



# Douglas County Voters' Guide Statewide Primary Election 2020

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER OMAHA - [LWVGO.ORG](http://LWVGO.ORG)

*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that never endorses or opposes any political parties or candidates. Candidate responses have not been edited. For candidate responses personalized to your address, go to [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org).*



## Table of Contents

Federal Offices .....	3
U.S. Senator .....	3
U.S. House of Representatives for Nebraska District 2 .....	8
Nebraska Unicameral Legislature .....	10
Legislature District 5 .....	10
Legislature District 7 .....	11
Legislature District 9 .....	12
Legislature District 11 .....	14
Legislature District 13 .....	16
Legislature District 31 .....	16
Legislature District 39 .....	18
State Boards of Education.....	20
Board of Regents – University of Nebraska .....	20
State Board of Education – District 2 .....	22
State Board of Education – District 4 .....	22
Douglas County Commission .....	24
Douglas County Commissioner – District 1.....	24
Douglas County Commissioner – District 3.....	25
Douglas County Commissioner – District 5.....	26
Douglas County Commissioner – District 7.....	29
Natural Resources District (NRD) .....	30
Papio-Missouri River NRD – Subdistrict 9 .....	30
Public Service Commission.....	31
Public Service Commission – District 2.....	31
Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha (MUD) .....	33
Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 3 .....	33
Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 4 .....	34
Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 5 .....	35
Omaha Public Power District (OPPD).....	36
Omaha Public Power District – Subdivision 1 .....	36

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) ..... 37  
Metropolitan Community College – District 3 ..... 37  
Metropolitan Community College – District 4 ..... 38  
Learning Community Coordinating Council..... 40  
Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 2 ..... 40  
Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 4 ..... 40  
Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 6 ..... 41  
Bennington Board of Education..... 42  
Omaha Public School Board ..... 43  
Omaha Public School Board – District 7 ..... 43  
Omaha Public School Board – District 9 ..... 45  
Westside Board of Education ..... 46  
Special Issues Ticket – Ballot Questions ..... 47

Return your Early Voting ballot  
to the Douglas County Election  
Commission office,  
by USPS mail, or use  
Drop Boxes at these locations:



Douglas County Election Commission  
west of main entrance in parking lot  
12220 W Center, Omaha

**Other Locations**

**City/County Building**

Between 18th & 19th on Farnam, near sidewalk  
1819 Farnam Street, Omaha

**South Omaha Library**

Southwest corner of building  
2808 Q Street, Omaha

**Charles B. Washington Branch Library**

Southwest corner of building  
2868 Ames Avenue, Omaha

**Ralston Police Department**

Southwest corner of building  
7400 Main Street, Ralston

**Milton R. Abrahams Branch Library**

South of main entrance  
5111 N 90th Street, Omaha

**Douglas County Engineer's Office**

Near sidewalk by parking stalls  
15505 W Maple Road, Omaha

**Millard Public Schools Foundation**

Northwest corner of building  
5225 South 159th Avenue, Omaha

**Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch Library**

Northeast corner of building  
2100 Reading Plaza, Elkhorn

# Federal Offices

## U.S. Senator

**Matt Innis (R):** No response received.

**Chris Janicek (D):**

*Website:* <http://chrisforsenate2020.com>

*Occupation:* Owner of CakeBox and CupCake Omaha -Property Investor

*Education:* Mary Our Queen Catholic -Archbishop Ryan High School -University of NE - Omaha

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Military experience:* None

*Volunteer experience:* Youth Emergency Services -Nebraska Aids Project -Big Brothers/Sisters -Stephen Center -Open Door Mission

**Dennis Frank Macek (D):**

*Website:* [www.macekforsenate.com](http://www.macekforsenate.com)

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None (N/A)

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* BA Marquette University; MA University of Arizona; Extension courses U of Cal; qualified for Ph. D in English Education University of Texas at Austin (degree not completed); finished HVAC program at Capitol City Trade and Technical School Austin, TX

*Military Experience:* N/A However, sporadic contract work for U. S. military 1973-1975, Pacific Theater (Zukeran, Okinawa, Japan

*Volunteer Experience:* McGovern campaign, 1971; Dave Domina for Senate campaign, 2014

**Ben Sasse (R):** No response received.

**Larry Marvin (D):** No response received for biographical information.

**Alisha Shelton (D):**

*Website:* <http://sheltonforsenate.com>

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* Masters of Science in Clinical Counseling, Masters of Science in Human Services, Bachelor of Science in Psychology Pre-Medicine.

*Military Experience:* N/A

*Volunteer Experience:* I volunteer with several organizations. Most recent Center for Holistic Development, providing free therapy to clients. I serve as the regional program, planning, & development co-coordinator for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, past president & more .

**Gene Siadek (L):** No response received.

**Andy Stock (D):**

*Website:* <http://andystockforsenate.com/>

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* B.A. UNK; M.A. UNL; Ph.D. U of Colorado; and J.D. University of Texas School of Law

*Military Experience:* I served as a medic in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

**Daniel M Wik (D):**

*Website:* <http://wiksenate.com>

*Current Public Office, dates held:* 2016 Democratic Candidate US Congress Nebraska District 1

*Education:* 1976 White Earth Indian Reservation Mahnomens, MN. 1980 BA Biology/Chemistry. Concordia College, Moorhead, MN 1985. Doctor of Chiropractic. Northwestern Health Sciences University. 2000 Doctor of Medicine. St. George's University School of Medicine.

*Volunteer Experience:* Medical Lobbying, American Medical Association, American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians, Wisconsin Medical Society.

**Angie Phillips (D):**

*Website:* <http://angiefornebraska.com>

*Occupation:* I spent over a decade working with at risk youth and families before becoming a community organizer.

*Education:* Studied Behavioral Science at Bellevue University

*Volunteer experience:* I've spent the last 4 years organizing for humanitarian aid and human rights advocacy. My focus has centered on women's rights, immigration reform, and social and economic justice. I also founded and chaired the DCDP Women's Caucus.

**What, if anything, should Congress do to protect the U.S. voting system from foreign influence?**

**Chris Janicek:** We must invest in our election infrastructure to protect the integrity of our elections. Congress' primary focus needs to be securing our elections from foreign influence. 17 U.S. intelligence agencies found Russia interfered and attempted to influence the 2016 elections with most agreeing that they did influence the outcome. Russia itself announced it plans to do it again in 2020. Robert Muller's report stated "they are doing it as we speak." The federal government must act with the urgency, force and funding that this threat to our democracy deserves. The threats of cyber attacks on paperless voting machines has to be addressed immediately. Congress must put a plan together to protect back-end election management systems with paper audit trails. A national law requiring all votes to be recorded on paper would be the easiest fix. States then will be required to conduct statistically sound, risk-limiting audits after every election so the results of our votes are accurate.

**Dennis Frank Macek:** Pass legislation that coordinates the U. S. Cyber Command with the private sector in evolving and deploying ENCRYPTING SOFTWARE and other products to protect our infrastructure--INCLUDING our election process--from cyber attack and mischief; also pass legislation that partners the Department of Energy and relevant federal agencies with the private sector in maintaining U. S. WORLD LEADERSHIP in developing--and deploying--ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. Concurrently, Congress must ensure that the work of our first lines of defense--the U. S. intelligence agencies and diplomatic community--cannot be subverted. That kind of work should be fully enabled. If it results in calls for implementing specific sanctions or other forms of retribution, Congress must act accordingly and promptly.

**Larry Marvin:** We should already have severe penalties in place. I will help get them updated.

**Alisha Shelton:** As a U.S. Senator I would introduce an election security bill than request all voting machines run independently of the internet. We need research completed on our entire voting infrastructure with recommendations on protecting voter information and the integrity of the voting system. The bill would also address foreign influence by mandating all candidates enter this into their quarterly reports. Election Day should be a National holiday and voters should be automatically enrolled upon turning 18.

**Andy Stock:** Our democracy is at stake and we need to dedicate the money and resources necessary to insure our elections are free from foreign interference and influence. Obviously, bolstering our cyber security capabilities would be a key component of any congressional bill addressing this issue.

**Daniel M Wik:** Cyber Security Technology investment should parallel US Military Cyber Security Technology. The key to success is testing security in non-election years on local elections to perfect all flaws.

**Angie Phillips:** We have evidence that Russia interfered in the 2016 elections. It is Congress's responsibility to defend the U.S. voting system from foreign influence. We can safeguard American elections by updating election infrastructure and mandating paper ballots and post-election audits. I support the Protecting American Votes and Elections (PAVE) Act of 2019 to help ensure the integrity of our elections is protected. This Act would replace insecure voting machines with reliable, secure hand-marked paper ballots and gives states the funding needed to defend their election systems. The PAVE Act will also ban internet, WiFi, and cellular connections for voting machines and creates minimum cybersecurity standards for voting machines, voter registration databases, and electronic poll books. To combat the spread of disinformation, I also support reinstating the cybersecurity coordinator at the National Security Council and additional sanctions for countries that engage in election interference.

