



## 2024 Nebraska Legislative Candidate Voter Questionnaire

**Our Process** - Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM) 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 our four ongoing priority groups of housing, election accessibility, mental health, and childcare. Candidates are listed by Legislative District. To find your candidates, [click here](#).

### Our Questions -

1. What experience do you have with nonprofits and what will you do to support the nonprofit sector?
2. What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?
3. How do you intend to keep elections safe, secure, and accessible in Nebraska?
4. Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?
5. Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?

## Candidate Responses

### District #1

Name: Robert "Bob" Hallstrom

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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 assisted a number of local community organizations in establishing and administering nonprofit organizations. I appreciate the role that nonprofits play in communities across the state. I am supportive of the current tax exemptions authorized for nonprofits and would work to encourage and enhance the activities of nonprofits in the affordable and workforce housing arena.

#### **Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** While I am generally a supporter of the free market enterprise system, I have come to the conclusion, at this point in time, that the affordable and workforce housing markets require government intervention to meet the significant housing needs which exist in our state. The documentary stamp tax provides funding for important affordable housing projects and state appropriations have assisted the marketplace in developing rural and middle income housing units. The return on investment for the state relating to both affordable and workforce housing have been impressive and should be continued.

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

**Answer:** We must remain diligent to ensure that elections are safe, secure and accessible in Nebraska, and just as importantly, that the election system is trusted by the general public. The fact that Nebraska retains hard copies of all ballots submitted provides a valuable safeguard and cross-check to enhance election integrity.

#### **Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** We must provide support and additional resources for the prevention and treatment of mental health and substance use disorders, which impact older Nebraskans, as well as our youth. In particular, school teachers are struggling with classroom management, as they work with an increasing number of students with significant forms of disruptive behavior. We should provide incentives to draw and retain mental health professionals, both to our school systems

and to our health care system. Addressing these issues would be an upper-tier priority for me in relation to other budget priorities.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** In reaching out to child care providers in the District, I have discovered that there are a number of existing rules and regulations which adversely impact the ability of providers to attract and retain employees and to operate their businesses on a profitable basis. Without compromising the quality of care or the safety of children under the control and supervision of childcare providers, easing of these regulations would assist in ensuring that parents have access to affordable quality childcare. Differential meal reimbursement and existing training and certification requirements are areas in which regulations could be modified. Certification and training requirements serve, in some instances, to prevent individuals with real-life experiences raising and caring for children from entering the childcare workforce. There are a number of positive public-private childcare partnerships that have been established across the state which provide a framework for other communities to follow.

### **District #3**

Name: Victor Rountree

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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 numerous organizations this election cycle to listen and learn about their work and their biggest challenges. I believe the government must work with nonprofits to help address the needs of our communities. I want to work closely with experts to understand and uplift the voices of our nonprofits and help solve these issues.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** I believe that it is the government's job to protect and increase the safety and quality of life of its residents. Inflation, rents and mortgages, and property taxes weigh heavily on many families on a day-to-day basis. As a state senator, I want to address and promote affordability in our communities. To do so, we need to create more housing options at every level and provide incentives for people in starter homes who have the ability to go to the next level to create more affordable options for everyone.

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

**Answer:** The Constitutional Right to Vote is what makes the United States and our democracy strong. Nebraska and our election officials work hard to make our elections some of the safest and most secure in the country. I want to ensure that all eligible voters can always exercise their right to vote and that disabled and elderly voters have easy access to the polls.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** I believe that we must work towards prevention and address these issues at the source. This means reducing or eliminating access to dangerous substances, improving the economy and job opportunities, addressing food/housing security, and other items. Investing in prevention saves money in the long run as it can reduce crime rates and prison populations and lead to more people having successful careers and putting money into our economy. These investments ultimately not only help individuals, but they keep communities healthier and safer. As a senator, I will want to listen to our public health experts and work together on these concerns.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** The cost of childcare is hurting many of our working families and there are increasingly limited facilities and options. I believe that more collaboration is needed between the public and private sectors on these issues to incentivize businesses and expand childcare access for our workforce. I want to work with experts in these fields to find common-sense and creative solutions that will lessen the burden on our Nebraskans while maintaining our budget.

