

## **Minnesota Senate District 59 DFL**

### **2011 Senate Special Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**Distributed Tuesday November 22 • Due 5:00PM Tuesday November 29**

The following is an informational Questionnaire for all candidates actively campaigning for the MN Senate District 59 DFL Special Primary Election to complete. Candidates: please respond to each question as completely as possible. Please cut and paste each question separately above each response so that each question and response corresponds to one another. Please type your name and contact information at the top of page one of the completed Questionnaire.

**Please submit your completed Questionnaire electronically to Harrison Nelson, SD 59 DFL Chair at: [chair@sd-59.org](mailto:chair@sd-59.org) by the deadline of 5:00PM Tuesday November 29**

The SD 59 DFL will post the full text (verbatim) of each Candidate Questionnaire online for public review prior to the November 30, 2011 Candidate Forum. The SD 59 DFL will also post the Questionnaire questions in advance of the Candidate Forum in order to give the public a sense of what questions candidates will already be addressing to help them narrow the questions they may wish to ask at the Forum. Please be as thorough with your responses as you wish also remembering that those who read your responses are looking for concise, clear information. Thank you for your cooperation in a full effort to educate, inform and empower Senate District 59 voters.

#### **Legislative Priorities**

1) Which three committee assignments would you request? Why would you request these three?

*(1) Jobs and Economic Growth*

*(2) Higher Education*

*(3) Education.*

*First, I would request an assignment of Jobs and Economic Growth because this would enable me to enact new ideas. It's time for a shift in the way we think about job creation and economic growth. The Tea Party Republicans have offered one solution: do nothing, and somehow the private sector will create jobs. This "do nothing" strategy does not work. I have outlined job creation proposals on my website ([www.jacobfreyforsenate.com](http://www.jacobfreyforsenate.com)), which I will also discuss during the candidate forum.*

*Second, I would request an assignment of Higher Education. University students are a large percentage of our residents in Senate District 59. This segment of our population has routinely been left out of the political process, and this needs to change. By actively working with the Minnesota Student Legislative Council ("MSLC"), I will seek to engage students in the political process, decrease student tuition, and create innovative ways to allow students to arrive at jobs upon graduation.*

*Third, I would request an assignment of Education. Our schools are the key to bringing Minnesota out of this economic recession. Students that graduate high school make on average \$1 million more than non-graduates over the course of their lifetime. This means an additional \$1 million injection into our economy to help create jobs, and to further bolster our economy.*

## **Taxes and Budget**

1) If you had revenues of \$100 (to symbolize the state's budget revenues) how would you allocate those revenues according to your priorities and your understanding of the budget and public priorities (so those priorities add up to \$100)?

*I will preface my figures with one statement: We do not have a budget problem, we have a revenue problem. If we ensure that the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes we would have adequate funding for ALL programs that help people, as opposed to corporations. The first step on any budget plan has to be to raise taxes on those who have capitalized off of a system that the rest of us have paid for.*

*\$50 - Education and Higher Education.*

*\$20 - Job Creation (including but not limited to public jobs related to infrastructure improvement, education, transportation, green jobs, and the arts).*

*\$20 - Safety net for those who are struggling, including healthcare and other welfare initiatives.*

*\$10 - Funding for the environment, renewable energy, and the arts.*

2) What is your position on tax policy? What are the relationships between income tax, sales tax, property tax, user fees and other surcharges? If you had to raise revenues how would you do that?

*Traditionally, Minnesota has operated off of a system where 1/3 of revenue comes from the property tax, 1/3 comes from the sales tax, and 1/3 comes from the income tax. However, the economic downturn has caused the revenue accrued from the sales tax to drop dramatically. To make up for the loss of funds, the Tea Party Republicans have shifted the burden to the property tax. Such a shift is not fair because it disproportionately affects seniors, the middle class, and the poor. To make matters worse, the richest of our society are paying approximately 3% less in state and local government taxes than the middle class, the working class, and the poor. I will work to regain a balance between the three primary revenue generators. I will begin by increasing the income tax on the wealthiest individuals in our state.*

## **Education**

1) What are your priorities for early education, special education, K-12 education and higher education? How would you fund them?

*Skimping on education--whether its early education, special education, K-12 education, or higher education--is the wrong decision. First, early investment is the best investment. So, I will work to increase funding to those programs which allow our students to get off on the right foot. Second, K-12 education has seen drastic cuts in recent years. The result has been larger class sizes, with less individuals attention, and a substantial reduction in after school activities. These reductions are detrimental to both our students, as well as our economy. Third, I will increase funding to higher education. Presently, our public Universities only receive approximately 15% of their funding from the state. This dearth of funding has resulted in student tuition doubling in the last ten years. Saddling our students with enormous debt, and no jobs following graduation, handcuffs our new graduates, and hinders economic recovery.*

2) What are your views on investing in early childhood education? How would you pay for those? How would you prioritize this with other educational spending?