## What would you do to lessen the effects of climate change?

**Chris Janicek:** Science backed evidence establishes that climate change is real. Under this current administration we can forecast more attacks on the environment right now and in the future. I will work tirelessly in challenging the lawlessness of environmental protections being lifted and work towards reducing carbon emissions and clean water legislation. I will advocate relentlessly for solutions that will protect people, farms, animals and the planet, now and for the future. The United States must re-enter the Paris climate agreement and work with other countries on a global scale. We must invest in wind energy, solar, geo-thermal, nuclear, hydro and all other forms of green energy. We must stop new fossil fuel exploration and phase out leaking and polluting pipelines. Our environment is suffering, wildlife is struggling with a loss of habitat and starving. We cannot wait, we must take action now. We must elect better representatives. I want a democracy to live in and a planet to live on.

**Dennis Frank Macek:** Begin eliminating the root CAUSES of global-climate changes. For openers, fossil fuel must no longer be subsidized. As a U. S. Senator from Nebraska, I will sponsor and fight for legislation-- to immediately deploy in all U. S. electric power systems the best market-based technology utilizing 100% SOLAR ENERGY or 100% MIXED sources of renewable energy, to facilitate--immediately--free-market development of technologies to use renewable sources of energy FOR MOST FORMS of transportation, to partner with states and cities and private industry to modernize our electric-power grids FOR USING 100% RENEWABLE-SOURCED energy. Moreover, I will press for U. S. WORLD LEADERSHIP in stopping global-climate warming. Here our diplomatic community must weigh in with Congress, for instance to oblige Brazil to stop destroying our planet's "lungs"--the Amazonian Rain Forest. Always I will support scientific and technical innovations, such as carbon sequestration.

**Larry Marvin:** Climate change is scientific and I also want to know their reports on the climate that caused Nebraska to be covered by water possibly millions of years ago.

**Alisha Shelton:** In order to lessen the effects of climate change I support the Green New Deal, moving to 100% clean energy by 2030. We currently have Nebraskans farmers who are practicing regenerative farmer and not receiving incentives for this, while farmers and ranchers in California do. I support this being a federal program where all farmers and ranchers can benefit and take pride in saving our environment.

**Andy Stock:** I support the goals of the Green New Deal and many of the proposed programs but I would put more emphasis on a carbon tax and directly redistribute those receipts to every man, woman, and child in America on a monthly basis. A carbon tax works by putting a price on greenhouse gas emissions, giving companies an economic incentive to lower their emissions. Individual consumers are also incentivized to make greener choices because it would make goods produced by companies that emit less greenhouse gasses cheaper than goods from companies that emit more. A "revenue neutral" carbon tax simply means that whatever revenues the government collects from its carbon tax should be redistributed to all citizens equally. Making a carbon tax revenue neutral is important because it would make the new tax an economic stimulant rather than depressant. Moreover, it would help compensate citizens for the damages they have suffered from greenhouse gas emitters.

**Daniel M Wik:** 1. 50% Ethanol & biodiesel will drastically reduce carbon emissions, save imminent farm bankruptcy, and Nebraska has the ethanol processing capacity to start in 120 days. 2. Nebraska is one of the highest wind capacity states in America, as technology investment develops wind energy will become self sufficient and profitable self sustaining. Wind energy has the capacity to lower property and income taxes in Nebraska. 3. Ethanol byproducts feeds livestock, is more nutritious, and cheaper than feeding livestock corn, producing more nutritious protein food sources. 4. 50% decreases Mideast Oil Imports, increasing American Energy Independence. 5. 50% Ethanol decreases Chinese Export Manipulation and American dependence on trade negotiations, and creates another export product for the United States which will decrease overseas carbon emissions, as this must be a world wide participation.

**Angie Phillips:** We must take swift action to reduce the effects of climate change. The United States should re-enter the Paris Climate Agreement as well as work to surpass those goals. We must end our reliance on fossil fuels and move toward 100% clean energy by decarbonizing electricity, vehicles, and buildings. Nebraska can lead the way in carbon sequestration with regenerative agriculture. Regenerative organic agriculture could remove more than 100% of the current CO2 emissions while building soil health, maintaining crop yield, increasing crop resilience, and improving profitability. Regenerative organic agriculture also increases water absorption and reduces runoff and the release of toxins into our water supplies. We must also work to end and correct environmental injustices placed on marginalized communities including Native people who have been disproportionately impacted by companies that place profits over the preservation of Native lands and sacred sites.

## What are your thoughts on immigration policy?

**Chris Janicek:** Our current immigration policy is not working and is a violation of human rights and current immigration law. Immigrants crossing the border through legal ports of entry seeking asylum should be documented and within 48 hours have a legal decision on residency. It is costing the U.S. taxpayer hundreds of \$millions and destroying families and lives in detaining immigrants that could be integrated into our workforce and economy. They are coming here in search of a better life. Immigrants who cross the border illegally should be exposed to our legal system to determine eligibility for documentation and/or returned to their country. Those that break and violate our laws should be deported. The United States has close to 900,00 DACA (deferred action for early childhood arrivals) protected immigrants. This protection could be revoked at any time under the current administration. I advocate putting all DACA members on a path to citizenship. The U.S. is the only home they have known.

**Dennis Frank Macek:** It has to be realistic and pragmatic. We in the U. S. are extremely fortunate to have foreign-national STEM professionals here on work permits, green cards or student visas. We need to KEEP 'EM HERE--whatever that takes. Any such measures should transcend quota numbers. In any year, the USA does not have infinite capacity to accept immigrants. Moreover the number of new arrivals annually shouldn't exceed reasonable limits. Therefore we need immigration quotas that accord with changing realities. Quotas would be--and currently are--of two classes: educated and trained persons who can fill specific needs, and people who offer only basic skills and muscle. We need both. What the quotas should be only the experts can say. I can say with conviction that DACA recipients should have a clear, far less onerous path to U. S. citizenship. They have been--they are--US.

**Larry Marvin:** Immigration is a twisted and emotionally hot issue. My Savior Jesus Christ was a refugee from the criminal dictator king Herod. We need to update our laws. We have our regular laws on immigration and then we have NAFTA or the new USMCA laws that facilitate businesses and skilled laborers. Our old laws deal with Green Cards or temporary visas.

**Alisha Shelton:** My thought on our immigration policy is that it needs to change as soon as possible. We need a clear step-by-step process for individuals when they seek asylum that does not separate them from family and force them to sleep at our border. The option to live with American families, while completing steps to apply for asylum should be reinstated. We need a complete immigration reform where adults & parents are granted citizenship after 3 years of DACA with automatic inclusion of their minor children.

**Andy Stock:** Our government could've fixed our broken immigration system long ago but instead it bowed down to corporate masters that demanded an endless supply of cheap, non-unionized labor. The decades old charade of pretending to fix immigration continues to this day. Sadly, under President Trump a disturbing new twist has been added; his administration inflicts needless cruelties on immigrant children and families to further sell the charade that they are fixing the system. They aren't. To fix our broken system we need to take two steps. One, stop the inflow of new undocumented immigrants. And two, give all 10 million of the undocumented immigrants who are already here—so long as they've never committed a crime of violence—free and full citizenship. This would not only profoundly improve their lives, it would improve the lives of all American workers by bringing our shadow economy into the light, making it easier for workers to organize and fight for better wages and conditions.

**Daniel M Wik:** 1. DACA, no criminal record, 2 years citizenship , not 7, with deportation protection. DACA kids for the most part are American kids and should not live in fear of deportation. 2. Non Citizen Adult Immigrant employed, no criminal record, 2 year citizenship, not 7 years. Labor Unions, not ICE administer to protect from deportation. Law abiding decent people who simply want to work and care for their families are the quality people we want in America. 3. Foreign Worker Employment Administration by Labor Unions monitoring matching American Employers with job openings and Foreign Workers with no criminal record, guaranteed 2 year sponsored job sensible controlling border crossing. If American Employer wishes to permanently hire Foreign Worker, no criminal record, 2 year citizenship. America needs honest working immigrants to contribute to our society. 4. The Border Wall does not solve Immigration, this is a workable common sense immigration solution.

**Angie Phillips:** Our current immigration system is broken and inhumane. The system has been further strained by President Trump's harmful executive orders and policies. Millions of migrants, including children, are being detained in unsanitary and overcrowded detention centers. The Remain in Mexico order has endangered the lives of thousands. Seeking asylum is legal and migrants being detained on civil charges should be released immediately as well as all end forms of family separation. ICE has proven to be a corrupt agency and should be abolished. We should return the handling of immigration services back to Immigration and Naturalization Services and implement more efficient ways to

address human and drug trafficking. DACA and TPS recipients should have an immediate path to citizenship and there should be an immediate end to the Trump administration's Muslim ban. We also must address climate change as part of the solution to immigration as it will continue to contribute to the displacement of migrant

## **What, if any, changes would you recommend for "sensible gun legislation"?**

**Chris Janicek:** The 2nd Amendment protects the right of gun ownership. I respect this amendment. Over 90% of Americans, including gun owners, support common sense gun laws. I am for enforcing the laws we currently have and recommend the following: 1) Root out the problems that make guns too easy to obtain, regulating easy, unrestricted access. 2) Background checks on all purchases. 3) Registration on all owned firearms. 4) Gun training and a certificate or license to own and operate. Compare to driver's education and license. 5) Insurance on guns in case of an accident. 6) National assault weapon registry and off premise "assault weapon library" storage with check out accessibility.