**District #5**

Name: Margo Juarez

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

**Answer:** In a volunteer capacity, I have experience with many. One of my favorites is the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance. I will advocate for nonprofits to continue their missions in our communities. Do the nonprofits align with my community needs?

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** I wish the government would assist with areas of land which may have contamination issues. An entity withdrew from serving the South Omaha area because of the costs added to the project due to environmental issues. We need to pursue lower interest rates when the economy can support this policy. Continue to support accessory dwelling units with easier regulation for developers.

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

**Answer:** I don't think this is an issue in Nebraska. I believe we have a sound election system. However, I wish there were more opportunities for folks to register in poor neighborhoods. Do we adequately promote voting initiatives in poor neighborhoods?

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** These disorders should be included in all health initiatives. However, I would prefer to get root causes addressed. Does our school system work as a strong partner? Families are a top priority to me.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** I agree that this is an important issue to address. Are we adequately promoting this as a viable career option to our students? Are state regulations creating obstacles? Can our schools become a stronger partner to address the need? Can the chamber of commerce assist? Who are the small business advocates in the community? Are building codes creating obstacles?

**District #7**

Name: Dunixi Guereca

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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 a long history with nonprofits, I am currently the Executive Director of Stand for Schools a nonprofit organization focused on supporting and strengthening public schools. Additionally, I am an Eagle Scout and have volunteered and worked for the Boy Scouts of America. I will work collaboratively with nonprofit organizations to address their needs and enhance their impact.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The government should implement policies that encourage homeowners to transition to higher-tier housing, thus freeing up entry-level homes for new buyers. By making it more appealing for current homeowners to move up, we can help balance the housing market and provide more options for those purchasing their first home. Additionally, the government should ensure that Nebraska remains an attractive place to live, thereby drawing more residents and stimulating the local housing market and economy.

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

**Answer:** Nebraska's election infrastructure is robust, but we must remain proactive to ensure it stays that way. By continuously monitoring for potential issues and addressing any threats to the integrity of the voting process, we can maintain a secure and accessible election system for all Nebraskans.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Investing in mental health and resources for substance use disorders is critical as early investment in these areas will lead to safer communities and long-term savings for taxpayers. By increasing resources for treatment programs and expanding the network of mental health professionals, we can make a significant impact on these issues.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who**

**need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** To tackle the child care crisis, I would advocate for increased funding to support child care providers, especially in underserved areas, and offer incentives for new providers to enter the market. Such measures will benefit families, support the workforce, and stimulate economic growth in the state.

## **District #7**

Name: Tim Pendrell

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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 over 20 years of experience working in nonprofit fundraising and leadership, including serving as an Executive Director. My background includes a Master of Urban Planning from a college of public service, with a curriculum closely aligned to an MPA program. This educational foundation, combined with my deep experience, has given me a strong understanding of the needs and challenges nonprofits face.

In the Nebraska Legislature, I authored the Shovel-Ready Capital Investment Act, which became the largest single appropriation in our state's history. This legislation was created to protect the nonprofit sector when capital campaigns were in jeopardy during the COVID-19 pandemic, as donors understandably prioritized immediate emergency needs. By providing a lifeline to nonprofits and their projects, this act helped secure Nebraska's cultural, artistic, and community assets for the future, ensuring that these organizations, which employ over 90,000 Nebraskans and pay \$4 billion in wages annually, remain a vital part of our state.

The Shovel-Ready Act was the first time Nebraska directly invested in its nonprofit sector, recognizing its importance to both our economy and our communities. This was a \$115-million-dollar investment to support capital campaigns across the state, it was followed up with a second round that invested another \$60-million. I believe nonprofits are integral to Nebraska's identity, serving our citizens in countless ways while providing stability to our economy.

As a legislator, I will continue to champion policies that sustain and grow this sector, encouraging innovation and fostering collaboration between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. My track record demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that nonprofits not only survive but thrive as essential pillars of Nebraska's future.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The government plays a crucial role in addressing the affordable housing crisis, both as a direct investor and as a facilitator for public-private partnerships. My experience with Habitat for Humanity of Omaha through AmeriCorps deeply shaped my focus on Economic Development and Housing Policy in graduate school, where I learned firsthand the importance of thoughtful housing strategies.

