

MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT DFL 2011 SPECIAL ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Legislative Priorities

I would like to be on the Education Committee, the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee. Education would be my top priority and must be the top priority of the state. It is the best long-term answer to job growth and keeping Minnesota competitive in a global economy. I care deeply about the environment and have led many efforts as a Council Member to clean our air and water and preserve our natural resources. As a prosecutor and as a former chair of the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Committee, I believe I can be a leader on issues of criminal justice reform.

Taxes and Budget

I support Governor Dayton's proposal for a fourth tier income tax rate of 10.95%, which would apply, only to the top 2% of income. I would also support the Governor's proposal for a temporary surcharge on incomes in excess of \$ 500,000. These actions are a start but alone are not enough to fund a better Minnesota that makes the critical investments in education, people and infrastructure.

It is quite easy to rail against the draconian cuts to our state's budget. It is also easy to promise to support additional funding for education, the university and our critical safety net. It is much more difficult to tell everyone how we would fund a state budget consistent with our progressive values. Don't let candidates get away with simply saying we can tax the rich. That needs to be done but alone it won't get the job done.

I would support some or all of the following tax policies **if** the additional funding went towards educating our children for the 21st Century and funding a first rate system of higher education.

- Expansion of the sales tax to include taxation of Internet sales, additional services and a limited sales tax on clothing. Any expansion of sales tax on clothing should exempt second hand sales and the tax should be implemented in a way to ensure that it is progressive.
- Limit the mortgage interest deduction to the first one million dollars of valuation. This change would have to be phased in.
- A complete review of the corporate tax code should be done. Every tax expenditure should be justified by a valid public purpose. Tax breaks for companies that ship jobs out of state or out of the country should be eliminated.
- Governor Dayton's efforts to streamline state services should be enthusiastically supported by the legislature.

I believe Minnesotans would support some or all of these changes if they are part of a comprehensive approach to long-term financial stability for our state. We are one of only four states that have no tax on clothing. Exempting Internet sales from taxation is arbitrary and unfair to our main street businesses. It would be better to limit or eliminate increases in the corporate tax by eliminating loopholes that serve no public purpose. The mortgage interest deduction is a result of tax policy to encourage home ownership – once a home is valued at more than one million dollars, the public purpose for the exemption disappears.

Education

Early childhood education and all day kindergarten with a sliding scale fee schedule is our best possible investment in our kids. It is also critically important to close the achievement gap. For K-12 education, I would like to see the Promise Neighborhood Initiative in St. Paul to become a statewide model for closing the achievement gap.

Funding of our university system needs to be stabilized to stop the explosion in tuition costs. To address the crushing cost of student loans, I would support state actions to further leverage President Obama's recent executive order capping student loan payments at 10% of income.

As both a K-12 and a higher education initiative, I would support a "GI bill for teachers" that would promise to significantly reduce or eliminate student loan payments as long as the individual remains in teaching in this state for at least five years. Additional incentives could be provided for teachers in high poverty areas.

Social Justice and Equity

I support the extension of basic family protections to unmarried partners and non-biological children of public sector employees. I supported this policy as a Council Member but was unable to implement the policy due to state law.

I strongly oppose the use of Photo ID as a requirement for voting. Fairness and transparency in the electoral process is a critical part of my campaign. My Candidate's Pledge to Restore Democracy is attached and can be viewed on my web page at www.ostrowforsenate.com

Health Care

Minnesota has an opportunity through the health care exchanges authorized in the federal health care reform bill to be a leader in cutting costs and expanding care for the uninsured. As Democrats, we should be bold and creative in the implementation of these health care exchanges.

I was a strong supporter of the public option and continue to believe that it is the best system for health care. Sadly it was defeated largely as a consequence of the massive financial clout in Congress of the health insurance lobby.

The best way to address the critical problem of access to health insurance for small and micro businesses is to allow the creation of health insurance pools so that small business owners can join together to purchase insurance.

