska compete for jobs and talent and we must stay competitive with our neighboring states.

Once that foundation is in place, I would go agency by agency looking for efficiencies, with a special commission working through the State Auditor, made up of business owners, trusted government leader(s)--past and present, farmers, ranchers and geographically diverse so Omaha and Lincoln are not driving the whole strategy. The goal is for savings to come from overhead and duplication first. Just as important, direct services for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities should be the last place we look. To be sure, I would be equally careful with the services nonprofits deliver for the state, because they often reach people more efficiently than an agency can.

Finally, I've served on nonprofit boards and councils, and I've seen what happens when an organization lurches from crisis to crisis. The state shouldn't operate that way either. That's why I'd push for honest numbers, multi-year planning, and clear goals, so agencies and community partners can plan around commitments on which they can rely all underscored by accountability and transparency.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: I think nonprofits get hit twice in the increasingly strained state budget climate. State contracts and grants are often some of the easiest line items to trim or delay as they are "discretionary" despite nonprofits usually delivering those services more efficiently than government can. Moreover, as other support shrinks more people turn to nonprofits for help resulting in a higher demand signal ironically as the funding streams increase in uncertainty.

Therefore, early and often I would ensure nonprofits have a seat at the table early as they know better than anyone what happens on the ground when a program changes. I'd also push to have them included in the agency-by-agency efficiency review I mentioned, so the commission judges programs by their results rather than cutting across the board. In practice, that means looking at agency overhead and duplication first, before we trim the partners who deliver direct services to seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Beyond that, I would advocate for predictable, multi-year funding with clear roadmaps and action plans with corresponding timely payments, so nonprofits can plan their budgets and retain their staff.

I cannot promise every program will be unscathed particularly in this uniquely challenged fiscal environment. But, I will make sure to actively listen to nonprofit leadership and staff in order for decision-making to be underlined by results while working in parallel to protect the services on which Nebraskans depend most—For The People.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: I think the starting point is that nonprofits cannot be the state's safety net by default. When state funding shrinks, we can't assume a food bank, a counseling center, or a youth program will simply absorb the difference. These organizations are under the same budget pressure, yet with fewer dollars and more "customer" demand. Towards that end, we owe them transparency about the feasibility of what we are asking them to carry.

From there, I would focus on a few items. First, I would protect the core, which also is hallmark of customer focus informed by my private sector experience in Marketing/Business Development. Core=Direct services for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities come first, and the efficiency review I described should look at agency overhead and duplication before it touches the partners who deliver those services.

Second, I'd make the state a more dependable partner, with predictable multi-year funding, timely payments, and reporting that is proportionate to the size of the award, so nonprofits can spend their time on the mission instead of burdensome red tape.

Beyond that, I critically analyze why the demand signal continues to grow. To be sure, a stronger economy with more resilient, higher compensation jobs, property tax relief for families and seniors on fixed incomes (29.7% of LD 20 registered voters are 65+), and tools like the Child Care Tax Credit all help keep people from needing emergency help in the first place. Conversely, I'd put real weight on prevention and early intervention, especially in mental health, because it's far cheaper and kinder to help someone early than to respond to a crisis later—of note, I'm one of four candidates in Nebraska with the Mental Health Now badge of support. Finally, I would ensure state policy is amenable to charitable giving and volunteering because the strongest communities are the ones where government, nonprofits, faith communities, and neighbors all block and tackle. Having served at the national, state and local levels of nonprofit leadership, I know the best results come when the state is a reliable, trusted partner.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Safe, secure, and accessible have to go together. If people do not trust the process or cannot get to it then we have fallen short of the Framers' vision. A state senator doesn't run elections, but the Legislature writes the rules and funds the people who carry them out, so that is where I would focus my attention. Moreover, I would keep verifiable paper ballots, make sure county election officials have the training and resources to follow clear procedures, and support post-election audits so the public can see the results are right. Nebraskans approved photo ID in 2022, and I'd make sure the state carries it out faithfully, with free and easy ID access so no eligible voter is turned away over red tape.

District #24

Name: Dan Winter
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have limited experience with nonprofits in the last few years. In high school I was in the Boy Scouts of America and received the Eagle Scout award. In college I was member of a fraternity that focused on community engagement. Current Unicameral support for nonprofits focuses on making the act of donating and the use of those donations easier. I would continue this practice while also expanding the Nebraska Innovation Hub Act

allowing more nonprofits to work as "iHubs". Which would allow these nonprofits to support the local community creating new businesses and revenue.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: For most of my adult life, Nebraska governors and senators have run based on lowering property taxes, they have not done it. With the current state revenue shortfalls, I think lowering property taxes will not happen in the next four years. Governor Pillen has suggested the removal of sales tax exemptions linked to professional services, while protecting food, human medicine, community services, and agriculture inputs. This plan would put taxes on items such as pop and candy (consumption tax), home and vehicle repair, professional services, personal care, pet care, entertainment, industrial and heavy equipment, end-of-life services. While these new taxes would fill the budget shortfall, these taxes would also decrease Nebraskan's buying power for common goods. I would suggest a simple increase to the state's sales tax to 6%, generating $223.5 million. This change could help to close the current funding gap, but our tax code also needs to be updated. Currently, anyone making over $29000 is in the same income bracket, meaning I am in the same bracket as Warren Buffet or Walmart paying 4.55% in 2026. A simple solution is to create more tax brackets above the current top. Based off the average household income in Nebraska ($74000) the new middle bracket paying the 2027 lowered tax of 3.99% should cover $29000 to $38,999 for an individual. The next bracket at the current rate is 4.55% ($39000 to $49999) and the top tax bracket at 5% ($50000 and up).

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: We have already seen how Governor Pillen is trying to fix the budget crisis by cutting the budget by 5%. The state has already raided the "rainy day" fund and state agency cash funds, so to be honest I think nonprofit funding will be cut. To protect nonprofits I would suggest higher tax deduction percentages for donations. I would also ask you.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: The easiest way to make sure that Nebraskans who are struggling get the services they need is to fix the budget crisis.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: We currently have photo ID laws and I have not seen any evidence that Nebraska's elections are currently unsafe or unsecure. I if voting in person have to take an hour to go to my polling place, so accessibility is my primary issue. Several counties in Nebraska only vote by mail, so protecting access to vote-by-mail and early voting is important.

District #26

Name: George Dungan
Email: george@georgefornebraska.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have worked with a number of nonprofits including in my capacity as a public defender here in Lancaster county, working to get my clients the assistance they need in many different facets of life. I will continue to ensure that we partner with nonprofits who are doing important work in our communities to make sure no one gets left behind.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: First, we must look at how we got here. In 2023, we cut taxes for the highest wage earners and largest corporations in the state, despite revenue projections showing that would put us in a structural deficit and force us to cut critical services or raise taxes on working families. I remember standing on the floor asking proponents about the harm these cuts would cause and was told that all of these cuts would trickle back to us. They clearly have not. We need to ensure the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share. If we did this, we could solve Nebraska’s budget shortfall while still providing a tax cut to over 80% of Nebraskans. We can not have state employees being encouraged to sleep in their cars, while we give tax exemptions on private jets. We need a system that is fair for hardworking people. I plan to bring legislation on these income tax brackets next session.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: It is difficult to say, but when the budget deficit is this large, everyone needs to be alert. How nonprofits will be impacted will be determined by the decisions made in the next session. Are we going to double down on the mistakes that have put us in this position and forced us to repeatedly cut services, including nonprofit funding? Or will we chart another path and ensure we find responsible revenue streams to fill our shortfall? I am supportive

of the latter path and will fight every day to ensure our budget reflects the needs and priorities of our communities, not just the wealthy and well connected.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of the Nebraskans who rely on these services the most. We need to do the work of electing leaders who will prioritize Nebraskans over corporate interests and persuading lawmakers to vote with their district's needs when it comes time for appropriations. This will require us to solve our budget deficit and stand strong against attempts by wealthy interests to manipulate our budget, but I am up for that fight.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Nebraska's elections are secure. Unfortunately, accusations that they are not secure are only a method to chip away at the right to vote. We must continue to empower local election officials with the tools, training, and resources to ensure every Nebraskan is able to register and have their vote legally counted. We must also stand against efforts to make it harder for Nebraskans to vote early or by mail. Lastly, I believe we should ensure our election offices continue to have the resources they need to prevent and correct fraud if it arises.

District #28

Name: Colby L. Woodson
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: My experience with nonprofits is mostly practical and local. As a teenager, I worked temporarily for the Capital Humane Society during a summer phone-a-thon, and I later adopted my cat from that organization. I have also found value in the League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County's Lunch & Learn programs, which provide nonpartisan civic information on public issues.

As a resident in and around downtown Lincoln, I have seen the value of local food-access organizations. The Gathering Place has served meals to many people in the neighborhood for many years, and I used FoodNet myself when I was a university student. Those

experiences shaped my view that nonprofits can provide real public value when they meet concrete needs.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: Nebraska needs a more honest budget conversation. The shortfall is not just a math problem; it reflects choices the state has made about tax relief, revenue cuts, special funds, major projects, and the public services people still expect.

Everything should be on the table: exemptions, credits, incentives, agency cuts, transfers, and large set-asides. The question should be simple: what is actually producing public value, and who pays when the state creates a carve-out?

I would be careful about balancing the budget by sweeping smaller dedicated funds or cutting basic agency capacity. Some of those dollars help bring in federal funds, keep programs in compliance, or serve a specific public purpose. A cut that looks good on paper can cost more later if it weakens oversight, delays services, or pushes the burden onto nonprofits, local governments, and families.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: Nonprofits will likely face more uncertainty during the budget process. Some likely rely on state grants, contracts, pass-through dollars, matching funds, or agencies that administer programs. If the state cuts too broadly or sweeps dedicated funds without care, nonprofits may lose capacity even as community needs increase.