Each year, we fight to preserve and expand funding for critical programs like the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, workforce housing, and rural housing initiatives. These programs are lifelines for many Nebraskans, and they represent the state's commitment to ensuring that safe, affordable housing is available for all. Beyond direct funding, I believe the state must also be strategic in how it supports the development of affordable housing through innovative tools like gap financing and cost-effective infill housing.

Government support for tax credit programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Historic Tax Credits, is essential. These incentives help close funding gaps and make projects viable that might not otherwise be built. They also encourage the preservation of existing housing stock and historic neighborhoods, adding economic and cultural value to communities.

As a legislator, I will advocate for maintaining and expanding these vital funding sources and ensure that Nebraska remains competitive in attracting federal dollars to maximize our impact. Affordable housing is not just about building homes—it's about creating thriving, sustainable communities where people have access to jobs, education, and opportunity.

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

**Answer:** Keeping our elections safe, secure, and accessible is essential for our democracy to function. In Nebraska, we need to ensure that people trust the election process while making it as easy as possible for them to vote.

First, we have to continue investing in secure voting technology and cybersecurity to protect against any interference. Our systems need to stay up-to-date so that every vote is counted accurately and fairly.

At the same time, accessibility is just as important. We need to make sure that voting works for everyone, whether that's through early voting, mail-in ballots, or ensuring that polling places are available and easy to get to. Voting should be straightforward, not a burden. I'll also focus on making sure we're reaching out to voters, especially in communities that have been historically overlooked, so everyone knows how to participate.

Finally, I'll fight against any attempts to create unnecessary hurdles that make it harder for people to vote, like restrictive voter ID laws that can block people from exercising their rights. We should be making it easier, not harder, to have your voice heard.



My focus is on protecting the integrity of our elections while making sure that every Nebraskan has a fair chance to vote.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Mental health and substance use disorders are issues we can't afford to ignore, especially when the largest mental health facility in Nebraska is the Douglas County Jail. We have to stop treating mental health like a criminal justice issue and start investing in prevention and early intervention.

One of my top priorities will be ensuring that we're funding mental health services properly—not diverting those funds to pay for things like property tax relief. Early mental health support is not only more humane but also more cost-effective in the long run. If we can provide people with the help they need early on, we can prevent a lot of the problems that lead to incarceration or more serious issues later in life.

We also need to make sure we're making our SAMHSA match so we can maximize federal resources to support mental health and substance use treatment. And it's clear that we have a lot of work to do when it comes to making sure people with serious mental illness have access to community-based services. The Justice Department found that Nebraska is segregating people with serious mental illness in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that's unacceptable. People with serious mental illness deserve the chance to live and work in the community with the proper supports in place.

For me, it's about investing early, supporting prevention, and making sure we're meeting the needs of people with mental health and substance use challenges before they ever become a criminal justice issue. We can't afford to wait, and we have to prioritize these issues in our budget if we want to see real change.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** Addressing the child care crisis means recognizing that child care is an essential part of our economy. When we help families access affordable care, we free up parents to get back to work, grow their careers, and contribute to Nebraska's success. This isn't just a family issue—it's an economic one, and it has to be a priority for the state.

To really tackle this, we need to make sure that quality child care is both financially rewarding for providers and affordable for families. Increasing stipends and provider rates, as well as covering capital costs, will help make child care a more viable business. We also need to incentivize more people to become providers and create public-private partnerships to expand access.

Making child care more accessible and affordable benefits everyone, and we have to make it a focus if we want our economy and families to thrive.

## **District #11**

Name: Terrell McKinney

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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 several non-profits in both Omaha and Lincoln, advocating for community members on issues such as Medicaid expansion, food insecurity, entrepreneurship, and voting rights. My support for the non-profit sector is mission-driven, and I contribute wherever I can be of help. However, I am also unapologetic in holding these organizations accountable to ensure they are truly serving the communities they are part of. Far too many resources are funneled into these organizations, yet the results are often minimal at best.

### **Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The government plays a crucial role in addressing the affordable housing crisis to ensure all Nebraskans have access to affordable housing. It should focus on providing resources to expand the housing supply while also eliminating outdated, discriminatory, and overly burdensome barriers that prevent people from accessing affordable housing.

