

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 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?

Unlike House Members, Senators may serve on more than three committees. My preferences would be:

Taxes – Minnesota is becoming more reliant on property taxes, taxes that are not based on the ability to pay. I will advocate for fairer taxes and for the very highest earners to pay their fair share.

Transportation – I have unique expertise to bring to this committee and will be an advocate for transportation alternatives that work for urban areas.

Either K-12 or Higher Education – Public education is critical for students and our economy. See the answers to the education questions.

Environment and Natural Resources – My commitment is explained under Environmental Safety/Energy Policy

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)?

For clarification, some of the state's revenue, the gas tax for example, is constitutionally dedicated and cannot be allocated to other accounts. The general fund can be allocated.

Within the non-dedicated funds, I don't think the problem with our budget is that the proportions are allocated incorrectly. The problem is that everything is being squeezed by the destructive mythology of "no new taxes." Under the Republican-controlled legislature, we are now in the 9th straight year of Pawlenty budgeting. We now know that "no new taxes" means "no fingerprints." The state has failed to balance the budget, passing problems onto local units of government (cities, counties and schools) and pushing problems onto future legislatures and future generation. This inevitable leads to property taxes increases, making the overall tax system more and more regressive.

Currently the general fund allocation for K-12 education is just a bit less than 40%. The allocation for higher ed is 7.5%. The only other large allocation, Health and Human Services is at 33%. The other allocations are small. For example the environment is less than 1%. The criminal justice system and the judiciary combined are about 5%. The solution for our budget problems is not reallocating on the margins. The state has cut allocations to the point that they should not be cut further. The solution comes with more revenue from those who have benefited the most from the public investments of earlier generations.

- 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?

The fairest tax is a progressive income tax. Property taxes are not based on ability to pay. They have the greatest impacts on seniors and others on fixed incomes. I have taken on powerful interests to fight property tax increases. I will do the same at the Capitol. Sales taxes are regressive and we have become increasingly dependent on them. User fees should be just that. For example, the money used to purchase a fishing license should be used for the benefit of the purchaser--like restocking lakes. On the flip side, the general fund should not be subsidizing fishing licenses especially at a time like this when K-12 and the University are being short changed. Some think of the cigarette tax as a surcharge. Since the tax doesn't yet pay the full cost of health care impacts, I believe it is best characterized as a tax.

Additional revenue should come from those who have the highest incomes. They have benefitted the most from the public investments of earlier generations.

Education

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

Education is the State's priority. Pitting one level of education against another is not smart for our children or for our economy. Economists agree that our state has thrived because of investments in education and, if we are to continue to thrive, we must continue to invest. I want every child to have the opportunity to have the same high

quality Minneapolis Public School education that I had. I will also work tirelessly for early childhood education and optional all day kindergarten. A strong University has created countless jobs in Minnesota and in our district. It has been an economic engine for Minnesota. I will fight to keep it strong.

As to how to fund them, see my answers under "Taxes and Budget"

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?

I think we are fortunate to have the studies produced by Art Rolnick when he was at the Federal Reserve. The studies literally tell us that investments in early education are both good for the child and wise financially, a terrific win-win for Minnesota.

The latest research on brain development is incredibly compelling. We know now that early intervention is the single best way to address the achievement gap. Early investments provide the best return on investment for public dollars, paying social dividends all throughout a person's life.

We need to be careful not to pit one level of education against another. We need our children to succeed so our economy will succeed. Interests that dismissed early childhood education as an unnecessary expense only a few years ago, are now advocates and new sources of funding. We have not fully explored private foundations, business investments and new models for services. These need to be a priority.

Even if we cannot serve every child, we must get started, target resources to at-risk children and be willing to explore multiple models for service delivery.

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?

Student loan debt is today the fastest growing personal debt in America. In 2008 it was \$440 billion. Today it is \$550 billion. It has been suggested that this debt could be the next financial bubble, just like the housing bubble, to pop and damage the economy as a whole. I've met with many college students at the U and at Augsburg, who are motivated to participate in my campaign because they want to build an economy big enough to include them after they graduate. We can do that. We've done this before. It is easy to look back and see the positive long lasting impacts of the GI bill. We must get people to agree to replicate the kind of effort that was made for earlier generations. I will make that case

In the short term, Legislators need to apply all the pressure possible on higher education institutions to keep tuition as low as possible. Over the next year DFL legislators must organize to get back into the majority. We must allocate part of new revenue for financial aid.

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?

Simply put, if a heterosexual person or couple has access or a right to any protection or benefit, I will fight to make sure equal access and rights are granted to all GLBT persons.