I would protect nonprofits by asking practical questions before cuts are made: what services are actually being delivered, whether reductions would lose federal or private matching dollars, whether agencies have enough staff to administer programs, and whether the state is simply shifting costs onto nonprofits, local governments, and families.

Good decisions also require good information. Legislators should pay attention to community feedback, clear budget reporting, local data tools, revenue forecasts, and warnings from offices like the State Auditor when incentive programs or other policies create longterm costs.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: The state should not cut services and then assume nonprofits can absorb the need for free. When people lose access to housing support, food assistance, childcare, behavioral health services, reentry help, or family support, the need does not disappear. It shows up at food pantries, shelters, clinics, churches, community programs, and local nonprofits.

Meeting the needs of struggling Nebraskans starts with stable basics: housing people can afford, access to food, childcare that allows parents to work, behavioral health care, transportation, and enough state capacity to administer programs correctly. Nonprofits are important partners because they are often close to the people being served, but they cannot replace a functioning public system.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Nebraska should keep elections safe and accessible by starting with the people who actually run them. County election officials, clerks, and poll workers know where the real problems are and what tools they need.

The recent Lincoln petition-signature case is a good example. Thousands of questionable signatures were flagged because local election workers checked them, found problems, and referred the matter for investigation. That is election security working.

District #30

Name: Janet Bock
Email: janet_bock@aol.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have worked at Family Health Services in Tecumseh and Beatrice a Family Practice Nurse Practitioner providing women's health care.

This program provides breast and cervical cancer screenings, STI testing for males and females, referrals for further testing or to specialty clinics, and education on reproductive health.

I work closely with the Community Food Pantry and Emergency Services of Beatrice, where I refer individuals who are food-insecure or in need of assistance. I also support the Beatrice Humane Society, which is diligent in keeping animals safe and well cared for while they await their forever homes. The facility is well maintained, and staff are extremely helpful.

I am also a member of the Arbor Day Foundation because I believe that trees and other plants are essential to maintaining a healthy environment. I maintain a windbreak at my farm for shelter and bird habitat. My flower garden and shrubs are also an important part of my environment.

I am extremely aware of how important nonprofits are and how we depend on them for assistance, and I will always advocate for funding and supporting them.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: The budget deficit is a priority for the upcoming Legislative session. There are many moving parts to resolving budget shortfalls, such as maintaining assistance with food, housing, and health care for the most vulnerable, as well as supporting the public education system. I have been in contact with Senators who feel there is a way out of the deficit by examining what corporations can contribute to tax revenue, as well as by slowing, but not stopping, the decrease in property tax to make this a win-win situation. Careful decisions in how to spend money saved "for a rainy day" are key to keeping funding viable. Hiring freezes and cuts in state aid are not the answer.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: Nonprofits should not be burdened with the task of fixing the errors that led to overspending and the depletion of Federal funding and savings. Nonprofits are formed to support their respective objectives and goals. They are not formed as a state monetary safety net and should not be impacted.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We need to ensure food, shelter, medical care, education, and job opportunities that provide a good income for all Nebraskans. Education and training must be offered to ensure their ability to perform those jobs. Meeting those basic needs ultimately decreases costs to the state by supporting healthy Nebraskans who can afford them through work, are educated, and are able to meet them.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I will keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska by maintaining mail-in ballots, preventing disingenuous “observers” from being present at the polls, and preserving the right of all eligible Nebraskans to vote. Our democracy encourages citizens to monitor any elected leader attempting to reduce voters' rights. Leaders who attempt to curtail this freedom should be voted out. This applies to state and national leadership.

District # 32

Name: Mark Schoenrock
Email: mark@schoenrockforlegislature.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have eleven years experience as a Jefferson County commissioner serving in leadership positions for three vital nonprofits for southeast Nebraska: Public Health Solutions District Health Board, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging and Blue Valley Community Action. Each one of these organizations serves thousands of our fellow citizens across the entire southeast Nebraska area from Thayer County to Otoe County. I am very proud of the services we offer to enrich the lives of our fellow citizens and will stand strong for them and other vital nonprofits as a Nebraska state senator.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: I have prepared and executed many large budgets as a United States Army officer, as a Jefferson County commissioner, and as a leader on the above nonprofit boards. My experience in identifying essential services on one side of the equation and the revenue sources needed to provide those services on the other side of the equation will be a vital service to our fellow citizens in the Nebraska Legislature. It is a tough job, but I have the skill, expertise and vision that will be needed in a challenging budget climate.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: My experience in leadership positions of the nonprofits I have been privileged to lead, along with preparing eleven county budgets for essential services to our fellow citizens, along with my understanding and commitment to the importance of the essential services provided by our nonprofits will be a powerful force in the Nebraska Legislature. I will stand strong.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely

impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We must ensure that we are maximizing all the revenue sources for our nonprofits: private sector, local, state and federal government. I have deep relationships with many private sector and elected sector leaders across Nebraska and will be able to start well past square one to help ensure that the best interests of our nonprofits are well represented at the table in what will be a tough budget climate, and that the needs of our fellow Nebraskans are being met.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: Safe, secure and accessible elections are the bedrock of our republic. I served in many places across the world in my three decade Army career and I saw first hand where this is not the case, and thus, I have a special appreciation for our form of republican government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. I will stand strong for that vital principle and will work hard as a state senator to ensure that Nebraska government is responsive to our citizens and is achieving that vital objective.

District #34

Name: Ben Blodgett
Email: bhblodgett@gmail.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I do have a little bit of experience with working for a non-profit organization. Our small-town movie theater was owned by my family for many years and was donated to a non-profit group, which I did serve on the board for a short time. I would encourage partnerships between nonprofits, local governments, schools, businesses, and community foundations. I would also support programs that strengthen volunteerism and help our local organizations develop the leadership and funding they need to remain sustainable.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: Push for responsible spending and hold the state accountable to do so. If telling Nebraska families that they need to tighten their own household budgets why should the state be any different. I had a business teacher once tell the class when creating a budget, you make a wants and needs list and right now the state is spending too much on the wants side of the list.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: I believe that nonprofits will face funding pressure during the budget process, even though many provide essential services our communities depend on. As a legislator, I will listen to nonprofit leaders and protect funding for programs that deliver real value to Nebraskans. My goal would be to work with nonprofits rather than create unnecessary barriers for them.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: When state funding is reduced, we can't simply expect nonprofits to fill the gap without the resources to do it. I would work to protect funding for essential services, support partnerships between the state and nonprofits, and make sure taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently. Listening to the organizations serving struggling Nebraskans and the people they serve so we can identify where the greatest needs are and find practical, sustainable solutions.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I support securing voting systems, mail in ballots, paper ballots, regular audits, and strong cybersecurity while ensuring every eligible Nebraskan can access the ballot. We can protect election integrity without creating unnecessary barriers for voters.

District #36

Name: Darin Tompkins
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Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have met with a number of different nonprofit organizations since I started my campaign for office to learn more about the nonprofit sector and the services they provide to Nebraska communities. Before that, two of my sons were members of the Boy Scouts of America, and I supported them in their endeavors to become Eagle Scouts. My family volunteers and donates to various non-profits such as local food banks, Habitat for Humanity, Lions and Kiwanis clubs, etc., throughout the year.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: I have extensive budgeting experience throughout my career. When I was executive director for MERCK Animal Health, I was responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in operating costs almost every year. When I reviewed the budget, I was consistently able to save our company money by eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse in the system. When I am elected, I know I have the skills to hit the ground running. When the legislature addresses this problem, we should not shift the burden onto the backs of our hardworking Nebraskans to make up the difference. Meanwhile, my opponent has supported and voted for the largest sales tax increase in state history, planning to increase costs on hundreds of goods and services. Additionally, a large part of what got us in this situation in the first place was the income tax breaks that prioritized the ultra-wealthy and out-of-state corporations during a time when everyday people are also struggling with a property tax crisis. My opponent helped dig us into this deficit with reckless tax handouts for them, but nothing for us. I'm ready to bring fresh, experienced leadership. The most effective way to address this issue is by building a stronger economy, strengthening our middle class, eliminating no-bid contracts, and making sure we keep our state's financial investments in Nebraska.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: I am sure that if services to vulnerable populations are cut, this will greatly impact nonprofits because the burden of providing services to those in need will be amplified. We should do everything in our power as state agencies to help people out of the cycle of poverty so that these organizations do not have to pick up the burden. If we make responsible decisions and prioritize the health and welfare of Nebraskans first, we can ease the burden on nonprofits.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We have to meet struggling Nebraskans where they are. If a child is not receiving enough food at home, bringing the family food only goes so far. We must address the root issue by ensuring students have hot meals at school and at home. I want to work with nonprofits and government agencies to help identify gaps in services so that we can better tailor our services to address the needs of vulnerable populations throughout Nebraska.

There has to be a collaborative approach when accomplishing this task, and we need investment from all levels of government, private industry, and the nonprofit sector.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: We need to protect our election process as much as possible because it is the foundation of our American democracy. The freedom to cast your vote is central to our government. Poll workers need to be able to do their job without interference, and we should be encouraging every citizen to vote so they can have their voice heard without intimidation or harassment. I have worked the polls during previous election cycles and have seen firsthand the processes we have in place that keep our elections secure. The dedication of election staff, volunteers, and nonprofits in our state to protect our vote is unparalleled. I've spent 30 years working in highly regulated industries that used processes and procedures to ensure integrity, transparency, and traceability of all activities, and I would use my experience in this area to help keep our election process protected. I would stand against any attempt to interfere with our election process and work to ensure our elections are the safest and most secure in the country.