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

**Answer:** I am committed to working with my colleagues to ensure that elections in Nebraska remain safe, secure, and accessible. If necessary, I will introduce legislation to strengthen these protections. Last session, I introduced and passed legislation to recognize tribal IDs as valid forms of identification, equal to state IDs. This was crucial in light of the new voter ID requirements, ensuring Native Americans are not further disenfranchised in the election process.

### **Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** I will collaborate with my colleagues to increase funding for preventive and treatment services to address the mental health and substance abuse crisis in our state. Additionally, I will explore other barriers beyond funding that may need to be addressed to improve access to these critical services.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** First and foremost, I will continue to listen to and learn from childcare providers to better understand the challenges they face. I will ask questions about funding, barriers in state policies, and gather their suggestions. From there, I will meet with my staff and collaborate with my colleagues to determine how we can effectively address the childcare crisis.

### **District #13**

Name: Nick Batter

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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 served on the board of several nonprofits, both locally and nationally. I also serve as pro-bono legal counsel to several nonprofits.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** First, stop incentivizing bad actors. Slumlords, which plague my community, are benefitting from property tax relief funds. They need to be removed immediately. The savings should be used to create incentives for developers to rehabilitate existing homes and to build new homes.

Second, the current discussion around property tax relief puts renters in a worst-of-both-worlds situation, since they will not receive any relief but will pay the increased consumption taxes contemplated to fund the relief. I would be interested in seeing a policy that addresses this -- possibly if landlords want to apply for such relief, they need to offer affordable rents or other benefits.

Third, we need to adopt land use regulations that reflect reality. Programs like multi-family housing, ADU's, etc, that allow multigenerational families to live together make housing more affordable and communities more cohesive.

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

**Answer:** I would like to see vote-by-mail preserved and expanded where possible. This allows people to do their homework and cast a vote on their own time -- rather than having to squeeze in a visit to a neighborhood polling location on what is often a workday for many people.

Additionally, I think it is important that every eligible voter be given every chance to participate in our electoral process. In my community, many new citizens don't understand how to register. We also have disabled adults who might not have received information necessary to receive a mail in ballot. We should always be thinking about these hurdles and how we can remove them.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** A large solution to this is making sure that Emergency Rooms and jail cells are not our first lines of treatment -- because of the current state of things we spend significantly more than we need to just connecting people to the correct level of service. Helping to expand emergency response to more than just law enforcement (or, alternatively, law enforcement specialized in mental health or substance abuse), across both our 911 and 988 systems, we can make sure people receive proper assistance in a crisis. Ultimately, criminalizing mental illness costs us much more than doing nothing.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** Nebraska is worse than most other states in this regard, in large part, due to our state's failure to take advantage of federal programs (which are already paid for using existing federal tax dollars). This includes tens of millions of dollars annually in federal childcare aid that the state is not applying for. This also includes not taking advantage of maximizing TANF formulas, to provide direct relief to more working families. The legislature could solve this problem with a pen.

Another solution is to streamline regulations to allow quality child care using existing infrastructure. My community has a community center that is maintained by the City of Omaha but is generally locked and only available on an ad-hoc basis. Facilities like this, if not in use, should be available to providers at a discount due to the good it would bring. This would decrease facilities costs and allow more providers to open, using the savings to offer more affordable childcare while also paying staff a fair wage. Any regulation must, of course, ensure that childcare providers remain safe places for children.

### **District #13**

Name: Ashlei Spivey

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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 spent my entire career working in the nonprofit sector, from direct service, to organizational development, then philanthropy. I am the founder and Executive Director of I Be Black Girl, the first and only reproductive justice nonprofit in Nebraska. Nonprofits are not only a necessary safety net and support for community, we are working to solve some of the most complex issues our communities face. We are experts and need to be at the table when decisions through policy are being made that affect how we work and the folks we are serving. I will continue to be a conduit to the nonprofit sector and partner.

#### **Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** We first need a common definition of affordable housing as a state that guides our efforts. Once we have that, our government has a responsible in leveraging federal dollars and creating incentive programs that spur development for more affordable housing.

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

**Answer:** I believe our elections are safe and secure - despite efforts to make voting less accessible (Voter ID). The people are the most important part of our democracy and our voices must be heard through out vote. I am committed to ensuring that is always the case.