Economy/Jobs/Small Businesses

I am the one candidate in this race who has worked directly with small businesses on the eastside. I am on a first name basis with many owners of our local businesses. Many of our small businesses are our artists who make up one of the greatest arts districts in the country. I worked with the artists to create the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District and worked closely with artists to reduce barriers to their success in the zoning code and building code.

Skyrocketing property taxes are another major challenge for small businesses. My plan to stabilize property taxes through financial independence for the city (see our website) would address this issue.

We are now in a global economy and as Minnesota. Our competition is not just Wisconsin, it is South Korea, China and India as well. We must play to our strengths – a well-educated workforce, an entrepreneurial spirit and a strong civic culture. As state senator, I would be a strong supporter of our research institutions and funding for research in medical advances, energy and technology.

Public Safety and Crime Prevention

I am a strong supporter of background checks prior to the purchase of firearms. Minnesota needs to join other states and prevent straw sales of handguns by limiting the number of gun purchases to any one persons. I do support enforcement efforts that would include periodic checks of current office holders.

I was a leader on the City Council and on the Hennepin County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee in addressing livability crimes. Stabilizing our local finances by giving the city financial independence from the state and stabilizing the city's resources (see our website for details) would ensure sufficient staffing levels for the Minneapolis Police Department. I would also advocate for criminal justice reforms and sufficient funding of the court system to reduce delays in the prosecution of criminal cases, especially violent crimes and domestic abuse.

I was a strong supporter of the "ban the box" ordinance in Minneapolis, which reduced barriers to low level offenders in job applications with the City. As an Assistant Anoka County Attorney, I have assisted in implementing the County's nationally recognized diversion program for first time low level drug offenders . This program allows first time offenders to be diverted from the criminal justice

system without charges as long as the offender follows certain conditions and obtains treatment.

Environmental Safety/Energy Policy

I have balanced the interests of citizens with the interests of the business community on many occasions. I either authored or participated in many citizens' advisory committees for Target Field, the northeast artists community and other efforts. I worked with the EPA and the MPCA on important environmental issues at Interpolates and the W.R. Grace Asbestos site in the Logan Park neighborhood. I worked very closely with Xcel Energy and the Marshall Terrace Community in the conversion of the Xcel Riverside plant from coal to natural gas. I have a very positive relationship with the Minneapolis business community. I will convene partners and collaborate as a state senator in the same manner.

I strongly support alternative energy sources. Minnesota has great potential as a generator of wind energy. I do not support subsidies to the ethanol industry and share the concerns of the Sierra Club and others that the energy used to generate ethanol is excessive eliminate any environmental advantages.

Our building codes are antiquated and need to be revised to allow and promote energy efficiency. I supported amendments to the Minneapolis City Codes to encourage energy efficiency. I authored the ordinance adopted in 2006, which requires LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for any new city buildings. Similar actions should be taken at the state level.

Transportation

Minnesota requires a sustainable long term funding source for transit and infrastructure. I would support an increase in the gas tax and indexing the gas tax to inflation. My priority would be the creation of a comprehensive system of mass transit including light rail, commuter rail and an effective bus system. I have experience in the development and implementation of mass transit as the former Vice Chair of the Northstar Corridor Development Authority.

My Candidacy

I am seeking the office of the state senate because we need a new kind of politics to restore the people's faith in their government and their democracy. (Please go to our website and sign our **Petition to Restore our Democracy**). I am also seeking this office because I know and love this community. I will be an accessible leader who will listen to the voice of the community not the lobbyists or big campaign contributors.

As a leader on the Minneapolis City Council for twelve years, I can bring a unique understanding of our City's diversity, financial challenges and neighborhoods to the legislature. The positive relationships I developed with the business community,

nonprofits, neighborhood organizations and the Minneapolis School Board can serve the community well.

I have expertise in a number of areas that would serve the state and the senate. At a time of very tough budgets, I am a respected leader on budget issues and have managed the City through tough budget times. As a prosecutor who knows the criminal justice system well, I can be a leader in needed criminal justice reform. I led many efforts to make city government more efficient and effective and I can do the same in St. Paul.

I have led many partnerships. We need leaders who can bring people together and solve problems. I have done this often and will do this often in the senate.