District #41

Name: Jeremy Heneger
Email: henegerfornebraska@gmail.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have worked with and for nonprofits. As an educator, my career has often overlapped with nonprofits doing similar and complementary work. This was especially true when working for the Nebraska Department of Education. We built many partnerships that helped us do more than any of us could alone. My current employer, ACT Education Corp, was originally a nonprofit when I began. It later changed status when it was acquired. After leaving the Nebraska Department of Education, I mainly looked for roles in the nonprofit sector. I also have experience volunteering for nonprofits. I believe it is essential for Nebraska Legislators to work with and support the nonprofit sector. Partnering with nonprofits allows Nebraska to expand the positive impact of nonprofits and state policies in ways that are not possible when working alone. I will support the nonprofit sector by listening to nonprofit experts during the legislative process. I will also look for ways to financially support nonprofits that can multiply the policy efforts of specific legislation. When appropriate, I will partner with nonprofits to craft and revise proposed legislation. During the campaign, I have had many positive interactions with nonprofits. I have found

those interactions to be informative and inspiring. Nonprofits across the state are making the Good Life even better, and I look forward to working with nonprofits when in the Unicameral.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: The budget shortfalls are likely too big to fix by cutting our way to a balanced budget. The Unicameral has repeatedly cut programs and funding that often hurt the most marginalized Nebraskans. I believe we should roll back the most recent income tax cuts and also look at raising taxes on the ultra-wealthy, typically the top 1% of earning households. This could mean raising income taxes or implementing a one-time tax on the ultra-wealthy to close the budget shortfall, so we can do more to stimulate and grow the economy for the benefit of hard-working Nebraskans.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: The budget shortfalls are likely so large that we will need to put everything on the table to figure out how to close the gaps. I feel that nonprofits and similar programs have already been cut too much, and we have to address the shortfall in different ways. I will do my best to protect nonprofit funding. This includes building coalitions and using Unicameral rules to encourage compromises to address the shortfalls.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: We have to stop cutting and start taxing the ultra-wealthy. The top 1% of households do not pay their fair share. The top 1% pay about 7.2% of their income on all types of taxes. The bottom 80% of households pay between 10.2% and 11.2%. We need tax policy that does not treat those with the most as special. Making the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share is the best way to help Nebraskans who need a hand to get back on their feet.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I plan to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska by helping build a coalition in the Unicameral that can continue to pass legislation that protects our system and improves our election processes. The Unicameral needs to use oversight powers to ensure that the executive branch continues to prioritize safe, secure, and accessible

elections for all Nebraskans. If anyone, including the Secretary of State, does anything to undermine Nebraskans' elections, I will use whatever power I have to hold them accountable to Nebraskans and the law.

District #46

Name: Danielle Conrad
Email: danielle.conrad1@yahoo.com

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Answer: I have extensive experience working with the nonprofit community in Nebraska. As a lawyer I started my legal career building the policy program at Nebraska Appleseed and assisting with litigation and community education. I have worked with nonprofits in the advocacy realm for 12 years as a State Senator. I have served as a board member for many nonprofits. I led the ACLU of Nebraska for 8 years and was actively involved with NAM, the Nebraska Table, and the Coalition for a Strong Nebraska.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Answer: I will prioritize funding for education, healthcare, childcare, housing, job training, veterans, developmental disabilities, infrastructure, public safety, and targeted tax relief. The state should cut massive corporate welfare programs and close tax loopholes. The state should right size the Perkins County canal expenditure to ensure our fair share of water in a more economical way.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Answer: It is unclear how nonprofits will be impacted in the next budget process. However, one thing is clear; if we want different results that end drastic painful budget cuts, policies that support vibrant public private partnerships, a restoration of fiscal responsibility, that prioritizes children and working families and our most vulnerable citizens we must elect different leaders.

Nonprofits cannot and should not be partisan but they should utilize all tools available to them individually and collectively to amplify issues, hold leaders accountable, and activate and educate their networks with nonpartisan voting information.

Additionally, if Nebraskans of goodwill are working at nonprofits serving on their boards and donating to these wonderful organizations and care about these issues they should also be

active in their personal capacity with their time money and votes on campaigns that can make a difference in changing the trajectory of our state.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Answer: Working families, students, and seniors on fixed incomes are working harder than ever before and find it more challenging to meet basic needs and work towards a better life. This is the result of failed political choices from our present leaders. The Governor and his allies in the Legislature care only about divisive social issues and massive corporate welfare programs and inequitable unsustainable tax cuts that benefit corporations and the wealthiest at the expense of all else. They have engineered a fiscally reckless approach to governance as evidenced by their self created structural budget deficits. They have made college tuition much more expensive and have increased regressive fees on countless programs. They have failed to deliver meaningful tax relief to those who need it most.

I will continue to address affordability concerns for Nebraskans and address our workforce challenges by championing childcare, housing, healthcare, wage standards, and education. Specifically, I have introduced measures to close tax loopholes that only benefit the rich, cap medical debt, and protect family homes to ensure no one loses their home due to unforeseen medical issues. I successfully ended the abusive practice of schools turning families over to collection for unpaid school meal debt.

I will continue to introduce and prioritize real solutions, that have strong support across the political spectrum, to help working families succeed like expanding the EITC and establishing a state level child tax credit.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Answer: I have decades of experience as a civil rights lawyer and policymaker protecting the right to vote and fighting successfully against voter suppression efforts.

Candidate Responses by Question

Question One: What experience do you have with nonprofits, and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?

Dean Helmick, District #2: With decades of military experience, the nonprofit organizations I have most experience working with are the Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). We used these organizations on many of our most difficult challenges.

At the State and Local level, I've had exposure to a number of nonprofits here in Nebraska; from the Children's Museum, Humane Society, Cass County CASA, and others. I understand that there are a number of legal, reporting, and governance requirements for nonprofit organizations.

I support the key role that the nonprofit sector plays across our State.

Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, District #4: I volunteer with various nonprofits in our community including the Foodbank of the Heartland and Access Period. I have also served as the president of Better Ballots Nebraska and on the board of nonpartisan Nebraska. I know this sector is doing critical work in our neighborhoods to ensure our families have the resources they need to succeed. I want to be a partner with the nonprofit sector when elected to help them do this important work.

Brad von Gillern, District #4: I have worked with non-profits throughout my entire life, beginning in youth, college and through my business career. I have sat on,and led numerous non-profit boards including: YMCA; Salvation Army; Scouting America; Downtown Rotary; Rotary Foundation; YPO; Lifegate Church; The Hope Center. Additionally we have supported numerous non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Lydia House, Open Door Mission, and many others.

Patrick Leahy, District #6: I have served on a number of nonprofit boards and committees in the community including Keep Omaha Beautiful, New Leaders Council, Humanities Nebraska, and more. Additionally, I was the Development Director for the Business Ethics Alliance. No matter the nonprofit, I am appreciative of the hard work people at these organizations do on a daily basis to fill gaps in our community. I will work to ensure the state of Nebraska is a reliable partner for nonprofits in our communities, whether that is protecting programs currently receiving public dollars, ensuring state grant programs and contracts are fair, and we are not imposing unnecessary regulations on individuals and organizations.

Nate Ostdiek, District #6: I have worked with and for a variety of non-profits over the last several years including building partnerships between Nebraska Diaper Bank, Heartland Bikeshare, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I also served with Conservation Nebraska as an AmeriCorps fellow between 2022-23 and my lovely girlfriend of seven years has completed the Nebraska table policy fellowship program. I've had the opportunity to build partnerships firsthand between the public sphere (University of Nebraska) and community nonprofits and see how many of them operate internally to understand the challenges being faced. Something I want to do is make sure that we're listening to our non-profit sector when it comes to appropriated money and the rules around it. The legislature has a history of earmarking funds for non-profits, only to later make that money inaccessible because of one oversight or another. I will do my best to exercise due diligence and advocate to prevent situations like that. Furthermore, coordinating the public and non-profit sectors makes both more effective, especially when pursuing economic development or public health issues. I hope to engage all parties on relevant cases to ensure we do all we can to solve today's problems and prepare for tomorrow.

Josh Livingston, District #8: I have volunteered with several nonprofits and provided legal guidance. I have also served on nonprofit boards and continue to do the same. The nonprofit sector provides a valuable benefit to our community and we, as legislators, should finds ways to benefit from their expertise in our professional capacity as we decide what bills and laws to pass. Additionally, we should use our community roles to lift up the message of nonprofits in order to ensure continuity of their goals but to also ensure ongoing funding.

Christy Knorr, District #12: I have had nonprofits that have helped me at different times in my life. I think it is important to protect the nonprofit sector. I will advocate for them.

Bill Bowes, District #14: Here is a list of groups I have worked with:

Legacy Veterans Garden, 2008-2010 – a project to develop a plant and flower garden at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in Bellevue.

United Way Community Investment Review Team, 2012-2019 – Led a team in reviewing grant applications for United Way funding Nebraska 117, 2023-present – A nonprofit formed to assist foster parents through respite care, home modifications, and counseling Nonprofits play a crucial role in providing goods and services to those in need and in providing for an improvement in the quality of life in communities. As a State Senator, I plan on supporting nonprofits by: helping eliminate government red tape, providing letters of support whenever possible or needed, acting as a proponent when a nonprofit is seeking funding from a funding organization, and assisting with state and federal grants.