#### **Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** A key part of my platform is health equity through a public health lens. This includes expanding access to mental health supports. Having healthy Nebraskans is key in building a stronger state, economy and future. Budget priorities do not have to be a zero sum game, and

we can prioritize key services and the expansion of those services by leveraging other revenue streams.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** As a mom that has lived through this crisis, I know the implications it has on families, workforce and our economy. We have to expand the types of child care being offered (in home, centers, drop in, etc.), create more grant and funding programs for providers to start, grow and maintain their business, as well as expand subsidies for working families. Having quality affordable childcare in proximity to you is a necessity and is a top priority for me within my Economic Opportunity policy priorities.

## **District #21**

Name: Seth Derner

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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 worked for the National FFA Organization for four years prior to returning to Nebraska and starting our company, Vivayic. I've served on the boards of foundations and local nonprofits. And, our company counts many nonprofits as clients including Feeding America. Nonprofit organizations help to fill in vital gaps in our communities and make Nebraska a better place to live. I look forward to working with nonprofits as a Senator to address issues they and our communities are facing

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** It is critical that we address the affordable housing crisis. Addressing this issue will help us attract and retain families in Nebraska, which helps us solve various other issues we are facing as a state. Every Nebraskan that works hard should have the opportunity to own a home someday. The Legislature can play a role as a catalyst and capacity builder for those organizations already working to solve this issue. Further, the Legislature can help remove barriers to more effective efforts.

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

**Answer:** Elections are vital to the American way of life and need to be safe and secure. Thankfully, Nebraska already has safe and accessible elections due to the hard work of public servants. I will be a vocal advocate for the integrity of our elections, encourage greater civic engagement, and promote policies that help ensure more Nebraskans can easily access their right to vote.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** We need to do more to get people access to treatment and prevention services as it relates to mental health and substance abuse. Without treatment, these neighbors often experience homelessness and the criminal justice system. Investment in timely and effective prevention and treatment can save on other, greater costs in the system. While the costs of these services is an important consideration, there is a fundamental responsibility to care for the vulnerable and suffering in our society...that is why funding these services is important.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** Lack of child care for families is a major issue in this state. I have met families in my community where one of the parents isn't working because the costs of child care exceed the amount of income they would make if they were working. This only exacerbates the workforce shortage and brain drain issues we are facing. Staffing shortages at the facilities we do have also diminish the amount of services available to Nebraskan families and need to be addressed. In order to address our child care crisis, the state will need to make investments. I believe our kids and families are worth the investment and look forward to working with stakeholders to solve this issue.

## **District #27**

Name: Jason Prokop

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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 am the Director of First Five Nebraska, a public policy organization focused on early childhood care and education. In addition, I serve on the Board of Directors of Educare Lincoln

and Kiwanis Lincoln Center. Because I work at a nonprofit, I understand firsthand the importance of the work that nonprofit organizations do, and if elected, I will work with nonprofits to understand their priorities and address needs accordingly.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** It's not economically feasible to solve our state's affordable housing challenges by carelessly throwing limited tax dollars at the problem. I would like to incentivize people to move to the next tier of housing to alleviate housing shortages at all price points. If you are in a starter home and can afford to upgrade, we should make it worth it so that first-time home buyers have more options available to them. We also should examine and remove any unnecessary regulatory requirements that create hurdles to building affordable housing.

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

**Answer:** Nebraska's election system is strong in terms of safety, security, and accessibility. To keep it that way and make further improvements, it's important that we stay vigilant and address any challenges to the election process or efforts that might affect voter participation.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** The Nebraska Legislature should prioritize additional resources and comprehensive legislation to address these issues. We should expand treatment programs and address the shortage of mental health providers. Investments in these programs early can make our community safer and save taxpayers money in the long run.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** This is an issue I get up every morning thinking about because of my role at First Five Nebraska. Investing in childcare is crucial to ensuring Nebraska's youngest kids are having positive early learning experiences that foster their positive development and parents/caregivers have access to affordable childcare options. A major component of this revolves around our early educator workforce, creating incentives to keep these dedicated individuals in the profession and helping create career pathways for those who may be interested in the field.



Making these types of investments in our state's kids and families will return huge economic benefits both in the short and long term.