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 opposed the Republican voter ID bill and was grateful that we had elected a Governor who would veto it. I will continue to oppose the adoption of a photo ID as a requirement for voting. To describe this as “a solution in search of a problem” is charitable. Every non-partisan investigation has found voter fraud to be virtually non-existent. The purpose of this legislation is two fold: a.) to distract attention from the Republican failure to address jobs and the economy, and b.) to suppress voting by students, new American citizens, people of color, the elderly and transient populations.

We have an outstanding Secretary of State and I will respect his judgment with regard to any changes in election laws to make them more fair, efficient and accurate.

I have been and will continue to aggressively support Ranked Choice Voting and believe it will help increase voter participation. I am proud to have helped pass and implement RCV in Minneapolis.

I also continue to support public financing of campaigns to reduce the power of big money special interests in our politics.

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?

Minnesota has been a leader in health care reform for four decades yet we now have as many people uninsured as we did prior to Minnesota Care. The federal reform will help many people who could not get insurance to get insurance and that is tremendously important. However, it does not do enough to reduce costs of health care. Right now 62% of all bankruptcies are health care-related and 3/4ths of them were people who were insured at the time of illness.

One of the ways to address cost drivers is to look at the study conducted by a Harvard economist of a single payer proposal from Vermont. It calculated that the single payer

system would save 25% over the current system. A 25% cost reduction in Minnesota would be a \$10 billion savings per year. Clearly there is ample opportunity to reduce costs and cover more people.

If we got what we were paying for in health care, we would be the healthiest nation on earth. But we're not. Big changes are necessary. One of the most promising changes is paying for outcomes, not procedures. We must ensure that health care resources are spent on health care, not the health insurance bureaucracies that are stifling reform. I will push hard in this direction toward a single payer system

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?

More children miss school because of skyrocketing rates of asthma than for any other reason. Concentrating on improving air quality is a must. I have discussed the growing problem of fine particulate matter pollution under the Transportation question. Peer reviewed studies have shown that the savings on health care from reduced fine particulates is enormous.

Public agencies must reduce, not increase or maintain, their air pollution. That is why I am strongly opposed to Hennepin County's push to increase garbage burning. Rep. Frank Hornstein is leading a group of legislators who are pushing back against Hennepin County's plan. I support what Rep. Hornstein is doing. I am honored that he has endorsed my campaign. I will help him at the capitol.

We must also protect pensions and oppose privatization schemes or other efforts to allow middlemen to profit off of vulnerable populations.

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

See my answer above under Health Care.

Economy/Jobs/Small Business

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

We have started to recognize very small businesses and the role they play in our economy. But we haven't recognized the self employed. They are a large part of our work force that is often ignored. Minnesota needs to create policies and programs to help. Specifically both the need for access to capital and the kind of technical assistance that teaches people how to run a small business.

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

About a quarter of all businesses in Minnesota are self-employed businesses. That is why it is so important to recognize and support them. We also need to understand what

kind of communities will attract innovators and entrepreneurs. (see below).

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?

We are a major metropolitan area with good connections to the global economy. Growing and nurturing those connections is critical for our future

We must resist the call from special interests to return to old policies that seek to address our competitiveness through giant "silver bullet" developments, which involve corporate welfare and favors for those with money and political clout. The answer is not to subsidize particular businesses but for government to do well what the public sector is supposed to do. We must do this for the benefit of the economy as a whole, not to pick winners and losers.

To enhance our competitiveness we must invest in higher education and research, new high-speed transit lines and support inclusiveness and cultural opportunities in cost effective ways. These are the qualities and amenities that attract innovators and entrepreneurs.

Another subsidized mall in Arden Hills will only take business away from the existing retail sector, which is already overbuilt. We don't need the next Mall, we need the next Medtronic.

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?

I think it is wrong for the state to preempt local control of handguns. We need thorough background checks and I would support rechecks.

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

When Governor Pawlenty slashed funding for local police, I worked hard with City Council Members to restore funding and to add 71 police officers. We now have a historic reduction in crime.

I'm also proud of the work we have done with Step Up and out-of-school time activities for at risk youth. This must be the focus of our prevention work.

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?

If we want people to thrive and not re-offend, we all need people leaving the criminal justice system to be able fully re-enter society. In Minneapolis we voted to "ban the box" (ban the checkbox inquiring about felony status). I'm proud of that.

Our justice system has guidelines for sanctioning felony offenders. That should be it. We cannot get to where we want to be – bringing offenders back into society – if we put up road blocks to keep them from doing the very thing we say we want them to do, that is, to be a participating member of our community.