SuAnn Witt, District #14: Throughout my career in public education and service on the Papillion La Vista Community School Board, I have worked with community organizations and nonprofits that support educators, students, and families. These organizations often reach people in ways the government cannot, but even so they need reliable partners in state government. When I am elected as a senator, I look forward to listening and collaborating with nonprofit leaders and including them in policy discussions because you are often the individuals with the boots on the ground and it is important to hear directly from your experience. We need to work to maintain resources for nonprofits that help you better serve Nebraskans.

Ted Japp, District #16: My adult son has severe autism and has been assisted in various ways by several nonprofit group homes and agencies, including the Autism Center of Nebraska and Omni Behavioral Health. I have been consistently involved with many different churches and their affiliated agencies as well as different Cities' Chambers of Commerce.

John Fredrickson, District #20: I am a clinical social worker by trade, and have worked in various nonprofits throughout my professional career. I am also proud of the collaborative work I have done with the nonprofit community of Nebraska during my first four years in the legislature. Should I be reelected, I would continue that strong, collaborative relationship.

Chris Anderson, District #20: I have extensive experience with nonprofit organizations as a volunteer leader. I currently serve on the National Philanthropy Council of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, and I previously served on the boards of directors of the Boys and Girls Club of Cedar Rapids, Junior Achievement of Northern Louisiana, and Sci-Port: Louisiana's Science Museum. Those organizations span youth development, economic education, science education, and health, and I understand from the inside how nonprofits are governed and funded and what they answer for to donors and to the communities they serve. I would bring that experience to the Legislature in supporting the sector. I would start by bringing nonprofits into the legislative process early, before bills are written rather than after, because they know what is working in communities long before a statute does. I would work to make state grants and contracts predictable and paid on time, with reporting requirements proportionate to the size of the award, because late payments and shifting paperwork can cripple a small organization and pull staff away from the mission. Furthermore, I would support fair funding of the real cost of delivering a program, including the administrative work that keeps it running. I would also pay attention to the nonprofit workforce, especially in rural Nebraska, where it is hard to recruit and keep skilled staff. Nebraskans should be able to take part in civic life, and I support the ability of nonprofits to educate the public, register voters on a nonpartisan basis, and speak to lawmakers within

the law, regardless of who is in office. Because I put a high value on evidence, I would encourage nonprofits and the state to share data on what works so that proven programs can grow, and I would keep state policy friendly to charitable giving and volunteering.

Dan Winter, District #24: I have limited experience with nonprofits in the last few years. In high school I was in the Boy Scouts of America and received the Eagle Scout award. In college I was member of a fraternity that focused on community engagement. Current Unicameral support for nonprofits focuses on making the act of donating and the use of those donations easier. I would continue this practice while also expanding the Nebraska Innovation Hub Act allowing more nonprofits to work as "iHubs". Which would allow these nonprofits to support the local community creating new businesses and revenue.

George Dungan, District #26: I have worked with a number of nonprofits including in my capacity as a public defender here in Lancaster county, working to get my clients the assistance they need in many different facets of life. I will continue to ensure that we partner with nonprofits who are doing important work in our communities to make sure no one gets left behind.

Colby L. Woodson, District #28: My experience with nonprofits is mostly practical and local. As a teenager, I worked temporarily for the Capital Humane Society during a summer phone-a-thon, and I later adopted my cat from that organization. I have also found value in the League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County's Lunch & Learn programs, which provide nonpartisan civic information on public issues.

As a resident in and around downtown Lincoln, I have seen the value of local food-access organizations. The Gathering Place has served meals to many people in the neighborhood for many years, and I used FoodNet myself when I was a university student. Those experiences shaped my view that nonprofits can provide real public value when they meet concrete needs.

Janet Bock, District #30: I have worked at Family Health Services in Tecumseh and Beatrice a Family Practice Nurse Practitioner providing women's health care.

This program provides breast and cervical cancer screenings, STI testing for males and females, referrals for further testing or to specialty clinics, and education on reproductive health.

I work closely with the Community Food Pantry and Emergency Services of Beatrice, where I refer individuals who are food-insecure or in need of assistance. I also support the Beatrice Humane Society, which is diligent in keeping animals safe and well cared for while they await their forever homes. The facility is well maintained, and staff are extremely helpful.

I am also a member of the Arbor Day Foundation because I believe that trees and other plants are essential to maintaining a healthy environment. I maintain a windbreak at my farm for shelter and bird habitat. My flower garden and shrubs are also an important part of my environment.

I am extremely aware of how important nonprofits are and how we depend on them for assistance, and I will always advocate for funding and supporting them.

Mark Schoenrock, District #32: I have eleven years experience as a Jefferson County commissioner serving in leadership positions for three vital nonprofits for southeast Nebraska: Public Health Solutions District Health Board, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging and Blue Valley Community Action. Each one of these organizations serves thousands of our fellow citizens across the entire southeast Nebraska area from Thayer County to Otoe County. I am very proud of the services we offer to enrich the lives of our fellow citizens and will stand strong for them and other vital nonprofits as a Nebraska state senator.

Ben Blodgett, District #34: I do have a little bit of experience with working for a non-profit organization. Our small-town movie theater was owned by my family for many years and was donated to a non-profit group, which I did serve on the board for a short time. I would encourage partnerships between nonprofits, local governments, schools, businesses, and community foundations. I would also support programs that strengthen volunteerism and help our local organizations develop the leadership and funding they need to remain sustainable.

Darin Tompkins, District #36: I have met with a number of different nonprofit organizations since I started my campaign for office to learn more about the nonprofit sector and the services they provide to Nebraska communities. Before that, two of my sons were members of the Boy Scouts of America, and I supported them in their endeavors to become Eagle Scouts. My family volunteers and donates to various non-profits such as local food banks, Habitat for Humanity, Lions and Kiwanis clubs, etc., throughout the year.

Jeremy Heneger, District #41: I have worked with and for nonprofits. As an educator, my career has often overlapped with nonprofits doing similar and complementary work. This was especially true when working for the Nebraska Department of Education. We built many partnerships that helped us do more than any of us could alone. My current employer, ACT Education Corp, was originally a nonprofit when I began. It later changed status when it was acquired. After leaving the Nebraska Department of Education, I mainly looked for roles in the nonprofit sector. I also have experience volunteering for nonprofits. I believe it is essential for Nebraska Legislators to work with and support the nonprofit sector. Partnering with nonprofits allows Nebraska to expand the positive impact of

nonprofits and state policies in ways that are not possible when working alone. I will support the nonprofit sector by listening to nonprofit experts during the legislative process. I will also look for ways to financially support nonprofits that can multiply the policy efforts of specific legislation. When appropriate, I will partner with nonprofits to craft and revise proposed legislation. During the campaign, I have had many positive interactions with nonprofits. I have found those interactions to be informative and inspiring. Nonprofits across the state are making the Good Life even better, and I look forward to working with nonprofits when in the Unicameral.

Danielle Conrad, District #46: I have extensive experience working with the nonprofit community in Nebraska. As a lawyer I started my legal career building the policy program at Nebraska Appleseed and assisting with litigation and community education. I have worked with nonprofits in the advocacy realm for 12 years as a State Senator. I have served as a board member for many nonprofits. I led the ACLU of Nebraska for 8 years and was actively involved with NAM, the Nebraska Table, and the Coalition for a Strong Nebraska.

Question Two: The state budget will again require work to address a significant shortfall. What do you believe needs to be done to address our budget problem?

Dean Helmick, District #2: First, we must allow hardworking Nebraskans to keep more of the money they earn. This means keeping the individual income tax reduction for all Nebraskans on schedule, while also keeping in place the elimination of state taxes on social security. Next, we must prioritize state spending on the safety and security of every Nebraskan. With this in mind, I will work to control government spending, reduce regulations, and keep an eye on the future.

The best way to stabilize Nebraska's budget is to grow our economy. That means creating more jobs, training our workforce, building more homes for the working class, attracting new businesses, and giving Nebraskans a reason to stay here. My goal is to continually improve Nebraska as a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, District #4: In order to right our ship, we need to look at how we got here. Four years ago, the state had a billion dollar surplus and record high revenues. In response to this, lawmakers, including my opponent, have voted to give over half a billion dollars to trillion dollar tech companies to build data centers and handed hundreds of millions of our tax dollars to out-of-state companies without a clear return on investment. We are now in a structural deficit with a shortfall of over a billion dollars. In order to pay for this deficit, we have cut funding for property tax relief, veterans aid, developmental

disability assistance, and funding to support nonprofits. Our priorities are out of wack. We need to reverse some of the shortsighted decisions that have been made over the last four years, work to bring more people into our state to expand the tax base, and eliminate wasteful spending on things like no-bid contracts for friends of politicians.

Brad von Gillern, District #4: We need to continue to find places if inefficient spending, where dollars spent are not providing a return. That return may be financial in some cases, but in the case of the non-profit world, is likely an intrinsic return that may or may not be measurable. Feeding someone provides a return. Providing medical services to indigents provides a return. Educating children, adults and immigrants provides a return.

We also will have to look at some revenue generators such as eliminating some of the most outrageous sales tax exemptions that do not negatively impact working families and every day Nebraskans.

Patrick Leahy, District #6: The state is facing a billion dollar shortfall and there is no silver bullet solution. We need to get a little better in a number of areas. For starters, a family making $58,000 a year is paying the same income tax rate as Warren Buffett. We have sales tax exemptions for private jets and huge property tax exemptions for companies constructing data centers, while hardworking people are struggling to make ends meet. These are just three areas where we need to reevaluate our current decisions and priorities. We should also look at areas where we can cut, such as no-bid contracts that haven't had a clear return on investment for our state.