*The early investment in a child's education makes every subsequent investment more productive. To arrive at the best result, we must first give our students the proper foundation. The best foundation is developed through nurturing and triggering intellectual curiosity at a very young age. The funding for such programs would emanate from a more progressive income tax structure.*

3) The costs of higher education continue to escalate while the resources available to most MN students and families decrease. How do you plan to address the rising cost of higher education with continuing decreases in financial resources especially in a very stressed economy?

*Our colleges and universities have been squeezed in the last ten years. They have been forced to operate off of a scant 15% funding from the state, which has resulted in a doubling of student tuitions. We need to*

*increase funding to our colleges and universities, so that students have the ability to pay off debt, and begin investing in our local economy. Furthermore, corporate profits have risen 35% in the past two years (not including 2011). The intelligence and hard work of Minnesotans are largely responsible for that productivity and profit. Minnesota has been a leader in our nation's economy largely because of an educated and diligent workforce. By cutting funding to our universities, we sacrifice that which has set us apart.*

## **Social Justice and Equity**

1) What is your position on the extension of basic family protections such as health insurance, pension benefits, sick and bereavement pay to unmarried partners and non-biological children of governmental/public employees as currently afforded married heterosexuals?

*All Minnesotans should be allowed to constitute their families as they wish. Any benefits afforded to public employees should apply to ALL family members, regardless of their respective makeup.*

2) What is your position on the use of Photo ID as a requirement for voting? What changes (if any) would you propose to improve voter participation, and election fairness, efficiency and accuracy?

*I oppose the Voter ID bill, and will oppose a constitutional amendment requiring voter ID. This is a partisan issue, created by the Tea Party Republicans that predominantly affects students and senior citizens. Minnesota has one the best voting patterns in the country and there is no reason to fix what is not broken.*

## **Health Care**

1) Given that many Minnesotans are without any health care coverage, are underinsured, cannot receive coverage for specific health conditions, or cannot access the proper medications, how would you increase the number of Minnesotans covered and the quality of their coverage? What else would you do to improve the current health insurance climate? How would you pay for that?

2) What would you do to improve the health and living conditions of the elderly, young children and others at risk? How would you pay for that?

*The answer to both of these questions, and to Minnesota's health care problems, is universal health care. Until that time, The Affordable Care Act is coming into effect and will begin to help Minnesotans who are without health care. We also need to undo the damage that the current Tea Party Republicans have done to MinnesotaCare. Currently, for adults without children to qualify for the program, their income must be at or below 75 percent of the federal poverty guideline and that is disgraceful. We have to restore MinnesotaCare to provide basic health care to our seniors and our children.*

*I support the Governor in going after every federally matched Medicaid dollar in order to cover the neediest Minnesotans.*

3) What would you do to address the critical problem of access to health insurance for small and microbusinesses?

*Again: universal health care. The Affordable Care Act continues to come into effect. Minnesota has a rich infrastructure of community organizations which are currently working together to specify how best to provide health care to all Minnesotans. I will do my best to help foster this process, rather than simply confining the funds from the Act to large HMOs. Doing so will ensure that we remove the burden of providing health insurance from businesses of all sizes.*

## **Economy/Jobs/Small Business**

1) What are the largest hurdles to the greater success of small and microbusiness? How would you lower those hurdles and minimize the barriers to their economic improvement?

Largest Hurdles:

- *Providing health care to business owners and employees.*
- *Tax and regulatory structures oriented toward the success of giant corporations.*

Steps to Lower Hurdles:

- *Provide universal health care.*
- *Make the corporate tax rate progressive based on gross revenue and employee number: eliminate state and local tax incentives for business location.*
- *Subsidize employee salaries during initial training phase.*

2) In the context of *job creation*, where are nearly all U.S. jobs (since 2002) being created?

*Nearly all job creation is taking place in businesses with fewer than 100 employees.*

3) What is Minnesota's role in the global economy? What would you propose to support your position and serve the best interests of the Minnesota economy and Minnesotan's?

*Minnesota has long had a leading role in socially responsible investing and business. MN's blend of progressive social policy and high investment in education have created a highly sought-after workforce – employers want to locate in Minnesota and businesses around the world want to recruit Minnesotans. Our role in the global economy remains to model what's great about Minneapolis: smart, healthy, caring people who don't compete by racing to the bottom.*

## **Public Safety and Crime Prevention**

- 1) What is your position on the availability of guns and particularly handguns? What is your position on the use of background checks prior to the purchase of firearms? Do you support periodic checks of current license holders?

*Hunting is a great Minnesota tradition. The right to bear arms is enshrined in the Constitution. Neither of those facts protects my right to walk down Central Avenue with a .357 Magnum loaded with armor-piercing bullets. I fully support criminal background checks prior to the purchase of any firearm. I fully support periodic checks of current license holders.*

- 2) What specific legislation would you propose to reduce crime? What types of legislation would you propose to aid in the prevention of crime?