## **District #31**

Name: Mary Ann Folchert

Email: [electmaryannfolchert@gmail.com](mailto:electmaryannfolchert@gmail.com)

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

**Answer:** My prior experience with nonprofits is as a volunteer and donor. Over the years, I've supported a number of nonprofits including Together, the NorthStar Foundation, The Nebraska Diaper Bank, the Omaha Public Library Foundation, the Millard Public Schools Foundation, Special Olympics Nebraska, and MOSAIC among others. I've always felt it important to support nonprofits and will continue to do so with my time, talent, and treasure. I look forward to building relationships with nonprofits and working together to find solutions to challenges facing our communities.

### **Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The affordable housing crisis is key to strengthening Nebraska's workforce. Without affordable, available housing, workers will continue to leave the state and relocate. In order to grow its workforce, Nebraska must play a role in growing affordable housing options, such as middle housing, and local government can help with more creative zoning.

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

**Answer:** Elections are safe and secure in Nebraska. We must continue to ensure that everyone who has the legal ability to vote, can vote. I will reject efforts to disenfranchise voters with unnecessary barriers, such as strict ID requirements, notarized signatures, or limits to early voting.

### **Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Mental health is critical to overall health. Investing in healthy Nebraskans strengthens our workforce as healthy workers perform better and miss fewer days. Similarly, substance abuse is an illness and must be treated as such. We need to continue our public private partnerships and properly fund resources for a strong, healthy Nebraska.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** This is a complex problem that will require creative solutions. I support expanding the child tax credits. Another solution is incentives for companies who provide childcare as an employee benefit (which would in turn help grow our workforce). I also support intergenerational shared sites, combining childcare and eldercare, which is both beneficial to participants and cost-effective. I support a living wage so people don't have to make hard decisions about childcare, and remote work should be encouraged for our IT and customer service jobs coming into Nebraska.

### **District #33**

Name: Michelle Smith

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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 been contracted with and am currently contracted with nonprofits to provide mental health services to individuals they serve. I support the needs of nonprofits, such as ensuring they remain tax exempt and have access to grants to ensure adequate funding.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** Complete housing need surveys, assist with recruiting investors/developers to communities, and providing TIF funding and other incentives to developers.

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

**Answer:** Support efforts to ensure voters have access to mail-in ballot options, polling places, and can receive their ID.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Mental health and substance use treatment is my number one priority.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** I support pre-K programs being implemented in our education programs. For example, Hastings remodeled a former elementary school into a preschool. Schools in District 33 are contracting with daycare providers to ensure children have access to child care. We can work to get fingerprints back in a timely manner, so child care staff can begin right away instead of waiting so long to start their employment.

### **District #35**

Name: Dan Quick

Email: dan@quickfornebraska.com

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

**Answer:** I worked with many nonprofits during my time in the Legislature and in my work in the community. I've supported nonprofits and their critical work in communities across the state. I look forward to working with nonprofits to help them address any problems they are facing.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** Affordable housing is a pressing issue in our communities. Legislators need to be looking for ways to make housing more affordable and to build more homes here so that more Nebraskans can live the American dream of owning a home. This is a problem that needs to be addressed to retain and attract families.

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

**Answer:** The integrity of our elections is vital to American Democracy. Nebraska's elections are already safe, secure, and accessible. We need to continue this trend by opposing any efforts to attack our elections and to suppress the voice of voters.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** As a state, we need to do more to get people suffering from mental health/substance abuse disorders access to proper treatment and prevention services. Mental health/substance abuse services have been a top priority of mine. If we make the correct investments here, we could also save money in other parts of the budget. For example, the more we are able to invest in prevention/treatment programs, the less we need to spend on moving people through the criminal justice system. I am committed to working with the other members and stakeholders to secure this funding.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** The child care crisis in Nebraska is serious and needs to be addressed. My community in Grand Island is suffering alongside other communities in the state. Allowing parents to work without their entire income going to childcare is important to our economy and allows families to not just get by, but get ahead. We also need to address staffing shortages at the facilities by looking at the underlying problems, like low pay for staff, that contributes to that shortage. It's going to take investments in kids and families to solve both issues without raising costs to families. But I think investing in Nebraska children and families is a worthy investment to make.