Nate Ostdiek, District #6: I believe Nebraska needs to significantly cut back on its corporate tax incentive programs, which have cratered corporate tax receipts while contributing only limited job creation and economic development. I will work to modernize our tax code to reflect a more digital, surveillance-based, data-driven economy, without expanding sales taxes on everyday goods and services our community relies on. Instead, we need to close the wide variety of loopholes in our code, from the extraordinary capital gains tax exemption to sales tax exemptions that benefit only the wealthiest Nebraskans. Finally, we should look to restructure our income tax system to be more progressive. Eliminating top brackets was a disaster for the state budget and entirely predictable, especially without revenue triggers to allow for a sustainable transfer.

Josh Livingston, District #8: Nebraska has to balance its budget. That is not optional, and I think we need to be honest with Nebraskans about the choices in front of us.

First, I would start with the budget itself. Before asking Nebraska families to give more of their hard earned money, we need to earnestly go through state government line by line and identify programs that are duplicative, ineffective, or no longer serving their intended

purpose. We should demand measurable results for the money we spend and look for efficiencies before cutting services that families rely on. These decisions should be based on need more than cronyism.

But responsible budgeting also means recognizing government spending is necessary and is valuable for our communities. We have obligations to provide a quality education for our children, provide comprehensive health care to vulnerable Nebraskans, maintain public safety, and support the communities that make our state work. I would not balance the budget by simply making across-the-board cuts and hoping someone else absorbs the consequences, I would insist that we take an intentional approach to spending and budgeting; the same way we as Nebraskans have to do in our every day lives.

We also need to be careful about continuing to reduce revenue while simultaneously trying to fund those priorities. Nebraska has already enacted significant tax reductions, and the state's own forecasts have shown how changes in revenue can create substantial budget pressure. In February 2026, for example, the forecasting board reduced projected FY2026-27 revenue by $175 million.

Finally, we need to think beyond the next biennium. We cannot repeatedly use one-time transfers, reserves, or temporary fixes to solve an ongoing structural problem. We need a sustainable budget where recurring revenues support recurring expenses.

My approach would be simple: eliminate waste, demand accountability, protect essential services, make decisions based on outcomes rather than politics, and make sure our tax and spending policies are sustainable for the long term.

Nebraska families have to live within their means. Their state government should do the same.

Christy Knorr, District #12: The budget needs to be reviewed line by line to make sure we know where every cent is going. I think we need to look at all of our spending and have honest conversations around ways we can save money while protecting essential services and social safety nets.

Bill Bowes, District #14: The long-term answer to our budget issue is to grow the state by creating a climate where our young adults stay after high school or college, where existing businesses can flourish, and where Nebraska is recognized as having a business-friendly tax structure. In the short-term, we need to control government spending by increasing transparency and accountability in how public funds are spent, as well as making sure we are funding projects and organizations that contribute to making our state better.

SuAnn Witt, District #14: Nebraska needs to start taking a proper long-term approach to the budget. Recent tax policy decisions have reduced our state's revenue while the cost of everything including groceries, education and healthcare continue to rise. We should carefully review state spending, eliminate waste, and make sure programs are efficient and producing results. However, we cannot balance the budget through cuts that shift costs onto local taxpayers, nonprofits, and families at a time when people are struggling with the cost of living. In the legislature, I will oppose increasing sales taxes on goods and services that everyday people rely on. These taxes would only place a greater burden on working class Nebraskans and stagnate our economy. We can not repeat what we know does not work. Tax exemptions for billion dollar corporations and out-of-state companies have put us in this situation, while hardworking people see no relief. I will promote economic relief for our middle-class, while supporting policies that promote economic growth that strengthens our revenue over time.

Ted Japp, District #16: In a perfect world there is sufficient funding for all the worthwhile groups and the causes they support. Much like individual families sitting around the kitchen table working on a household budget, the Legislature will need to identify and prioritize the areas most important at this time and adequately fund them.

John Fredrickson, District #20: In 2023, we passed significant tax cuts when the state had the budgetary surplus to absorb them, without pairing them with a plan for what happens when revenue slows down (for example, budget circuit breakers and connecting economic incentives to performance).

The tax cuts did not lead to the promised revenue performance and now the bill is due.

In terms of balancing the budget, we need to review exemptions and incentives that no longer serve a public purpose before we touch anything that hits working families. We need to protect the services that make this state worth living in: roads, schools, the workforce pipeline, and mental health and Medicaid. This necessary and cost-saving infrastructure is usually first on the chopping block in a budgetary crisis, but it is the last thing Nebraskans can afford to lose.

Governor Pillen has ordered a 5 percent cut across state agencies instead of a special session. That buys time, but it doesn’t fix the structural problem.

Chris Anderson, District #20: Undoubtedly, I think our budget problem is more about discipline than it is about revenue. We promised income tax relief and property tax relief at the same time without a clear action plan to pay for both, which has left us with patching holes instead of fixing the root cause. Indeed, the first thing I would tackle is the property tax relief funding mechanism itself especially because nobody at the 12,000 doors I've

knocked on my campaign trail has been a product of it. Fiscal analysts have called it a bucket with a hole in it, and you can't build a stable budget on something that leaks by design. Along with that, I staunchly would protect the 2023 income tax cuts, because they help Nebraska compete for jobs and talent and we must stay competitive with our neighboring states.

Once that foundation is in place, I would go agency by agency looking for efficiencies, with a special commission working through the State Auditor, made up of business owners, trusted government leader(s)--past and present, farmers, ranchers and geographically diverse so Omaha and Lincoln are not driving the whole strategy. The goal is for savings to come from overhead and duplication first. Just as important, direct services for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities should be the last place we look. To be sure, I would be equally careful with the services nonprofits deliver for the state, because they often reach people more efficiently than an agency can.

Finally, I've served on nonprofit boards and councils, and I've seen what happens when an organization lurches from crisis to crisis. The state shouldn't operate that way either. That's why I'd push for honest numbers, multi-year planning, and clear goals, so agencies and community partners can plan around commitments on which they can rely all underscored by accountability and transparency.

Dan Winter, District #24: For most of my adult life, Nebraska governors and senators have run based on lowering property taxes, they have not done it. With the current state revenue shortfalls, I think lowering property taxes will not happen in the next four years. Governor Pillen has suggested the removal of sales tax exemptions linked to professional services, while protecting food, human medicine, community services, and agriculture inputs. This plan would put taxes on items such as pop and candy (consumption tax), home and vehicle repair, professional services, personal care, pet care, entertainment, industrial and heavy equipment, end-of-life services. While these new taxes would fill the budget shortfall, these taxes would also decrease Nebraskan’s buying power for common goods. I would suggest a simple increase to the state’s sales tax to 6%, generating $223.5 million. This change could help to close the current funding gap, but our tax code also needs to be updated. Currently, anyone making over $29000 is in the same income bracket, meaning I am in the same bracket as Warren Buffet or Walmart paying 4.55% in 2026. A simple solution is to create more tax brackets above the current top. Based off the average household income in Nebraska ($74000) the new middle bracket paying the 2027 lowered tax of 3.99% should cover $29000 to $38,999 for an individual. The next bracket at the current rate is 4.55% ($39000 to $49999) and the top tax bracket at 5% ($50000 and up).

George Dungan, District #26: First, we must look at how we got here. In 2023, we cut taxes for the highest wage earners and largest corporations in the state, despite revenue projections showing that would put us in a structural deficit and force us to cut critical services or raise taxes on working families. I remember standing on the floor asking proponents about the harm these cuts would cause and was told that all of these cuts would trickle back to us. They clearly have not. We need to ensure the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share. If we did this, we could solve Nebraska's budget shortfall while still providing a tax cut to over 80% of Nebraskans. We can not have state employees being encouraged to sleep in their cars, while we give tax exemptions on private jets. We need a system that is fair for hardworking people. I plan to bring legislation on these income tax brackets next session.

Colby L. Woodson, District #28: Nebraska needs a more honest budget conversation. The shortfall is not just a math problem; it reflects choices the state has made about tax relief, revenue cuts, special funds, major projects, and the public services people still expect.

Everything should be on the table: exemptions, credits, incentives, agency cuts, transfers, and large set-asides. The question should be simple: what is actually producing public value, and who pays when the state creates a carve-out?

I would be careful about balancing the budget by sweeping smaller dedicated funds or cutting basic agency capacity. Some of those dollars help bring in federal funds, keep programs in compliance, or serve a specific public purpose. A cut that looks good on paper can cost more later if it weakens oversight, delays services, or pushes the burden onto nonprofits, local governments, and families.

Janet Bock, District #30: The budget deficit is a priority for the upcoming Legislative session. There are many moving parts to resolving budget shortfalls, such as maintaining assistance with food, housing, and health care for the most vulnerable, as well as supporting the public education system. I have been in contact with Senators who feel there is a way out of the deficit by examining what corporations can contribute to tax revenue, as well as by slowing, but not stopping, the decrease in property tax to make this a win-win situation. Careful decisions in how to spend money saved "for a rainy day" are key to keeping funding viable. Hiring freezes and cuts in state aid are not the answer.

Mark Schoenrock, District #32: I have prepared and executed many large budgets as a United States Army officer, as a Jefferson County commissioner, and as a leader on the above nonprofit boards. My experience in identifying essential services on one side of the equation and the revenue sources needed to provide those services on the other side of the equation will be a vital service to our fellow citizens in the Nebraska Legislature. It is a

tough job, but I have the skill, expertise and vision that will be needed in a challenging budget climate.

Ben Blodgett, District #34: Push for responsible spending and hold the state accountable to do so. If telling Nebraska families that they need to tighten their own household budgets why should the state be any different. I had a business teacher once tell the class when creating a budget, you make a wants and needs list and right now the state is spending too much on the wants side of the list.