*Crime is often rooted in economic hardship. Being poor doesn't make people criminals, but being desperate and having little hope does drive people to commit anti-social acts. We need more money for police officers, more money for community-oriented policing, more money for community centers, parks, and after-school programs. We need to marshal all our community resources – non-profits, businesses, mosques, synagogues, churches, temples, and neighbors to create a social fabric that encourages a sense of shared burden and responsibility. The less isolated people feel, the less likely they will be to hurt those around them.*

- 3) What is your position regarding Second Chance programs and opportunities for ex-offenders to reenter the community while balancing those initiatives with public safety and media influences?

*Crime is a social and individual problem. Offenders who have served their sentence must be welcomed back as full participants in every aspect of social and civic life. Ex-offenders should be encouraged to vote. The business community, non-profits, and the criminal justice system should invest in helping ex-offenders access education, counseling, and employment. For many offenders, criminality is an event, not a state of being.*

## **Environmental Safety/Energy Policy**

- 1) How would you balance the interests of citizens and the environmental community with the interests of industry, finance and the business community?

*All the groups mentioned in this question share a common interest: the integrity and sustainability of our natural resources and environment. When we apply the principle of environmental sustainability to each and all of our political, industrial, financial, and business decisions, we assure that future generations have the resources they need to survive and prosper.*

- 2) What is your position on energy, the use of alternative and renewable energy sources, and Minnesota's role in this arena? What key resources does Minnesota have to make good progress?

*Minnesota can and should be a nation-leading producer (and exporter) of electricity generated from wind power. We have existing frameworks (ex. our Renewable Energy Standard) that allow Minnesotans to demand more renewable, sustainable, clean energy from our utilities. Enforcing such standards vigorously will create jobs while helping reduce our contribution to pollution and climate change.*

- 3) What policies or programs would you support in the areas of state building code compliance with clean energy technology, improved energy efficiency and increased noise protection?

*Energy efficiency starts at home. Organizations like the Phillips Community Energy Cooperative combine Minnesota's best traditions of thrift and organizing: neighbors organize neighbors to install compact fluorescent bulbs, low-flow shower heads, and window insulation. We need to leverage the State's ability to raise and distribute funds with local civic organizations' knowledge of their constituents' needs. Doing so allows us to foster energy efficiency efforts that take root in each Minnesotans' desire to save – funds and our planet.*

*Noise pollution is not just a source of annoyance – it's an active impediment to productivity and peace of mind: two things we value a great deal here in Minnesota. This is not an area I've had a chance to study in detail, but rest assured, when elected, I would be disposed to keep our neighborhoods quiet. I look forward to learning more.*

## **Transportation**

- 1) What are your Minnesota transportation priorities as they relate to business, freight, travelers, and public transit including commuters, seniors, people with disabilities, young people, and visitors?

*My transportation policy begins with improving our infrastructure. For eight years, the Pawlenty administration allowed our infrastructure to crumble to the point that a major bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River. Under the Pawlenty administration, everyday maintenance on roads was deferred to the point of road not being drivable. I support Governor Dayton and call for a major transportation bonding bill to address the crumbling infrastructure left behind by eight years of Tim Pawlenty.*

2) What is your position on light rail transit? How would you play for light rail transit expansion if you feel it's needed?

*As stated, I support the immediate expansion of light rail into North Minneapolis. Upon completion, I would support the expansion of light rail into the western suburbs. Again, I support Governor Dayton and would call for a major transportation bonding bill to address the transportation needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

## **Your Candidacy**

Explain why you are seeking the office of Minnesota State Senator. What will you bring to your constituents? What experiences, expertise and skill sets do you have that make you best suited to hold this position? What specific expertise will you bring to the State Senate that is unique or rare to the body?

*I am seeking the office of Minnesota State Senator because I know that, if given the chance, I can truly improve people's lives. When Larry Pogemiller resigned, he noted that "it's time for a generational shift." I am that generational shift. I am 30 years old, I am brimming with enthusiasm, and as an attorney I understand the law and have the capacity to make the positive change that we need. It is time to move beyond politics, and to return to a true grass roots model. I have championed this model as an organizer in the community. I have advocated for tenants that were losing their homes following the North Minneapolis Tornado, I started The Big Gay Race, and mobilized over 2,000 people in support of marriage equality, and I have testified at the capitol to make sure that dangerous gun legislation does not take the life of one more innocent child. I know the purpose of government: to strengthen the weak, to hear the unheard, and to uplift the downtrodden. I will continue to lead, continue to motivate, and will continue to work for those who are struggling. With the courage of our convictions, and the passion do what is right, we can lend a voice and a hand to those who need us most. I am the only candidate that has the capability to mobilize the entire SD 59 community. And that is exactly what I intend on doing as Senator.*