**Dennis Frank Macek:** The Second Amendment is the law of the land, but for the sake of public safety, universal background checks on prospective gun purchasers must be implemented. Too many crazies own firearms that kill or maim; the stats bear this out. Of course we need to close ALL gun-sales loopholes. Collaterally, a person who is not on military duty has no business owning--or using-military or military-style ordnance. ANY military ordnance. Weaponry designed to kill many people fast must be banned and deemed illegal. Public safety and common sense DEMAND that the Congress do this.

**Larry Marvin:** I stress self defense. The day Congresswoman Gabby Gifford was wounded and others were killed, and elderly woman grabbed the killers gun and hands and s two other men helped her take the gun away from the killer who ran away. So, who do you think would next to be shot if the killer had succeeded to reloaded his gun? Maybe that lady and maybe those two men. So, this is self help or self defense. We have other cases of bystanders stopping mass shootings. We really need mental health coverage on our Patient Protection Affordable Care Act.

**Alisha Shelton:** My recommendations for sensible gun legislation would include expanding background checks, encouraging manufacturers to implement smart guns, and introduce parental controls.

**Andy Stock:** I support background checks, waiting periods, closing the gun show loophole, an assault weapons ban, magazine clip limitations, and reinstating the Violence Against Women Act. But we also need to attack income inequality. Countries with less income inequality have considerably lower levels of gun violence. And we need to finally end our failed War On Drugs. The War On Drugs has done nothing to lower drug usage rates and it has had a number of unintended consequences. One of those unintended consequences has been the proliferation of drug cartels and gangs, two large sources of gun violence in America.

**Daniel M Wik:** 1. I own guns. I support Constitutional Amendement II; right of the people to keep and bear arms. 2. Security backround and fingerprint checks should be the same in gun shops, gun shows, gun swap meets, or any palce where gun commerce is engaged. Honest gun owners do not mind waiting 2-4 weeks for a gun license. 3. Fingerprint Technology, print recognition on each gun much like cell phones, prevents anyone other than the owner from using the gun. This prevents many potential accidental shootings and stolen guns being unable to use. 4. Requiring gun purchases to participate in a one day class parallel to concealed carry classes allows an additional layer of observation of potential malignant gun users. 5. Affordable psychological care is key in preventing mass killings, thus Healthcare reform is key to treating mass killings. 6. Gun laws must be common sense workable solutions, as many highly restrictive gun laws do not work.

**Angie Phillips:** All Americans are impacted by gun violence and with the majority of Americans are in support of responsible gun legislation. The only thing standing in our way of ending gun violence are lobbyists and organizations like the NRA spending billions of dollars lobbying Congress and spreading disinformation. I will work towards ending gun violence in the following ways through universal background checks, creating a federal licensing system, increasing waiting periods, capping firearm purchases, strengthening anti-trafficking laws, banning high capacity ammunition magazines, prohibit accessories that turn semi-automatic weapons to fully automatic weapons, closing the "boyfriend" loophole, developing federal safety standards, holding manufacturers and dealers accountable, fully funding evidence-based intervention programs and gun violence research, establishing federal safe storage laws, and passing extreme risk protection or "red flag" legislation.

## U.S. House of Representatives for Nebraska District 2

### **Paul Anderson (R):**

*Website:* <http://Paulanderson4congress.com>

*Education:* High School Diploma (1971) Kensington, Ks. Associate Degree (Construction) 2018 Metro Community College

*Military Experience:* Retired from U.S. Navy Reserve 2008 (21 yrs. Mobilized in 2004 Operation Iraqi Freedom 2005 Hurricane Katrina Relief Effort

*Volunteer Experience:* Habitat for Humanity (5 yrs.) DAV Volunteer Driver (5 yrs.)

### **Ann Ashford (D):**

*Website:* <http://annashford2020.com>

*Education:* BA, Government/International Studies, University of Notre Dame JD, Creighton University School of Law

*Volunteer Experience:* Various non-profit Boards including Inclusive Communities, ICAN, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and Planned Parenthood

**Don Bacon (R):** No response received.

### **Kara Eastman (D):**

*Website:* <http://www.eastmanforcongress.com>

*Occupation:* Business owner, nonprofit executive

*Education:* MSW Loyola U; BA Pitzer College

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Metropolitan Community College Board of Governors 2015-2019

*Military experience:* None

*Volunteer experience:* Board Member, Nonprofit Association of the Midlands

### **Gladys Harrison (D):**

*Website:* [www.gladys4congress.com](http://www.gladys4congress.com)

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Education:* Graduated Marian High School 1985 Attended College of St. Mary's Omaha, Nebraska Attended Bellevue University Bellevue, Nebraska.

*Military experience:* None.

*Volunteer experience:* Youth Group Leader and Women's Group Leader Northside Mennonite Church Omaha Riverfront Jazz and Blues Festival Open Door Mission Habitat for Humanity Brew Ha Ha Career Day Mt. View Elementary School Art and Soup VNA Food Bank Celebrity Chef.

## **What, if anything, should Congress do to protect the U.S. voting system from foreign influence?**

**Paul Anderson:** As your congressman, I will sponsor legislation, to require, that the federal election, will be done by, voting by mail. If and when this would become law, I would encourage the state of Nebraska to join the states of Colorado, Washington, and Oregon who vote entirely by mail. In my view, this would increase our voting systems integrity and security from foreign influence. Here are some other positives, it would increase voter turnout, save the taxpayers money, allow more time for the voter to educate themselves about the candidates and ballot issues, and possibly eliminate the need for a voter ID law.

**Ann Ashford:** Voting is our most important right and must be secured from the influence of all bad agents. The House passed the Safe Act and the Shield Act in 2019 and both must be passed by the Senate. The Safe Act provides for voting security, banning voting machines connected to the Internet, mandated cyber security measures, requiring voting machines to be manufactured in the US, and paper ballots as backup. The Shield Act requires any candidate for federal office report any offer of foreign assistance, forbids campaigns from sharing information with foreign agents, and applies the rules to online ads as well as tv/radio. Finally, Citizens United must be addressed to remove the influence of dark money. Transparency must be legislated and enforced to prevent undue influence by foreign or domestic actors.

**Kara Eastman:** We need to aggressively tighten cyber-security and prosecute officials who illegally take foreign contributions in violation of federal law.

**Gladys Harrison:** Congress should do what every is necessary to ensure that our elections are protected from foreign influence. The right to vote is a privilege for everyone born in America, and those who come here and become citizens. There are parts of our Constitution which were added to ensure that we all have the right to vote, and we must be committed to defending that basic right. The House has already voted and passed The For the People Act of 2019, which protects the rights of voters, makes it easier to vote, decreases gerrymandering and limits efforts to purge the voter rolls. What we need now is for the Senate to vote and pass this act to protect our right to vote.

## What would you do to lessen the effects of climate change?

**Paul Anderson:** The low sulfur coal that comes out of Wyoming, is the sole reason I got to enjoy a 35 yr. career with the railroad. The carbon foot print from burning coal and petroleum products, has probably had the largest negative effect on our climate. In my view, the 24/7 availability of nuclear power to generate our electricity, would be the best way to lessen the effects of climate change. Solar and wind generation, are not available 24/7. Congress, also needs to support and encourage, high speed light rail, and electric car production.

**Ann Ashford:** The House has passed the Climate Action Now Act, HR 9 and it must be passed by the Senate. The Act keeps the United States in the Paris Agreement and requires the President to develop and update annually a plan for the US to meet its obligations within the agreement. Under this Act, the President must include steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025, provide clean energy job development in rural areas, slash emissions, and cut off new fossil fuel development on public lands. I will support legislation that will move to de-carbonize the US energy system by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5°C or below. Additionally, I will support actions such as the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, sponsored by the Citizens Climate Lobby, that bring all government, industry, and individual citizens together with a common goal.

**Kara Eastman:** I support the Green New Deal. We need to move to carbon-neutral energy. Basically let's get everything on the grid and make the grid green.

**Gladys Harrison:** To lessen the effects of climate change we must continue to lead, and educate the world on climate change. We must develop a realistic plan that allows us to care for and clean up the environment without causing a loss of jobs or business. We need a plan that creates a win-win situation for all of us, as well as the environment, and that's going to require a true partnership between government, technology, business, science and unions.

## What are your thoughts on immigration policy?

**Paul Anderson:** I believe that the number of non-citizens should be limited. I would support legislation to do away with the birthright of children, born of illegal immigrants. I also do not favor, building a wall on our north or south border. I would favor legislation that would require all employers, who have non-citizen workers, to provide time off (with pay), to learn how to read, write, and speak the English language. I would also favor legislation, to shorten the amount of time and amount of money, that it takes to become an American citizen.