### **District #37**

Name: Stan Clouse

Email: stanclouse@gmail.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 as an elected official in Kearney for the past 20+ years. I know the value nonprofits provide our citizens and communities. The services provided are many services the private sector will not because it is a lot of work and is not profitable. My mantra is "listen to understand" and I live by it and use what is learned to collaborate to resolve community issues effectively and as efficiently as possible. Funding is generally the biggest challenge which reinforces the need to champion value-added services provided by nonprofits.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** Affordable housing is difficult to clearly define because it means different things to different people and the quickest response is for government to fund housing. I don't subscribe

to that thinking but am in total agreement there is a role to play and it could involve many aspects such as code and zoning regulation reviews, scalable fees for infrastructure, bill paying assistance through funding programs, and providing free amenities, such as library and splash pads that free up valuable family resources that can be utilized in other areas.

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

**Answer:** I believe Nebraska is on the right track with voter ID and the checks and balances currently in place through the election offices in the counties throughout the state. We must always be vigilant to ensure we do not let our guard down.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** There are many issues presented by health experts that compete for limited dollars. I believe mental health and substance use disorders should always have a seat at the table and not be summarily dismissed. Issues in addition to mental health and substance use disorders line up with childcare, workforce, housing, poverty, elderly care, food security and numerous others that are constantly battling for limited funds as we try to reform tax policy. It is a funding challenge and we need to be responsible to all.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** I submit child care is possibly the number one issue as workforce and housing fall away if families do not have access to adequate child care. I've had countless meetings and workshops on this topic and we need to be creative in finding resolutions. We need to look at the success of peer states in solving this issue and we need to be open to try new things to see what will work. We also need to review regulations to determine if they are excessive and even relative to safe, affordable child care.

**District #39**

Name: Tony Sorrentino

Email: tsorrentino@hpfid.com

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

**Answer:** I have experience working as a fundraiser and Board member for non-profits. I am the current Board Chair of El Museo Latino; I am a Board member of Doane University; I served a 4 year term on the Metropolitan Community College Board of Governors; I was a member of the Nebraska Leukemia Lymphoma Board for 27 years and personally raised over \$1,000,000 to help find a cure. I will make sure that regulatory statutes do not inhibit the good work of these organizations.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** More governmental involvement will not solve this issue, and typically adds costs in the form of over-regulation. Instead, legislation that frees up the private sector is what is needed, with certain consumer protections built in to prevent unscrupulous behavior.

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

**Answer:** The current requirement to produce identification at the polling site is a good step towards fair and secure elections. More security and oversight may be necessary in the form of random audits and procedural review.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** These are a high priority as mental health and substance abuse leads to so many more issues not only for that individual, but for families and businesses. My background in health care law will allow me to take hold of this issue with a great deal of background in insurance and Medicaid.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** I would consider assisting with funding of private childcare centers, in order to facilitate the growth of the number of facilities.

**District #39**

Name: Allison Heimes

Email: allison@heimesfornebraska.com

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

**Answer:** I am on the loss team advisory board of the kim foundation. I used to serve on the board of Center for Holistic Development and I was the Omaha Liaison of the Nebraska Chapter of Honor and Remember. I support non-profit work.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The government should allocate resources, land, funds, grants to the crisis. Housing keeps crime low, prevents homeless deaths and necessity break-ins.

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

**Answer:** guarantee access to vote, safe polling places, make sure mail-in ballots are accessible.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Access to telehealth, mobile health clinics, increase mental health hospital wings, encourage providers to practice in the state - increase access to drug courts with penalties focused on treatment and care.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** public/private partnerships with businesses to provide work-care centers, encouraging home licensing, tax incentives for family based home centers.

**District #41**

Name: Ethan Clark

Email: Ethan@clarkfornebraska.com

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

**Answer:** I have consistently volunteered for non-profits for over a decade. I will ensure that non-profits have the best tools available to serve their communities. Without effective non-profits, many communities in District 41 would struggle without their services. I currently volunteer with TeamMates Mentoring, Night to Shine, Lions Club, and for

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** The government should ensure there are adequate resources available to non-profits and that there are not overbearing regulations.