Darin Tompkins, District #36: I have extensive budgeting experience throughout my career. When I was executive director for MERCK Animal Health, I was responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in operating costs almost every year. When I reviewed the budget, I was consistently able to save our company money by eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse in the system. When I am elected, I know I have the skills to hit the ground running. When the legislature addresses this problem, we should not shift the burden onto the backs of our hardworking Nebraskans to make up the difference. Meanwhile, my opponent has supported and voted for the largest sales tax increase in state history, planning to increase costs on hundreds of goods and services. Additionally, a large part of what got us in this situation in the first place was the income tax breaks that prioritized the ultra-wealthy and out-of-state corporations during a time when everyday people are also struggling with a property tax crisis. My opponent helped dig us into this deficit with reckless tax handouts for them, but nothing for us. I'm ready to bring fresh, experienced leadership. The most effective way to address this issue is by building a stronger economy, strengthening our middle class, eliminating no-bid contracts, and making sure we keep our state's financial investments in Nebraska.

Jeremy Heneger, District #41: The budget shortfalls are likely too big to fix by cutting our way to a balanced budget. The Unicameral has repeatedly cut programs and funding that often hurt the most marginalized Nebraskans. I believe we should roll back the most recent income tax cuts and also look at raising taxes on the ultra-wealthy, typically the top 1% of earning households. This could mean raising income taxes or implementing a one-time tax on the ultra-wealthy to close the budget shortfall, so we can do more to stimulate and grow the economy for the benefit of hard-working Nebraskans.

Danielle Conrad, District #46: I will prioritize funding for education, healthcare, childcare, housing, job training, veterans, developmental disabilities, infrastructure, public safety, and targeted tax relief. The state should cut massive corporate welfare programs and close tax loopholes. The state should right size the Perkins County canal expenditure to ensure our fair share of water in a more economical way.

Question Three: How do you believe nonprofits will be impacted during the budget process and what will you do to protect nonprofits during this time?

Dean Helmick, District #2: With the projected budget deficit, every line in the State's budget will be closely scrutinized. Nonprofits will most certainly be impacted.

My commitment to the nonprofit sector is to always listen and work to understand how we ensure fair representation of the underrepresented, disenfranchised, and most vulnerable Nebraskans. One thing I ask every organization, is to help our Unicameral identify and eliminate instances of fraud, waste and abuse. Every dollar wasted, is a dollar that does not reach those in need.

Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, District #4: Due to the shortfall, we face real challenges, but also have an opportunity to explore new ideas. I will work to protect funding for critical services, including for nonprofits, and eliminate wasteful spending such as tax handouts to data centers or no-bid contracts. Not all of my colleagues will share these priorities, but that is what I will fight for in the Legislature.

Brad von Gillern, District #4: We need to be considerate of the work that non-profits do, especially as much of that work would fall to government to provide is the non-profit ceased to exist. Cutting support for some organizations could be biting our noses off to spite our face.

Patrick Leahy, District #6: To be candid, the next session will be difficult for many sectors, including nonprofits. When you are facing a billion dollar budget shortfall, there isn't a painless solution. My commitment is to work to protect critical funding that is improving the lives of Nebraskans and to eliminate wasteful spending on things like handouts to data centers or no-bid contracts. We cannot cut our way out of this deficit by taking critical resources away from our communities. I will be a champion to put the needs of our everyday people first and deliver practical, long-term solutions through a more sustainable, balanced budget.

Nate Ostdiek, District #6: This will be a very difficult budget cycle for non-profits, similar to the last several cycles, with high expectations to do more with less. That is not fair and is very frustrating, but we need to keep scrapping for the small wins we can find. That looks like delaying funding sweeps, building good relationships with senators who have the ability to add things to the budget on the floor, and working closely with the fiscal office to have a solid understanding of where money is and isn't, so we can plan more effectively.

Josh Livingston, District #8: As we have seen time and again, nonprofits are often the first cuts that are made. This often sets a dangerous precedent because in many ways our values are demonstrated through the nonprofits we support. During a budget shortfall, it is inevitable that cuts are going to happen but we should avoid taking the easy route and simply cutting the programs that support the most vulnerable. I will always be an advocate for funding nonprofits to the extent feasible within our budgetary restrictions and I will ensure that any cuts that are considered are not done simply in the name of efficiency.

Christy Knorr, District #12: I do believe nonprofits will see cuts. I will advocate to try to keep those cuts from happening.

Bill Bowes, District #14: In this upcoming budget process, it will be difficult to increase funding for any state department. I hope to maintain necessary services at current funding levels. If a nonprofit can provide data showing its effectiveness in its area of expertise, I will advocate for continued funding.

SuAnn Witt, District #14: Budget decisions should factor in the value of nonprofits and the consequences families would face if those services disappeared. Nonprofits are usually the first organizations affected by budget cuts, even though they are already being asked to meet growing needs with limited staff and resources. Cutting their funding does not eliminate the need; it simply shifts the burden and makes the problem more expensive later on. I will make sure nonprofit leaders have a voice early in the budget process, push for timely state payments, and oppose cuts for critical programs.

Ted Japp, District #16: I don't have a clear picture at this time how much nonprofits will be impacted. A better understanding of the amount of shortfall and where the public dollars have gone in the past will be helpful to determine what impact may occur. Generally speaking, working to prevent additional hardships on those already impacted by way of impairment, disability, or extreme poverty, should have priority status in budgeting.

John Fredrickson, District #20: Nonprofits are often some of the first that are considered for budget cuts. This is an unfortunate reality that I do not agree with, and I have fought against these cuts during my first term in the legislature. I have also voted red on the budget the last two years due to the proposed cuts to essential services and resources for Nebraskans.

Chris Anderson, District #20: I think nonprofits get hit twice in the increasingly strained state budget climate. State contracts and grants are often some of the easiest line items to trim or delay as they are "discretionary" despite nonprofits usually delivering those services more efficiently than government can. Moreover, as other support shrinks more

people turn to nonprofits for help resulting in a higher demand signal ironically as the funding streams increase in uncertainty.

Therefore, early and often I would ensure nonprofits have a seat at the table early as they know better than anyone what happens on the ground when a program changes. I'd also push to have them included in the agency-by-agency efficiency review I mentioned, so the commission judges programs by their results rather than cutting across the board. In practice, that means looking at agency overhead and duplication first, before we trim the partners who deliver direct services to seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities. Beyond that, I would advocate for predictable, multi-year funding with clear roadmaps and action plans with corresponding timely payments, so nonprofits can plan their budgets and retain their staff.

I cannot promise every program will be unscathed particularly in this uniquely challenged fiscal environment. But, I will make sure to actively listen to nonprofit leadership and staff in order for decision-making to be underlined by results while working in parallel to protect the services on which Nebraskans depend most—For The People.

Dan Winter, District #24: We have already seen how Governor Pillen is trying to fix the budget crisis by cutting the budget by 5%. The state has already raided the "rainy day" fund and state agency cash funds, so to be honest I think nonprofit funding will be cut. To protect nonprofits I would suggest higher tax deduction percentages for donations. I would also ask you.

George Dungan, District #26: It is difficult to say, but when the budget deficit is this large, everyone needs to be alert. How nonprofits will be impacted will be determined by the decisions made in the next session. Are we going to double down on the mistakes that have put us in this position and forced us to repeatedly cut services, including nonprofit funding? Or will we chart another path and ensure we find responsible revenue streams to fill our shortfall? I am supportive of the latter path and will fight every day to ensure our budget reflects the needs and priorities of our communities, not just the wealthy and well connected.

Colby L. Woodson, District #28: Nonprofits will likely face more uncertainty during the budget process. Some likely rely on state grants, contracts, pass-through dollars, matching funds, or agencies that administer programs. If the state cuts too broadly or sweeps dedicated funds without care, nonprofits may lose capacity even as community needs increase.

I would protect nonprofits by asking practical questions before cuts are made: what services are actually being delivered, whether reductions would lose federal or private

matching dollars, whether agencies have enough staff to administer programs, and whether the state is simply shifting costs onto nonprofits, local governments, and families.

Good decisions also require good information. Legislators should pay attention to community feedback, clear budget reporting, local data tools, revenue forecasts, and warnings from offices like the State Auditor when incentive programs or other policies create longterm costs.

Janet Bock, District #30: Nonprofits should not be burdened with the task of fixing the errors that led to overspending and the depletion of Federal funding and savings. Nonprofits are formed to support their respective objectives and goals. They are not formed as a state monetary safety net and should not be impacted.

Mark Schoenrock, District #32: My experience in leadership positions of the nonprofits I have been privileged to lead, along with preparing eleven county budgets for essential services to our fellow citizens, along with my understanding and commitment to the importance of the essential services provided by our nonprofits will be a powerful force in the Nebraska Legislature. I will stand strong.

Ben Blodgett, District #34: I believe that nonprofits will face funding pressure during the budget process, even though many provide essential services our communities depend on. As a legislator, I will listen to nonprofit leaders and protect funding for programs that deliver real value to Nebraskans. My goal would be to work with nonprofits rather than create unnecessary barriers for them.

Darin Tompkins, District #36: I am sure that if services to vulnerable populations are cut, this will greatly impact nonprofits because the burden of providing services to those in need will be amplified. We should do everything in our power as state agencies to help people out of the cycle of poverty so that these organizations do not have to pick up the burden. If we make responsible decisions and prioritize the health and welfare of Nebraskans first, we can ease the burden on nonprofits.

Jeremy Heneger, District #41: The budget shortfalls are likely so large that we will need to put everything on the table to figure out how to close the gaps. I feel that nonprofits and similar programs have already been cut too much, and we have to address the shortfall in different ways. I will do my best to protect nonprofit funding. This includes building coalitions and using Unicameral rules to encourage compromises to address the shortfalls.