**Ann Ashford:** The US immigration policy must recognize our history and role in the world as being the beacon of hope and aspiration. We must never again tolerate children in cages or turning away asylum seekers. Steps to take include: 1) We must provide a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and their families; 2) Never separate families at the border; 3) Never use for-profit prisons to house individuals coming in at the border; 4) Allow individuals to be in the US while waiting for status determinations, and not require them to return to their country of origin; 5) Once the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled, accept a larger share of refugees and asylum seekers; 6) Assuming hiring levels return to pre COVID-19 levels, increase the number of work permits and visas available; 7) Suspend the operation of detention camps during the COVID-19 pandemic releasing those who have not been otherwise charged with a felony to alleviate the virus propellant effect of detention activities.

**Kara Eastman:** We need a clean DACA bill passed right away. We need to protect TPS individuals. We need to move away from "enforcement only" policies. We need to fully fund the state department and increase foreign aid to countries that are economically struggling.

**Gladys Harrison:** Unless your ancestors were among the indigenous peoples of this country, we are all immigrants—some by choice, and some by force. My vision is that we would continue to be a country that provides opportunities for people to legally come to this country, adhere to our existing laws and ultimately to become American citizens. I have a member of my family that is a 'Dreamer.' Their parents were seeking a better way of life, and they came here as children. This family grew up in America, was educated here, made friends in America, learned to read, write and speak English in America; made memories in America and graduated high school in America. As an adult, they became a tax paying member of our society. This is the only home they know. We need to create a path for citizenship for 'Dreamers,' enforce the laws that we currently have around immigration which legally allow people to come here from foreign countries and ensure that our borders are protected in a safe and sensible manner.

### **What, if any, changes would you recommend for "sensible gun legislation"?**

**Paul Anderson:** I'm a strong supporter of the 2nd amendment. I would support legislation, that would require, that when a gun is purchased at a gun shop, gun show, from a neighbor, friend, or family it must be registered. Of course, the big loophole with this would be, persons who intend on committing a crime with a gun, won't be registering their gun. A number of years ago, I saw this on a bumper sticker, "Gun Control is Not About Guns", I agree with the message.

**Ann Ashford:** It is possible to provide for sensible gun regulation while protecting 2nd amendment rights. Every life lost to gun violence is one life too many. I would recommend at least the following legislation: 1) universal and expanded background checks; 2) close the boyfriend loophole; 3) adopt national red flag laws; 4) regulate magazine purchases; 5) restrict individuals convicted of hate crimes from purchasing firearms; 6) adopt national red flag laws to permit local law enforcement to obtain a court order to remove firearms from individuals believed to be a danger to themselves/others; 7) fund research into gun violence causes and effects; and 8) enact "no fly, no buy". Almost 20 years ago, a friend committed suicide using a gun and none of this legislation could have prevented that. But we owe it to our fellow human beings to prevent every loss of innocent life possible.

**Kara Eastman:** I support red flag laws and universal background checks on the federal level.

**Gladys Harrison:** Having been the victim of gun violence, the changes I would recommend for sensible gun legislation are comprehensive background checks, raising the minimum age to purchase a gun, extend requirements for multiple purchases and mandatory training on gun safety.

## **Nebraska Unicameral Legislature**

### **Legislature District 5**

**Mike McDonnell (D):**

*Website:* [www.votemcdonnell.com](http://www.votemcdonnell.com)

*Occupation:* President of the Omaha Federation of Labor AFL-CIO

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska State Senator Legislative Dist. 5 January 2017-Present

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska State Senator Legislative Dist. 5, January 2017-Present

*Education:* Masters in Public Administration Bachelors in Criminal Justice Associate Degree in Fire Protection Technology

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Knights of Columbus Council 10184 Saint Thomas More Festival Committee

**Gilbert Ayala (R):** No response received.

### **Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?**

**Mike McDonnell:** Yes! I would like to adopt a more nonpartisan approach similar to what the State of Iowa has done. We could use a nonpartisan state agency and an outside advisory commission to draw the districts.

## How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?

**Mike McDonnell:** Reducing recidivism will reduce overcrowding. I introduced 2 bills this year that will help accomplish this. LB

1096 will be a private public partnership to teach skilled trade classes, to people within 18 months of being released from prison. LB 1097 will double the size of the current young adult court, which is a problem solving court. This court works with people age 18-26 to help with employment and addressing other issues to keep them out of the Nebraska prison system.

## Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?

**Mike McDonnell:** No!

## Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?

**Mike McDonnell:** Yes! I believe there should be limits on the amount of money individuals and organizations can spend on political campaigns. Based on not letting an individual or organization have more political influence.

## Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?

**Mike McDonnell:** Yes! I believe Nebraska workers should receive paid leave to deal with their own serious health conditions, and mothers should receive paid maternity leave following the birth or adoption of a child.

## Legislature District 7

**Jorge Sotolongo (R):**

*Website:* [www.gosotolongo.com](http://www.gosotolongo.com)

*Occupation:* Commercial Real Estate Executive

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None Education: Bachelor's Degree in Biology from Saint Louis University Master's Degree in Business Administration from University of Nebraska at Omaha

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Mayor Stothert's Millennial Advisory Committee (3 years)

**Tony Vargas (D):** No response received.

## Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?

**Jorge Sotolongo:** I am in favor of a fair, balanced, and bipartisan process of redistricting. The question is whether an independent body, outside of the legislature, would do a better, more equitable, job of redistricting. There may be constitutional implications and/or hurdles to this type of decision. If the legislative committee can uphold transparency and bipartisanship, I support its activities, but would also suggest the involvement of outside experts like the Metro Area Planning Agency.

## How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?

**Jorge Sotolongo:** Despite alternative solutions that seek to relieve the number of incarcerated individuals in Nebraska, several of which I do support, I still believe we will need to build new facilities in the future. For example, changes to restrictive housing alone will necessitate more space. Construction of new facilities raises questions about staffing, construction costs, operating expenses, and how these facilities will improve our current system.

## Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?

**Jorge Sotolongo:** As a Hispanic citizen, I hope to be a unique, informed, and pragmatic voice for District 7's Hispanic constituents. This involves supporting policies that help newly arrived residents to feel part of our community. Obtaining proper ID and other official documents can be daunting, but ultimately important for creating a sense of belonging and peace of mind. My plan would be to consult the data on voter fraud and voting patterns in District 7, in order to come to a fair decision on voter ID.

## Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?

**Jorge Sotolongo:** As a candidate, I have familiarized myself with Nebraska's rules and guidelines enforced by the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission. I have been pleased by the level of transparency that these rules provide. I will continually assess these guidelines and practices, as I move forward.

## Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?

**Jorge Sotolongo:** I think paid family leave is extremely important, because it allows families to care for their loved ones without fear. However, a universal mandate for paid family leave would be detrimental to many small businesses in my district. The demand for better maternity/paternity leave and other paid leave has increased in the market, and companies continue to respond to these demands, in order to remain competitive. I support solutions that incentivize employers to continue this trend.

## Legislature District 9

### John Cavanaugh (D):

*Website:* [www.cavanaughfornebraska.com](http://www.cavanaughfornebraska.com)

*Occupation:* Assistant Public Defender

*Education:* B.A. - Catholic University of America M.A.- Environmental Policy from Vermont Law School J.D. - Vermont Law School

*Volunteer Experience:* ModeShift Omaha, Aksarben/Elmwood Park Neighborhood Association

### Marque Snow (D):

*Website:* [www.votesnow.com](http://www.votesnow.com)

*Occupation:* Senior Advisor / Development

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Omaha Public Schools Board Member May 2013 - Present Board Vice President January 2017- January 2018 Board President January 2018 - Present

*Education:* University of South Dakota, B.S. Political Science & History 2011

*Volunteer Experience:* 100 Black Men of Omaha (Mentor) African Culture Connection (Board Member) Huespring Omaha (Advisory Board Member)

### Mark Vondrasek (D):

*Website:* [www.markinmidtown.com](http://www.markinmidtown.com)

*Occupation:* Bicycle Mechanic & Field Technician

*Education:* Some College, UNL, UNO, Metro CC. *Volunteer Experience:* Organizer w/ "Omaha Tenants United", usually do 20-30 hours a month of tenant organizing: canvassing & surveying folks who rent, help tenants negotiate with landlords, help tenants negotiate evictions, go to Eviction Court, need 2000+ words for this.

## Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?

**John Cavanaugh:** Yes, we need a nonpartisan redistricting process independent of elected officials. The people of the district should pick their elected official and not the other way around. I would support a nonpartisan commission to draft all election districts. I would further support nonpartisan elections for all state and federal offices in Nebraska as well.

**Marque Snow:** Yes,

**Mark Vondrasek:** Yes. Currently State Senators do it and that is unacceptable; the people who will benefit should not choose their voters. I would support an independent redistricting authority to be created for NE.