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?

I reject the idea that there is a general trade off between caring for the environment and economic growth. Addressing environmental issues is good for our economy.

While there are areas of conflict with particular industries, there are huge opportunities for common ground. I am strongly committed to carbon reduction. It is one of reasons that I am passionate about expanding transit systems and bike trails to make a sustainable Minneapolis. It is the reason I take the bus to work. It is the reason that I have spent hours making my old house energy efficient. I hope to have children and don't want to give them – or any child – a world that is unstable and inhospitable.

The business community has the same interest in transit and bikes albeit for different reasons. The business community needs and wants easy and cost effective transportation for its workers. There are many opportunities in addition to the expansion of rail transit and bike lanes. For example, our streets can be changed to route buses far more efficiently. That is what we did on Marquette & Second Avenues with huge emissions reductions. Moreover, because bus transit is now faster and more efficient on routes that use Marquette & Second, and riders are happier to take the bus.

I was the City's lead in getting these improvements made with the support of the business community. That is one of many reasons I am the only candidate endorsed by Sierra Club.

The business community has a strong interest in public measures that will reduce fine particulate matter pollution, an interest of the public as well. In addition to reducing health costs, avoiding going over federal limits will save substantial money for the business community that would otherwise have to find other more expensive ways to reduce fine particulate matter pollution

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?

Coal is not only polluting, new coal plants are expensive. Electricity from wind is the best choice right now for new capital investment in Minnesota. It is less expensive to construct and Minnesota has a terrific wind resource. Wind is also the wise choice for Minnesota's economy. We should not send Minnesota dollars to other states to purchase their fuels like we do for coal and nuclear. We should keep Minnesota dollars circulating in Minnesota on our own renewable sources.

The cost of energy from solar installations is expected to drop substantially and will be another good resource for Minnesota. People who work in solar expect that Minnesotans will be able to buy quality “off the shelf” solar panels from stores like Home Depot by 2020.

We need to concentrate on efficiency for all uses of electricity. Public buildings should be state-of-the-art when it come to efficiency. Much of our housing stock was built before energy efficiency was even considered. We need a plan with benchmarks in place to achieve energy efficient housing. These are just two examples. There are multiple opportunities for efficiency and we need to seek them out.

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?

When the DFLers were in control of the House and Senate, the Chair of the Capital Investment Committee, Rep. Alice Hausman, pushed for increased state standards for energy efficiency for state projects. This good work needs to be accelerated. Some of the Legacy Funds were specifically allocated for solar in our State Parks. These efforts, as well as new efforts to conserve water, should be requirements for all new state projects.

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?

The public is way ahead of the politicians when it comes to transportation. The public wants more transportation choices – especially high-quality transit and bicycling. But as a state and a region, we’re still on a “one-line-per-decade plan” for each transit mode. With the challenges we face, that’s unacceptable.

Our experience in Minneapolis at the center of the transit network has taught us that it’s time to add new tools to our transit toolbox. Even as we move forward on the Central Corridor and Southwest Corridor LRT lines, we must pursue additional opportunities like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Modern Streetcars.

If our goal is to provide quality, high-speed transit deep into outer-ring suburbs, BRT is a more cost-effective option on many corridors where LRT is unlikely to ever be built. If our goal is to promote sustainable density in urban areas, modern streetcars are a more cost-effective option on many corridors where LRT is unlikely to ever be built.

I’ve already produced results in each of these areas:

--I was the City’s lead negotiator on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) project including the comprehensive agreement with Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council and the University of Minnesota that kept the project on track

--I led the effort to secure a million dollars from the Obama Administration to begin the process of upgrading bus service on Central Ave and Nicollet Avenue to Modern

Streetcars.

-- I led the effort to secured \$34 million from the Bush Administration to completely rebuild Marquette and 2nd Avenues, tripling the transit capacity of those streets now and making important progress toward Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to Downtown Minneapolis from multiple directions.

I have also been a leader on bike trails and bike lanes. We've produced a dramatic expansion of bike trails & paths across the City and the first phases of NiceRide, leading to Minneapolis being named the "#1 Bike City in America."

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

I am a strong supporter of light rail transit. Please see my answer above.

Minnesota took an important step forward when the Legislature was under Democratic control and it approved a transportation bill by overriding Gov. Pawlenty's veto. We have capital dollars to build transit lines, but not the necessary operating dollars. Unfortunately the bill had to be cut in half in order to win enough votes from a few Republican legislators. It is time to pass the other half. Doing so would grow jobs right here in Minnesota and build a better future.