Danielle Conrad, District #46: It is unclear how nonprofits will be impacted in the next budget process. However, one thing is clear; if we want different results that end drastic painful budget cuts, policies that support vibrant public private partnerships, a restoration

of fiscal responsibility, that prioritizes children and working families and our most vulnerable citizens we must elect different leaders.

Nonprofits cannot and should not be partisan but they should utilize all tools available to them individually and collectively to amplify issues, hold leaders accountable, and activate and educate their networks with nonpartisan voting information.

Additionally, if Nebraskans of goodwill are working at nonprofits serving on their boards and donating to these wonderful organizations and care about these issues they should also be active in their personal capacity with their time money and votes on campaigns that can make a difference in changing the trajectory of our state.

Question Four: Nebraska nonprofits are often looked at to fill the needs gaps created by state funding cuts. However, there have been significant funding cuts that severely impact nonprofits' ability to do so. How do we meet the needs of Nebraskans who are struggling?

Dean Helmick, District #2: With the projected budget deficit, there won't likely be any increased spending or growth in this biennium. The State must prioritize spending on the safety and security for all Nebraskans. This includes caring for our most vulnerable. We must also prioritize economic growth. Unless we grow our economy, we will face budget shortfalls every year. Bottom line: we must build and prepare for our future.

I look forward to hearing nonprofit sector ideas on how to strengthen our communities, in the face of our projected budget deficit.

Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, District #4: We need to fix our structural budget deficit so that we can protect this funding in the long term. That means eliminating wasteful spending and standing strong against attempts to balance our budget by cutting critical services. We need leaders who are focused on working for everyday Nebraskans who are facing these struggles. My opponent has made it clear that he is only interested in working for the ultra-wealthy, the well-connected, and big corporations. I plan to bring fresh leadership that can refocus our priorities on what matters.

Brad von Gillern, District #4: Each one must be considered individually and as noted above, determine where the greatest return on the state's dollars come from.

Patrick Leahy, District #6: The State of Nebraska must be a more predictable and reliable partner to nonprofit organizations. We cannot double down on the shortsighted decisions

that have landed us a billion in the hole. We need to take steps to increase revenue slightly and cut spending that isn't improving the lives of working Nebraskans. Nonprofits should not be forced to do it all. The state has a clear role to play and it's time that we delivered on important items such as childcare, education, and veterans services.

Nate Ostdiek, District #6: Big question. I see the high cost of housing as a nexus point where many other issues intersect, so doing more to support Nebraskans facing housing insecurity will hopefully have a stronger stabilizing effect on our community. I have several bills I would like to bring that address utility rate classes and costs on that end, but they won't be a silver bullet. We need to keep the most vulnerable in mind and do more to bring their voices to the table, which I hope to help by coordinating testimony and other actions.

Josh Livingston, District #8: We cannot continue to cut necessary services and benefits to Nebraskans and expect that they will not continue to struggle. While nonprofits should not be expected to replace the responsibilities of state government, they are an essential partner in making sure Nebraskans have access to the services they need.

The reality is that when the state cuts funding, the need does not disappear, it simply gets shifted somewhere else. Nonprofits are then asked to serve more people with fewer resources, and eventually they reach a point where they simply cannot keep up and we end up losing out on the expertise and benefit of community partners.

We need to make sure that our budget decisions account for the real-world consequences of those cuts. That means protecting essential services, adequately funding programs that help people remain stable and independent, and working directly with nonprofits to understand where the gaps are occurring.

Christy Knorr, District #12: We are going to have to get creative. I will have everyone involved sit down at the table to come up with solutions.

Bill Bowes, District #14: We meet those needs by improving the economy of the state. We want employers to provide good-paying jobs to all Nebraskans who can work. This will help lift them out of poverty and will provide a needed sense of pride and dignity. For those who cannot work, we will provide a safety net that will meet their basic needs. It is this group that will be significantly and positively impacted by many nonprofits. Foundations and other charitable groups should help provide funding when state government is limited due to our budget situation.

SuAnn Witt, District #14: We cannot expect nonprofits to do more with less or to replace the responsibilities of state government. We have to get our priorities straight, and my priority will always be to work for our hardworking people and put everyday Nebraskans first. Those who are struggling need a leg up until they can get back on their feet. One of the

most important things we can do to accomplish this goal is to establish collaborative partnerships. When information is shared freely, we are better able to identify the gaps and meet the needs of struggling Nebraskans. Our state can do more for everyday Nebraskans and help them thrive, not just survive. I look forward to working with anyone and everyone willing to collaborate on this goal when I am elected to the legislature.

Ted Japp, District #16: I don't think there is a lack of resources among Nebraskans and the people of the Midwest. We need to continually appeal to those with the financial wherewithal to generously donate to great causes and appeal to those with free time to volunteer where needed. An advanced civilized society owes it to those far less fortunate to help and assist them in time of need. It is important for constituents to appeal to their senators for aid.

John Fredrickson, District #20: Funding needs to be restored to levels where needs are met effectively and efficiently.

Chris Anderson, District #20: I think the starting point is that nonprofits cannot be the state's safety net by default. When state funding shrinks, we can't assume a food bank, a counseling center, or a youth program will simply absorb the difference. These organizations are under the same budget pressure, yet with fewer dollars and more "customer" demand. Towards that end, we owe them transparency about the feasibility of what we are asking them to carry.

From there, I would focus on a few items. First, I would protect the core, which also is hallmark of customer focus informed by my private sector experience in Marketing/Business Development. Core=Direct services for seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities come first, and the efficiency review I described should look at agency overhead and duplication before it touches the partners who deliver those services. Second, I'd make the state a more dependable partner, with predictable multi-year funding, timely payments, and reporting that is proportionate to the size of the award, so nonprofits can spend their time on the mission instead of burdensome red tape.

Beyond that, I critically analyze why the demand signal continues to grow. To be sure, a stronger economy with more resilient, higher compensation jobs, property tax relief for families and seniors on fixed incomes (29.7% of LD 20 registered voters are 65+), and tools like the Child Care Tax Credit all help keep people from needing emergency help in the first place. Conversely, I'd put real weight on prevention and early intervention, especially in mental health, because it's far cheaper and kinder to help someone early than to respond to a crisis later—of note, I'm one of four candidates in Nebraska with the Mental Health Now badge of support. Finally, I would ensure state policy is amenable to charitable giving

and volunteering because the strongest communities are the ones where government, nonprofits, faith communities, and neighbors all block and tackle. Having served at the national, state and local levels of nonprofit leadership, I know the best results come when the state is a reliable, trusted partner.

Dan Winter, District #24: The easiest way to make sure that Nebraskans who are struggling get the services they need is to fix the budget crisis.

George Dungan, District #26: We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of the Nebraskans who rely on these services the most. We need to do the work of electing leaders who will prioritize Nebraskans over corporate interests and persuading lawmakers to vote with their district's needs when it comes time for appropriations. This will require us to solve our budget deficit and stand strong against attempts by wealthy interests to manipulate our budget, but I am up for that fight.

Colby L. Woodson, District #28: The state should not cut services and then assume nonprofits can absorb the need for free. When people lose access to housing support, food assistance, childcare, behavioral health services, reentry help, or family support, the need does not disappear. It shows up at food pantries, shelters, clinics, churches, community programs, and local nonprofits.

Meeting the needs of struggling Nebraskans starts with stable basics: housing people can afford, access to food, childcare that allows parents to work, behavioral health care, transportation, and enough state capacity to administer programs correctly. Nonprofits are important partners because they are often close to the people being served, but they cannot replace a functioning public system.

Janet Bock, District #30: We need to ensure food, shelter, medical care, education, and job opportunities that provide a good income for all Nebraskans. Education and training must be offered to ensure their ability to perform those jobs. Meeting those basic needs ultimately decreases costs to the state by supporting healthy Nebraskans who can afford them through work, are educated, and are able to meet them.

Mark Schoenrock, District #32: We must ensure that we are maximizing all the revenue sources for our nonprofits: private sector, local, state and federal government. I have deep relationships with many private sector and elected sector leaders across Nebraska and will be able to start well past square one to help ensure that the best interests of our nonprofits are well represented at the table in what will be a tough budget climate, and that the needs of our fellow Nebraskans are being met.

Ben Blodgett, District #34: When state funding is reduced, we can't simply expect nonprofits to fill the gap without the resources to do it. I would work to protect funding for

essential services, support partnerships between the state and nonprofits, and make sure taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently. Listening to the organizations serving struggling Nebraskans and the people they serve so we can identify where the greatest needs are and find practical, sustainable solutions.

Darin Tompkins, District #36: We have to meet struggling Nebraskans where they are. If a child is not receiving enough food at home, bringing the family food only goes so far. We must address the root issue by ensuring students have hot meals at school and at home. I want to work with nonprofits and government agencies to help identify gaps in services so that we can better tailor our services to address the needs of vulnerable populations throughout Nebraska. There has to be a collaborative approach when accomplishing this task, and we need investment from all levels of government, private industry, and the nonprofit sector.

Jeremy Heneger, District #41: We have to stop cutting and start taxing the ultra-wealthy. The top 1% of households do not pay their fair share. The top 1% pay about 7.2% of their income on all types of taxes. The bottom 80% of households pay between 10.2% and 11.2%. We need tax policy that does not treat those with the most as special. Making the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share is the best way to help Nebraskans who need a hand to get back on their feet.