### **How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?**

**John Cavanaugh:** We can not build our way out of a prison overcrowding crisis. We need to address the root causes of crime and incarceration. We need to start with investing in early childhood education. Increase access to health care and mental healthcare for children and adults. We must increase access to Drug and Alcohol treatment. The jail and prison system should not be the only place people can get treatment. We also need sentencing reform and to change our approach to non-violent offenses.

**Marque Snow:** Prison reform

**Mark Vondrasek:** My opinion is that our prison system, here in Nebraska and the rest of the US, is so horrific that one could almost argue letting most prisoners out would have better societal effects than to continue to let current conditions exist at all. I am just a Worker not an academic, but I work hard to understand prison abolition theory b/c what I believe prisons should be is so radically different from their current form that it would only be appropriate to call it abolition. Need more space.

### **Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?**

**John Cavanaugh:** No, we should be making it easier to vote, not harder. Voter ID disenfranchises the poor and those less able to get a state ID. If elected, I will advocate for Universal Vote By Mail. It is safer and less expensive than traditional voting in person. It is also more secure. Universal Vote By Mail has the added benefit of giving people the time to sit at their dinner table with their ballots and the League of Women Voters' guide to do their research.

**Marque Snow:** No

**Mark Vondrasek:** No. Every single person should be automatically registered to vote.

### **Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?**

**John Cavanaugh:** Yes, money has a corrupting influence on anyone, and the need to raise large sums of money perverts the purpose of elections, which is to communicate with voters. Some money is necessary to communicate effectively. Individuals should be able to contribute to campaigns, but corporations and unidentified entities should not be able to spend money on behalf of candidates. If elected, I would work to amend the Constitution to repeal the Citizens United opinion and get dark money out of politics.

**Marque Snow:** Yes, lobby and interest groups

**Mark Vondrasek:** Yes. It's very clear that our current problems are caused by the undue influence those with money have on our political and economic affairs. I advocate for Workers to organize at their workplace, in their homes/apartments, and in general in their daily lives to fight back and take power back from bourgeois politicians and their business counterparts. 500 characters is not enough space to adequately outline "specific" restrictions I would support, of which there are many.

### **Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?**

**John Cavanaugh:** Yes, the recent Covid-19 crisis has laid bare the weaknesses in our society. People go to work when they are sick, risking the health of everyone around them because they can not miss a paycheck. Now, we have a glaring example of what advocates for family leave have been saying for years. We need family medical leave to help the individual but also to protect the rest of society.

**Mark Vondrasek:** Absolutely yes. In order to support working families during medical problems who have been left behind by the "free market". Capitalism doesn't value the health of families because it doesn't make profit to keep families healthy. We need a lot more than PFML. We need Universal Healthcare. We need organized and Unionized workplaces so greedy bosses can't revoke healthcare or layoff Workers in a crisis like a worldwide pandemic.

## Legislature District 11

### **Fred Conley (D):**

*Occupation:* Self-Employed

*Current Public Office, dates held:* 1999-Present Papio NRD Board

*Past Public Office, dates held:* 1988: Interim Mayor – Omaha 1981-1993: Omaha City Council Member 2005-2016

Metropolitan Community College Board Education: 1966 High School – Omaha North High 1976 B.S. Psychology & Sociology 1980 J.D. Creighton Law School

*Military Experience:* 1967-1970 Air Force – Sergeant

*Volunteer Experience:* Served as a member of the Sierra Club, a board member of the Charles Drew Health Center, President of the North Omaha Foundation and was a founding member of the 100 Black Men of Omaha.

**Gwen Easter (NP):** No response received

### **Terrell McKinney (D):**

*Website:* [www.peopleforterrellmckinney.com](http://www.peopleforterrellmckinney.com)

*Occupation:* Career Specialist

*Education:* Creighton University School of Law, 1L Masters of Business Administration, Midland University Bachelors of Science, Sport Business Management, Maryville University St Louis

*Volunteer Experience:* Black Men United - 2016 - Present At Large Board Member. Ready RP Nationals Wrestling Team, 2016 – Present. Assistant wrestling coach. Policy Research & Innovation, 2019 - Present Board Member

### **Teela A. Mickles (D):**

*Website:* [www.compassioninactionnc.com](http://www.compassioninactionnc.com)

*Occupation:* Founder and CEO of compassion in action Inc

*Current Public Office, dates held:* n/a

*Past Public Office, dates held:* n/a

*Education:* Associate's degree in chemical dependency counseling

*Military Experience:* n/a

*Volunteer Experience:* 36 + years in the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services

**John Sciara (R):** No response received.

**Cornelius F. Williams (D):** No response received.

### **Dennis J. Womack (D):**

*Website:* [www.dennisjwomack.com](http://www.dennisjwomack.com)

*Occupation:* Retired (2019) from U.S Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Job Title Economic Assistant

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Appointed as Chief Deputy Election Commissioner, by Governor Mike Johanns

*Education:* attended, Metropolitan Community College and University of Nebraska at Omaha

*Military Experience:* N/A

*Volunteer Experience:* N/A

## Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?

**Fred Conley:** Prior to my election to City Council in the 1980s, I fought for district level elections in Omaha and Nebraska as a community activist. The creation of fair districts is an issue I am passionate about and it directly impacts my district. I support an independent commission for redistricting after the 2020 Census. I will support any legislation that guarantees a nonpartisan approach.

**Terrell McKinney:** Yes, its needed to ensure districts aren't slighted in one parties favor and to also make sure Nebraskans are actually represented by members of their community. This is also needed to make sure communities like North Omaha aren't neglected economically. District 11 is a minority majority and its important that we keep it that way. Lines have been drawn in the past to get individuals elected and to also limit change in our state. The good life is needed for all Nebraskans not just a few.

**Teela A. Mickles:** Yes I believe it should just to make the boundaries more clear and realistic and also considering how the city has grown and the growi.get diversity of the populations.

**Dennis J. Womack:** Yes, It requires an Independent Group who has no interest, but to assure that it is done fairly.

### **How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?**

**Fred Conley:** Criminal justice reform is long overdue in Nebraska. We do not need to build more prisons; we need to find solutions to reduce the number of prisoners. One avenue is to prevent non-violent offenders from going to prison and instead focus on rehabilitation to reduce recidivism.

**Terrell McKinney:** Prison overcrowding should be addressed by taking a hard look at the system itself there is a need for change inside and outside of our local jails and prisons. We first have to look at the root causes poverty, unemployment, mental health, housing, and the over policing of North and South Omaha. Our state must begin to rethink sentencing guidelines, ending cash bail, making probation and parole less punitive, programming inside prisons, re-entry, and police accountability.

**Teela A. Mickles:** The community especially District 11 needs to be aware educated and actively involved intervention pre-release, reentry, transition incommunity re-establishment for our prison population. District 11 is heavily represented in the correctional facilities and under-represented in voter registration and Progressive activity for the resolution. Community involvement in Partnerships for prevention, interventions, reentry and transition are necessary to reduce the population of confined individuals.

**Dennis J. Womack:** Currently we have a mix violent and non- violent criminals in the same facilities I believe that some have minor or less violent offenses that could lead to house arrest this will lead to reducing the population in the facilities. However it would create what may be viewed as more work for probation officers and prison staff, they will need to become more active as they conduct home visits and checking monitoring devices.

### **Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?**

**Fred Conley:** No – we should remove any and every barrier to voting.

**Terrell McKinney:** No, there is no need for voter ID.

**Teela A. Mickles:** Unfortunately I am not educated enough in this area to determine the best methodology regarding voter ID

**Dennis J. Womack:** No I am opposed to any additional Voter ID laws, when You register to vote you have to have your Nebraska Drivers License or State issued ID available.

### **Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?**

**Fred Conley:** Yes, there should be increased restrictions on money in politics. Currently, we have no transparency in the system. Whatever restrictions were appropriate prior to the Citizens United decision are a good starting point.

**Terrell McKinney:** I think we have to look at money in politics and how its being used to stifle change in our state and country. We have to ensure that candidates are committed to their respective communities once elected and not making decisions based on who contributed to their campaigns. We need to either limit the impact super pacs can have on politics or provide resources to candidates especially candidates of color that lack resources/connections.

**Teela A. Mickles:** In my opinion sending should be to the point of easy access for any individual who is willing to run for public office regardless of their economic status. The political field should be based on a person's commitment qualifications to serve rather than the size of their bank account. I believe without certain restrictions qualified committed individuals may be forced out of the campaign to run for political offices

**Dennis J. Womack:** I feel that Campaign financing laws need to be revised. I believe there should be restrictions on candidates financing their own campaigns to the tune of Billions of dollars.

### **Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?**

**Fred Conley:** Yes, there should be a paid family medical leave program. Many people are currently left without access to sick leave. This puts working-class families in a vulnerable position when someone becomes ill or injured. A reasonable duration of leave (12+ weeks) is appropriate and legislation ought to protect workers so they can use their leave when needed without risk to their employment. There are examples in place and it protects families during times of uncertainty.