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

**Answer:** I believe that we should make our election days state holidays to give voters the best chance to get to the polls, we should strengthen voter identification requirements, and recruit more poll workers and watchers.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** Mental health and addiction issues are continually rising in Nebraska and across the country. We must give those with mental health and/or substance abuse issues the best opportunities for treatment. The government should assist non-profits to give them the resources they need.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** As a parent of a one-month-old I know that Nebraska is in dire need of more child care opportunities. We need to ensure organizations have resources to properly fill the need of childcare, especially in rural communities.



## **District #45**

Name: Sarah F Centineo

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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 worked at a nonprofit hospital, I am a board member and in leadership roles in two non-profit organizations.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** I think there are quite a few things that government can do from housing subsidies to grants to addressing banking practices. There are also things that government could do in childcare and transportation that would then make housing more affordable.

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

**Answer:** By not making voting any harder and by encouraging VBM.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** These two issues affect so much of what we do from the prison system to schooling to DHHS. It is my belief (and backed up by data) that treatment options for SUD are far more effective than punitive measures, so, we should focus on that. Mental healthcare screenings and treatment should be normalized, not just when a person is "sick". The way leaders talk about mental health makes a big difference, so it is my intention to address the issues with directness and compassion and work on ways to help people where they are at.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** There are so many models and programs out there that we can look to that have had success in this area. This will not be a one size fits all, because what works in Omaha won't work the same way in Valentine or Bayard. We need to work with communities to find solutions.

## **District #47**

Name: Larry Bolinger

Email: LB@LarryBolinger.com

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

**Answer:** I ran a nonprofit many years ago, I've ran my own business for 20 years, and I've worked for many nonprofits and they do provide a need for communities.

**Question Two: What role do you believe the government should play in addressing the affordable housing crisis?**

**Answer:** We need to first, work on expanding the unit allowable for both HuD housing and Veteran housing. I have been trying to get that done for about a decade. We also need to work on issues that can decrease the cost of living, such as my energy policy that will reduce energy costs by 60%.

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

**Answer:** always look forward on improving our election process. Today is not the best we can ever do.

**Question Four: Mental health and substance use disorders continue to be top concerns from public health experts. How would you prioritize prevention and treatment for these conditions in relation to other budget priorities?**

**Answer:** This was a top priority when I ran for Attorney General in 2022 and it continue to be a top priority in my campaign for State Legislature. We need to have enough coverage throughout the state. From 2015 to 2018, the Governor did a mass shut down of many health care facilities. People have to travel as much as 300 miles to get mental health or addiction support if you live in Western Nebraska. In many cases across the state, law enforcement have utilized correctional facilities to handle people with drug addictions or mental health because of lack of support. This has created a very high prison population and a increased in homelessness. This has become a very big problem that needs addressed.

**Question Five: Nebraska is experiencing a child care crisis. Parents of young children report that they are missing work, turning down promotions and job opportunities and leaving the workforce all together because they can't find affordable, quality child care. 9 counties in Nebraska have no licensed child care providers, and an additional 23 counties have child care spaces for fewer than 50% of the families in their county who**

**need it. How would you plan to address the child care crisis in Nebraska to ensure that all kids have access to affordable quality child care?**

**Answer:** listen to the people in those communities so as to come up with a fair plan to address this problem. Both my self and my wife ran a daycare for a number of years. Promoting the need and the licensing requirements could help create an interest in this field.

**Responses were not received from:**

Dennis Schardt (District 1)  
Felix Ungerman (District 3)  
Gilbert Ayala (District 5)  
John Cavanaugh (District 9)  
Julia Palzer (District 9)  
Dave Wordekemper (District 15)  
Roxie Kracl (District 15)  
Glen Meyer (District 17)  
Mike Albrecht (District 17)  
Rob Dover (District 19)  
Jeanne Reigle (District 19)  
Beau Ballard (District 21)  
Dennis Fujan (District 23)  
Jared Storm (District 23)  
Carolyn Bosn (District 25)  
Nicki Behmer Popp (Dist. 25)  
Dawn Liphard (District 27)  
Eliot Bostar (District 29)  
Kathleen Kauth (District 31)  
Dan Lonowski (District 33)  
Ray Aguilar (District 35)  
Lana Peister (District 37)  
Daniel McKeon (District 41)  
Tanya Storer (District 43)  
Tony Tangwall (District 43)  
Rita Sanders (District 45)  
Paul Strommen (District 47)  
Bob Andersen (District 49)  
Jen Day (District 49)