Danielle Conrad, District #46: Working families, students, and seniors on fixed incomes are working harder than ever before and find it more challenging to meet basic needs and work towards a better life. This is the result of failed political choices from our present leaders. The Governor and his allies in the Legislature care only about divisive social issues and massive corporate welfare programs and inequitable unsustainable tax cuts that benefit corporations and the wealthiest at the expense of all else. They have engineered a fiscally reckless approach to governance as evidenced by their self created structural budget deficits. They have made college tuition much more expensive and have increased regressive fees on countless programs. They have failed to deliver meaningful tax relief to those who need it most.

I will continue to address affordability concerns for Nebraskans and address our workforce challenges by championing childcare, housing, healthcare, wage standards, and education. Specifically, I have introduced measures to close tax loopholes that only benefit the rich, cap medical debt, and protect family homes to ensure no one loses their home due to unforeseen medical issues. I successfully ended the abusive practice of schools turning families over to collection for unpaid school meal debt.

I will continue to introduce and prioritize real solutions, that have strong support across the political spectrum, to help working families succeed like expanding the EITC and establishing a state level child tax credit.

Question Five: How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?

Dean Helmick, District #2: Free and fair elections are at the very heart of our Republic. In the Legislature I will always support efforts to protect election integrity and security. This includes ensuring that those eligible to vote, can; while those who aren't eligible to vote, don't.

Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, District #4: I trust in Nebraska's local election offices to keep our elections safe, secure, and accessible. I will stand up to attacks on voter participation. This includes protecting voting by mail, voting early, protecting our voter data, and opposing efforts that add additional barriers to voting. I will also work to make it easier for voters to cast their ballot through means such as establishing Election Day as a state holiday so that everyone has the chance to participate.

Brad von Gillern, District #4: Numerous audits by the Secretary of State's office have shown that Nebraska elections are safe, secure and accessible. I know of no immediate dramatic changes that would be required but am open to discussing if there are accessibility matters that I am not aware of.

Patrick Leahy, District #6: Nebraska has safe and secure elections. However, recent history and rhetoric shows we cannot take this for granted. We need to continue to give local election offices the tools and training they need. We must also stand up to attempts we are seeing at the state and federal level to make it harder for Nebraskans to vote. I will always protect mail-in-voting, early in-person voting, and election day voting. It should be easy for Nebraskans to vote and hard for any bad actor to cheat, and those will be my priorities as an elected official.

Nate Ostdiek, District #6: Nebraska's elections are safe and secure, and we need to keep them accessible. That means ample access to state IDs, polling places near the precincts they serve, and a state holiday for Election Day. While not all of this policy is at the state level, I will be an advocate for protecting and expanding our democracy.

Josh Livingston, District #8: We have mechanisms in place right now to keep Nebraska elections safe, secure, and accessible. Frankly, some of the efforts being undertaken in the name of "safety" can become overt efforts to disenfranchise eligible voters.

As with most things, we need guardrails to ensure that everyone is operating within the same rules and that our elections are protected from interference and tampering. But those rules should never be weaponized to make it harder for eligible Nebraskans to participate in our democracy.

We should be looking for ways to expand access to the ballot while maintaining appropriate safeguards against fraud, interference, and other attempts to undermine our elections. Nebraska's election officials already have extensive security and verification procedures in place, and we should continue to support those systems and the people responsible for administering them.

Overwhelmingly, the evidence has demonstrated that our elections are secure. We should take legitimate security concerns seriously, but we should also be careful about creating a problem where one does not exist. Constantly undermining confidence in our elections does not make them more secure, it can make people less confident in the democratic process itself.

Our responsibility is to protect both the integrity of the ballot and the right of eligible Nebraskans to cast it. We can, and must, do both.

Christy Knorr, District #12: Elections in Nebraska are safe, secure, and accessible. I will oppose anyone trying to take away mail in ballots, early voting, or anything else that will disenfranchise Nebraska voters.

Bill Bowes, District #14: I believe we have a good election process in Nebraska now. We always need to remain vigilant in protecting our system and should continuously review procedures to prevent fraud.

SuAnn Witt, District #14: We need to protect our elections as much as possible. The establishment of trust in our election process is imperative to the success of the democratic process. We must also fight against partisan interference in our elections every step of the way. This behavior only serves to sow distrust and disincentivizes voters from participating in the process. We need to listen to the experts when we are evaluating changes to the process so that we are not disenfranchising voters. I would hold the line against any threats to the democratic process because our election in Nebraska should always be safe and secure.

Ted Japp, District #16: I believe paper ballots and photo IDs are necessary for safe, secure, elections. We should make certain only U.S. citizens vote. If the few people without a photo ID need one, the State of Nebraska should provide one. No eligible voter should be excluded from our elections.

John Fredrickson, District #20: I will continue to advocate for access to voting for all eligible voters. I will fight against efforts to disenfranchise Nebraskans from voting, whether that is efforts to cut back on mail-in voting or other unnecessary requirements for voting. We have a proud history of secure, safe, and accessible voting in Nebraska - we should not make it harder for Nebraskans to make their voices heard.

Chris Anderson, District #20: Safe, secure, and accessible have to go together. If people do not trust the process or cannot get to it then we have fallen short of the Framers' vision. A state senator doesn't run elections, but the Legislature writes the rules and funds the people who carry them out, so that is where I would focus my attention. Moreover, I would keep verifiable paper ballots, make sure county election officials have the training and resources to follow clear procedures, and support post-election audits so the public can see the results are right. Nebraskans approved photo ID in 2022, and I'd make sure the state carries it out faithfully, with free and easy ID access so no eligible voter is turned away over red tape.

Dan Winter, District #24: We currently have photo ID laws and I have not seen any evidence that Nebraska's elections are currently unsafe or unsecure. I if voting in person have to take an hour to go to my polling place, so accessibility is my primary issue. Several counties in Nebraska only vote by mail, so protecting access to vote-by-mail and early voting is important.

George Dungan, District #26: Nebraska’s elections are secure. Unfortunately, accusations that they are not secure are only a method to chip away at the right to vote. We must continue to empower local election officials with the tools, training, and resources to ensure every Nebraskan is able to register and have their vote legally counted. We must also stand against efforts to make it harder for Nebraskans to vote early or by mail. Lastly, I believe we should ensure our election offices continue to have the resources they need to prevent and correct fraud if it arises.

Colby L. Woodson, District #28: Nebraska should keep elections safe and accessible by starting with the people who actually run them. County election officials, clerks, and poll workers know where the real problems are and what tools they need.

The recent Lincoln petition-signature case is a good example. Thousands of questionable signatures were flagged because local election workers checked them, found problems, and referred the matter for investigation. That is election security working.

Janet Bock, District #30: I will keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska by maintaining mail-in ballots, preventing disingenuous “observers” from being present at the polls, and preserving the right of all eligible Nebraskans to vote. Our democracy encourages citizens to monitor any elected leader attempting to reduce voters' rights. Leaders who attempt to curtail this freedom should be voted out. This applies to state and national leadership.

Mark Schoenrock, District #32: Safe, secure and accessible elections are the bedrock of our republic. I served in many places across the world in my three decade Army career and I saw first hand where this is not the case, and thus, I have a special appreciation for our form of republican government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people. I will stand strong for that vital principle and will work hard as a state senator to ensure that Nebraska government is responsive to our citizens and is achieving that vital objective.

Ben Blodgett, District #34: I support securing voting systems, mail in ballots, paper ballots, regular audits, and strong cybersecurity while ensuring every eligible Nebraskan can access the ballot. We can protect election integrity without creating unnecessary barriers for voters.

Darin Tompkins, District #36: We need to protect our election process as much as possible because it is the foundation of our American democracy. The freedom to cast your vote is central to our government. Poll workers need to be able to do their job without interference, and we should be encouraging every citizen to vote so they can have their voice heard without intimidation or harassment. I have worked the polls during previous election cycles and have seen firsthand the processes we have in place that keep our elections secure. The dedication of election staff, volunteers, and nonprofits in our state to protect our vote is unparalleled. I’ve spent 30 years working in highly regulated industries that used processes and procedures to ensure integrity, transparency, and traceability of all activities, and I would use my experience in this area to help keep our election process protected. I would stand against any attempt to interfere with our election process and work to ensure our elections are the safest and most secure in the country.

Jeremy Heneger, District #41: I plan to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska by helping build a coalition in the Unicameral that can continue to pass legislation that protects our system and improves our election processes. The Unicameral

needs to use oversight powers to ensure that the executive branch continues to prioritize safe, secure, and accessible elections for all Nebraskans. If anyone, including the Secretary of State, does anything to undermine Nebraskans' elections, I will use whatever power I have to hold them accountable to Nebraskans and the law.

Danielle Conrad, District #46: I have decades of experience as a civil rights lawyer and policymaker protecting the right to vote and fighting successfully against voter suppression efforts.

Responses were not received from:

Caitlin Knutson (District 2)

Erin Feichtinger (District 8)

Cindy Johnson (District 10)

Rebecca Rens (District 10)

Merv Riepe (District 12)

Cindy Chatt (District 16)

Jess Goldoni (District 18)

Taylor Royal (District 18)

Dawson Brunswick (District 22)

Jana Hughes (District 24)

Tobias Howard (District 26)

Patty Pansing Brooks (District 28)

Cally Ideus (District 30)

Shaylene Smith (District 32)

Loren Lippincott (District 34)

Rick Holdcroft (District 36)

Tim Anderson (District 38)

Janell Anderson Ehrke (District 38)

Barry DeKay (District 40)

Joe Johnson (District 41)

Shaylee Scranton (District 42)

Mike Jacobson (District 42)

Teresa Ibach (District 44)

Jessica Landers (District 48)

Brian Hardin (District 48)