**Terrell McKinney:** Yes, its needed so families can have a security blanket in times of need and also as a tool to attract business and talent to our state.

**Teela A. Mickles:** absolutely for obvious reasons especially now during the current crisis with a Coronavirus

**Dennis J. Womack:** Yes the State of Nebraska needs a paid family medical leave program, since medicine is not an exact science there unforeseen circumstances that can occur during any procedure.

## **Legislature District 13**

**Justin T. Wayne (D):** No response received.

## **Legislature District 31**

### **Mark B. Gruenewald (R):**

*Occupation:* Licensed Insurance Advisor

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Director of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

*Education:* B.S. Of Agricultural Economic with a Computer/Chemistry minor

### **Alexander J. Martin (D):**

*Occupation:* Service Manager

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Education:* BBA

*Military Experience:* Navy

*Volunteer Experience:* Habitat for Humanity, UNICEF, UNAIDS.

**Rich Pahls (R):** No response received.

### **Tim Royers (D):**

*Website:* [www.royers2020.com](http://www.royers2020.com)

*Occupation:* Teacher

*Education:* Bachelor of Science in Social Science Education, Master of Arts in History, Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Administration

*Volunteer Experience:* YMCA, Volunteer Coach Teen Center, Volunteer Instructor

### **Melanie Williams (D):**

*Occupation:* Executive Dir. Family Advocacy Movement

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Appointed Member of the Nebraska Children's Commission (appointed in 2019 for 2

year term) / Current elected member of the Douglas County Democratic Party Central Committee (2016-present)  
*Past Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska Democratic Party State Central Committee, 2016-2019  
*Education:* Dundee Elementary School, Omaha Central High school, Omaha University of Nebraska at Omaha - Majored in English in 1978 / Returned to major in Communications/Journalism in 1988 and again in 2004. Focuses: Sociology, Women's Studies, Black History  
*Military Experience:* None.  
*Volunteer Experience:* In early college years, I volunteered at the Omaha Children's Museum. In 2009, I founded the Family Advocacy Movement (FAM) which has provided a decade of volunteer advocacy for families and children intertwined with child welfare & juvenile justice.

## **Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?**

**Alexander J. Martin:** For Sure. Let's try to be fair

**Tim Royers:** Yes. We need an independent commission to draft any modifications to political boundaries for the Legislature to approve. The redistricting process should be designed to be as non-partisan as possible.

**Melanie Williams:** Yes. The only way to ensure democratic representation for citizens is by independent, non-partisan remapping that does not favor one party affiliation over another. Our current system is undemocratic, as it provides for partisan redistricting - first via legislative committee that is overwhelmingly comprised of Republican state senators, then via the full Unicameral, with a significant Republican majority, and finally our Republican governor, who can use his veto power, benefitting Republicans.

## **How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?**

**Mark B. Gruenewald:** Over 40% of the inmates suffer in prison suffer from mental illness. Re-opening lock down mental health facilities in Norfolk and Hastings will solve prison overcrowding. So, will having ICE deport those who qualify. The Win/Win is Omaha no longer needs to waste more than \$100M for a needless new prison. Out state communities familiar with dealing with mental health facilities are revitalized. The need for mental health is a growth industry. Nebraska was a leader. It can be again.

**Alexander J. Martin:** Stop incarcerating non violent drug offenders for one?

**Tim Royers:** Thoroughly examining sentencing guidelines, and assessing what we currently offer to assist people in completing their sentences so they can successfully return to the community and have gainful employment. Reducing recidivism is critical to addressing prison overcrowding.

**Melanie Williams:** First we must take back from private interests and ownerships the public responsibility of addressing incarceration & rehabilitation. We do not need to build more prisons in a country that already incarcerates more citizens per capita than any other country on earth, including China. Further, the systemic racism that is endemic to our country is also evident by the disproportionate minority populations of jails - far too many for victimless crimes, exacerbated by the devastating "War on Drugs."

## **Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?**

**Mark B. Gruenewald:** Yes, it makes no sense for illegal immigrants and others who game the system (vote early, vote often) to have the right. They vote for their self-interest. They, needlessly, gain the power to make hard-working taxpayers' foot their bills. After meeting our social net responsibility for citizens, it is time to kick the rest out of the cart. Input is welcome.

**Alexander J. Martin:** I don't feel the need for voter ID

**Tim Royers:** No, voter id is unnecessary. There is no evidence to indicate that there is any kind of voter fraud that would necessitate an ID requirement. More importantly, ID requirements have the potential to disenfranchise. And unless those IDs are provided free of cost, such a requirement could potentially violate the 24th amendment.

**Melanie Williams:** Absolutely not. We must work to expand and protect democracy, which includes tearing down barriers to voting, not building more. While this issue has been promoted, there has been no legitimate or significant evidence of voter fraud related to "voter imposters." Voter ID laws undemocratically target impoverished, minority, and historically disenfranchised populations the most - those more likely to vote against unfair austerity & weakened civil liberties measures, favored by Republican policies.

### **Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?**

**Mark B. Gruenewald:** It is time for the electorate to demand that their votes or the right to vote on an item be respected. Too many times, local public boards and officials have gone to the legislature to have foolish senators override a vote by the people that they, purportedly, represent.

**Alexander J. Martin:** I say all money out of politics. I've spent zero dollars on my campaign.

**Tim Royers:** Yes. This would really necessitate work at the federal level to overturn the current precedent established by Citizens United v. FEC

**Melanie Williams:** Yes. I am in favor of overturning Citizens United and reinstating the Glass-Steagall Act. Democracy and public interests are not best served when big-money and the super wealthy are able to use their private money for campaign financing, influencing our elections, gaining unequal access to lawmakers, and unduly shaping public policy. We should move toward public financing of campaigns & public elections, and away from lobbyists peddling private money/support, in exchange for political favors.

### **Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?**

**Mark B. Gruenewald:** Yes, this and the homestead exemption will free funds that help families and healthcare workers keep our elderly in their homes. Keeping the individual's money in the right hands for their benefit and away from unscrupulous agencies and individuals is appropriate.

**Alexander J. Martin:** Yes. Why? Covid19.

**Tim Royers:** Yes. The current COVID-19 outbreak has exposed a significant vulnerability with the lack of family leave impacting the community. We need paid family leave to not only help with the health and economic security of those people that would use those days, but also for the benefit of everyone else in the community.

**Melanie Williams:** Working families are not disposable cogs, but people. Lives are complex and full of uncertainty. The wealthiest country on earth can certainly afford to treat people with dignity by offering sustainable, good-paying work, and by not allowing unplanned & important life events to upend and displace. There are many reasons why working people may need to take personal time away from their jobs, while still having the ability to pay all bills. For a more stable economy, this right must be guaranteed

## **Legislature District 39**

### **Allison Heimes (D):**

*Website:* [www.heimesforlegislature.org](http://www.heimesforlegislature.org)

*Occupation:* Attorney Education: JD, Creighton University School of Law MS, Creighton University BA, University of Nebraska at Omaha

*Military Experience:* Military Spouse

*Volunteer Experience:* Foodbank of the Heartland, Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Kim Foundation, Attorney of the Day for immigrant kids, etc.

### **Lou Ann Linehan (R):**

*Website:* [www.LinehanforLegislature.com](http://www.LinehanforLegislature.com)

*Occupation:* State Senator

*Current Public Office, dates held:* State Senator, Legislative District 39 including Elkhorn, Valley, Waterloo and portions of

Millard and West Omaha, elected 2016; chair, Legislature's Revenue Committee, elected 2019

*Past Public Office, dates held:* none

*Education:* attended University of NebraskaLincoln and University of Nebraska at Omaha; Lewiston (Nebraska) High School

*Military Experience:* None/ While working for the U.S. Department of State, Lou Ann was assigned to Iraq several times between 2008 and 2012 where she worked closely with the U.S. Military.

*Volunteer Experience:* St Patrick's Catholic Church, Elkhorn; Women's Center for Advancement of Omaha, 2014 Distinguished Honoree; City Charter Review; Cable Television Board; past president, Meyer Board Auxiliary; treasurer, Parent Teacher Assoc; CCD education teacher

## **Does Nebraska need to change its method of redistricting? Why or why not?**

**Allison Heimes:** We need to use algorithmically derived district remapping that optimizes the creation of new districts based on equal numbers of voters and compactness and avoid the anti-democratic practice of gerrymandering.

**Lou Ann Linehan:** Redistricting is a specific and clear duty of Nebraska's non-partisan Unicameral Legislature. In fact, Article III Section 5 of Nebraska's State Constitution explicitly places this authority with the Legislature with the following sentence: The Legislature shall redistrict the state after each federal decennial census. I do not support delegating this duty outside the Legislature where the State Constitution clearly and appropriately places this authority.

## **How should the problem of prison overcrowding be handled?**

**Allison Heimes:** Is the primary function of prison to punish individuals for misdeeds or is it to rehabilitate people who have taken a wrong turn in life? I believe prison's primary function is to rehabilitate individuals so that they can rejoin society. Thus, we need to create rehabilitative programs and provide mental health treatment to inmates. We can limit the amount of people in prison for nonviolent drug offense and offenses related to mental illness if we address the root causes of criminal behavior.

**Lou Ann Linehan:** The solution is more beds and adequate programming for inmates who will re-enter society after prison. In the last two years more beds have been added including a 100 bed dormitory and a 160-bed work-release facility for women. One hundred beds are under construction at the State Penitentiary, and work has begun on a 64-bed facility for elderly and mentally ill inmates. The Legislature has also approved 384 more beds at the Lincoln Correctional Center for the state's worst-behaving inmates.

## **Do you feel there is a need for voter ID, if so why and how should it be implemented?**

**Allison Heimes:** No, there should not be any barriers to voting. It is my opinion, that in addition to no voter ID laws, election day should be a national holiday so that everyone can participate in their civic duty.

**Lou Ann Linehan:** According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of December 31, 2019 a total of 36 states have laws requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification. Voter identification laws are intended to prevent in-person voter impersonation and increase confidence in the election process, and I agree with those objectives. However, these laws cannot infringe on individual voter rights or serve as a discriminatory poll tax so they must be implemented carefully.

## **Should there be increased restrictions on money in politics? Why or why not and what specific restrictions would you support?**

**Allison Heimes:** We need campaign finance reform. I have many ideas on this matter, but to keep my answer brief and to the point, we need to have a ceiling on how much money can be raised total. Ceilings would prevent incumbents from being able to out-raise challengers before it's even an election year, they would prevent big companies and millionaires from being able to buy elections, and it would even the playing field for candidates who aren't wealthy, but who truly want to advocate for their districts.

**Lou Ann Linehan:** Nebraska candidates disclose all contributions and expenses over \$250 and non-individuals, including corporations, also report contributions in excess of \$250. These requirements provide transparency for how campaigns are funded. Adding restrictions on campaign contributions increases the likelihood contributions will end up in dark money

organizations which lack any transparency. Consequently, I oppose more restrictions which would increase unregulated, unaccountable campaign spending.

## Does Nebraska need a paid family medical leave program? Why or why not?

**Allison Heimes:** The healthcare system we currently have is not ideal. It is difficult to find affordable insurance, hospitals bill high amounts for basic treatments, and few employers offer paid sick leave, so when an individual gets sick it is catastrophic for a family. Medical emergencies bankrupt families. We need to offer a parachute for suffering families. If your reasons for running for office don't include taking care of your constituents and their families, then you aren't running for the right reasons

**Lou Ann Linehan:** Many large employers offer paid family medical leave and I applaud them for choosing to do so. What many employers have found is that in order to compete for employees they need to offer an attractive benefits package including things like paid family medical leave. However, many smaller employers can find it cost prohibitive to offer this benefit and I don't support imposing a mandate that would hurt small businesses which are the backbone of our state's economy.

## State Boards of Education

### Board of Regents – University of Nebraska

#### **Viv Ewing (D):**

*Website:* <http://EwingForRegent.com>

*Occupation:* Human Resources

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* Ph.D. University of Nebraska at Lincoln MS University of Nebraska at Omaha BS University of Nebraska at Omaha

*Military experience:* N/A

*Volunteer experience:* Salvation Army Tree of Lights Chair, UNMC Board of Councilors, UNO CPACS Board, UNO Alumni Board, Human Resources Assn of Midlands-Past President, Salvation Army Advisory Board, Rotary Board, Opera Omaha Advisory Board, Sienna Francis House Board

#### **Mike Kennedy (R):**

*Website:* <http://kennedyforregent.com>

*Occupation:* Attorney

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Millard School Board Member 2003 to Present, Omaha Public Library Board Trustee 2015 to Present.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Metro College Board Member 1999 to 2003, City of Omaha Charter Review Commission 2013, City of Omaha Naming Committee 2015 to 2017

*Education:* Juris Doctorate from Creighton University School of Law, Bachelors of Science from University of Nebraska-Omaha, High School Diploma from Creighton Preparatory High School.

*Military experience:* none.

*Volunteer experience:* I have volunteered at many community organizations over the years including the Boy Scouts of America, Millard Public Schools, and the Catholic Church.

#### **Jack A. Stark (R):**

*Website:* <http://StarkforRegent.com>

*Occupation:* Performance Psychologist

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* none.

*Education:* B.A. Philosophy- St. Francis Seminary. M.A. Counseling Psychology UNL Ph.D. Counseling Psychology. UNL.

*Military experience:* None.

*Volunteer experience:* Ak-Sar-Ben Award for thousands of hours of volunteer mental health counseling, UNL and

Creighton sports teams, 1000 presentations to churches, schools and non profits, National President of Disability Association and Community Foundation assistance

## **What role does the first amendment have on college campuses?**

**Viv Ewing:** The first amendment assures us of freedom of speech. This means that freedom of speech on college campuses should be allowed and supported.

**Mike Kennedy:** The 1st Amendment plays a vital role on our college campuses. A college campus is designed for learning and the civil exchange of ideas. As a person that has served on education boards for the past 22 years, including the Metro Community College Board, I believe a person serving on the Board of Regents needs to ensure that 1st amendment rights are not infringed upon and that the University has a campus climate that is civil and open to the exchange of differing opinions and ideas.

**Jack A. Stark:** The more serious and pressing issue in higher Education today is the restrictions on free speech and debate on American Campuses. Free speech zones, dis-invitations of speakers and campus shutdowns undermine our most important defining mission of the search for truth. I support the first Amendment fully as written and will support that standard on College campuses.

## **How do you see the future of funding for Nebraska's public universities?**

**Viv Ewing:** Given the economic climate of the State, I see the future of funding for Nebraska's public universities continuing to experience funding reductions due to budget cuts. I have been involved in efforts to advocate for less budget cuts. We have to create public private partnerships to increase the funding and continue to educate our students, retain talent, and be competitive economically.

**Mike Kennedy:** The University receives 59% of its budget from state appropriations which amounts to almost 1 billion dollars. That \$1 billion investment by the Nebraska taxpayers has a \$4.5 billion impact on Nebraska's economy. Nebraskan's know a good value when they see it. I believe the future for funding is bright if the Board of Regents continues to manage the budget wisely and invests in projects like UNMC's "Next Project" which will have billions of dollars of impact on our local and state economy.

**Jack A. Stark:** Recent adjustments to admission requirements will help with enrollment. However the University will still be facing funding constraints as they have exhausted what they will receive from the state and other sources. As a member of the Board of Regents I will review programs and make the tough decisions on what programs need to evolve or be cut in an effort to control costs for students and increase the quality of their education.

## **With the rising costs of higher education, how will you help to ensure that all young Nebraskans have access to a college education?**

**Viv Ewing:** I will help to ensure that all young Nebraskans have access to a college education by 1). supporting initiatives to reduce tuition cost. 2). Increase education accessibility in all parts of the state through expanded technology infrastructure. This would increase access to education, benefit agribusiness, and the economy.

**Mike Kennedy:** I have successfully worked on college affordability for the past 22 years. While serving on the Metro Board we worked to keep tuition low and expanded aid. While serving on the Millard School Board, I helped create Nebraska's first Early College program where high school seniors graduate with their Associates Degree from Metro. The University needs to work on securing more public and private funding for scholarships and continue its efforts in helping students obtain high paying internships

**Jack A. Stark:** UNMC'S NExt Project is a 3 billion public/private partnership that will be transformational for future students. We need to find similar public/private partnerships for all of our state colleges to better match students with their talents and areas of job growth in exchange for tuition for years of service particularly in STEM fields. This will help reduce tuition costs and excessive student loan burdens for the students upon graduation.

## State Board of Education – District 2

**Robert Anthony (R):** No response received.

**Lisa Fricke (D):**

*Website:* [www.lisafricke.com](http://www.lisafricke.com)

*Occupation:* Retired teacher

*Current Public Office, dates held:* State Board of Education Member Incumbent-Elected in 2016

*Past Public Office, dates held:* NE State Board of Education is my first public office

*Education:* Graduate of Bellevue East, BAE from Wayne State College, Earned five additional teaching endorsements, Taught English 6-12, Geography 7- 9, Speech 7-12, Language Arts 6-8, and Reading 8

*Military Experience:* My father served in the US Air Force for 30 years. Being a member of a military family gave me a global perspective that still guides many of my decisions today.

*Volunteer Experience:* I have served as a volunteer for the Red Cross, Salvation Army, an Intergenerational & TeamMates Mentor, helped with NeSA Assessments for Reading and Writing, and was also a gubernatorial appointee to the Special Education Accountability Commission.

**Do you see this board as being an elected or appointed body? Please explain your reasoning.**

**Lisa Fricke:** I see the Board as an elected constitutional body. According to the NE Constitution Article VII, Section 3: "The State Board of Education shall be composed of eight members, who shall be elected from eight districts of substantially equal population as provided by the Legislature." One state senator unsuccessfully tried to eliminate the State Board, and the legislature's majority vote demonstrated their support for the Board's work to ensure quality education for ALL students.

**What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?**

**Lisa Fricke:** School personnel, students, communities, and the state must work as a team to ensure school safety. School districts must have an up-to-date safety plan that utilizes best practices. Schools should have a process that allows students to report safety concerns. Several schools have weekly safety advisory meetings to assess potential safety issues--being proactive averts danger. Effective safety communication among all stakeholders is essential.

**How can the continuing education of teachers be supported?**

**Lisa Fricke:** Continuing education is important, but professional development meets immediate needs: Teachers should have input in this process. PD training improves teacher effectiveness which in turn improves student learning. Right now, mental health is a concern, but any training should start with districts ascertaining teacher needs. Then, the district can seek input from ESUs and the NE Dept. of Ed. that could provide trainers and best practice resources to support what teachers need to be successful.

## State Board of Education – District 4

**Jacquelyn Morrison (D):**

*Website:* [www.morrisonfor4.com](http://www.morrisonfor4.com)

*Occupation:* Attorney

*Current Public Office, dates held:* NA

*Past Public Office, dates held:* NA

*Education:* BBA (Accountancy)-The George Washington University, Juris Doctor - Georgetown University

*Military Experience:* NA

*Volunteer Experience:* Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) Volunteer, St. Cecilia's Cathedral Soccer Coach, Member of the Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Board, Former Mentor with Girls Inc Bold Futures Program

**Adrian Petrescu (NP):**

*Website:* [www.Adrian4NE.com](http://www.Adrian4NE.com)

*Occupation:* Professor and Teacher, Legislative Adviser, Diplomat

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* Doctor of Philosophy, Public Policy (hon), Economics of Science & Technology for Innovation, Univ of Pittsburgh, 2003 Juris Doctor, Creighton Univ, Omaha NE, 2016 Master of Science, Engineering, UPBucharest, Romania, 1989 M.A., Int'l Rel's, NSPSA, Ro

*Military Experience:* Yes.

*Volunteer Experience:* Midtown Neighborhood Alliance (MNA), Omaha NE 2015- Yates Future, #SaveYatesForOmaha, ensuring continuance of Refugee & Immigrants educational programming by OPS, & building repurpose, Nov 2019- Gifford Park Neighborhood OPS & GPNA, EdSpec Comm-2017

**Do you see this board as being an elected or appointed body? Please explain your reasoning.**

**Jacquelyn Morrison:** The State Board of Education is an elected body per the Nebraska State Constitution. I believe that the board should remain an elected body as it allows each district to vote for the candidate that best represents their district.

**Adrian Petrescu:** Nebraska State Board of Education is elected. It is very important for Nebraska Dept. of Education to respond to the citizens through representation by an elected board. Democracy is ensured, & the vision of the Nebraska Department of Education, "to lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living," can be fulfilled truthfully with equity towards all Nebraskans. Democracy often under-hears those who whisper--e.g. girls in STEM. This board must hear everyone.

**What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?**

**Jacquelyn Morrison:** I believe that safety is an extremely important issue. Within schools we can improve safety by addressing our growing need for behavioral and mental health services. If we are able to address these needs of students, teachers and students will be less exposed to danger. We also have to guard against outside threats to our schools. I think we do this by securing our schools and creating strategic partnerships with local officials and law enforcement.

**Adrian Petrescu:** Parents must take responsibility to nurture discipline & respect from early on in life of children, & ongoing. Role models. This way school children will behave better as they had & continue to have a good upbringing in partnership children-schools-families-communities. Early childhood structured learning opportunities help w/ early socializing among children before they come to school. Attention to diversity & inclusion as in Gifford Park. Training for teachers. Strong gun background checks.

**How can the continuing education of teachers be supported?**

**Jacquelyn Morrison:** The continuing education of teachers can be supported through funds specifically dedicated to professional development. As a regular practice, we should continuously survey the needs of teachers, and work with educators to develop course offerings that address those areas of need. Finally, I believe that we have to reward teachers (through raises and promotions) for their efforts so that they know that their efforts are recognized.

**Adrian Petrescu:** Training & professional development for teachers made available. Lecture/speakers series. Sharing of best practices. NED support for furthering educational opportunities--we did it with establishing partnerships between school district(s) and educational institutions (community colleges and universities and graduate programs), in SE Michigan, in S Texas, in Philadelphia. Peer system of support internally inside ESUs/Schools/Grade/Subject. Support from NSEA and OEA for continuing education. CECs?

# Douglas County Commission

## Douglas County Commissioner – District 1

### **Mike Boyle (D):**

*Website:* [www.mikeboyle.org](http://www.mikeboyle.org)

*Occupation:* Lawyer.

*Current Public Office, dates held:* County Commissioner

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Mayor of Omaha

*Education:* St. Cecilia's Cathedral High School U.N.O.1963 -1964 Creighton University 1962 - 1973 Creighton University Law School 1974 - 1977

*Military Experience:* Sole Surviving Son, Gold Star Brother

*Volunteer Experience:* American Red Cross, Combined Health Agency Drive, Urban League 1963,Holy Name Housing Board 1980 - 2006, Citizens for Educational Freedom, Co-Founder, Omaha 100

### **Roger Garcia (D):**

*Website:* [www.garcia2020.com](http://www.garcia2020.com)

*Occupation:* Nonprofit Executive Director

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Metro Community College, Board of Governors, 2 terms, 2013 - 2016 and 2017 - 2020

*Education:* Bachelors in Psychology and Latino/Latin American Studies at UNO - Masters in Public Administration at Bellevue University - Masters in Theological Studies at Iliff School of Theology - Doctorate in Ministry at Willamette University (in Progress)

*Volunteer Experience:* Co-coordinator for the Nonprofit Executive Institute - Former board member of the Immigrant Legal Center - Former board member of the Women's Center for Advancement - Former Big Brother/Big Sisters mentor (5 years) - Open Door Mission dinner server

**Tonya Ward (D):** No response received.

## **What element of the county's government is most effective, and why?**

**Mike Boyle:** There are many effective operations of County Government. The Douglas County Health Department under the leadership of Adi Pour,Ph.d stands out.. She and her staff are performing, so well. They are disseminating solid, accurate information and coordinating their work with all branches of our Government. Elected Officials, and Department leaders are serving us well, Our dedicated employees make us proud, We serve the Citizens of Douglas County. We are proud to serve.

**Roger Garcia:** The Treasurer's office in recent years has been operating within their budget, has added online and additional payment options for local residents, and successfully passed a bond through a public vote. Specifically, a few years back, the Treasurer's office did not accept debit or credit cards and now they do. This is an example of a County office listening to local residents and adding options that made things easier for taxpayers. County Treasurer John Ewing has been transparent & accessible.

## **What are some ways to provide property tax relief? Are there any services you think should be cut, and if so, why?**

**Mike Boyle:** No smoke and mirrors to this answer. WE NEED GAMBLING! Let's start with Sports Gaming. I heard Iowa pulled in \$76,000,000,000 the first month of Sports Betting. Gambling is legal in almost every State near Nebraska. I serve as co-chair of the Budget Committee with Commissioner P.J. Morgan, Douglas County Finance Director, Joe Lorenz, helps us look for spending cuts wherever possible. But, County Government is an arm of the State. We need to add GAMBLING REVENUE so we can cut property taxes

**Roger Garcia:** The County Board can stop raising our taxes like they did in 2019. Considering property valuations have gone up substantially within the last several years, the County is already receiving more tax revenue from those increased tax valuations. As a Commissioner I would cut the new effort to build an approximately 30 million juvenile justice center

that is being paid for by bonds that were not approved by voters and none of these funds go toward prevention nor mental health services for youth.

### **What do you see as the three most compelling problems facing your office?**

**Mike Boyle:** Prison crowding, Mental Health treatment and saving our young people from lives of crime are several important problems facing us. (High property taxes are a BIG PROBLEM, too). We need to enact fair bail relief so persons charged with misdemeanors can get back to work and back to their families. Mental Health care needs to be available to so many suffering neighbors and friends. The terrible crimes our young people are committing is alarming! We must let young people know they matter.

**Roger Garcia:** We need to engage all stakeholders in juvenile justice and build a strong consensus toward providing evidence-based prevention, intervention, and mental health services for our youth instead of building a new youth detention center that does not allocate funding toward youth programming. Best practices tell us to focus on the front-end of juvenile justice not the latter end of detention. We also need to address the adult County Jail overcrowding & have a better functioning County Board.

### **What should the county do to address climate change issues?**

**Mike Boyle:** Our Director of Environmental Services is a leader in his Field. Douglas County has adopted a Model, Low Impact Development Plan that conserves water and is cost effective. It calls for an end for dams that DO NOT stop flooding. DAMS FAIL. OPPD is offering options such as solar and wind generation. These renewable sources are needed. Thank you, OPPD Directors! I represented Douglas County in a Resilient Counties program sponsored by the National Association of Counties. Important lessons.

**Roger Garcia:** The County needs to ensure that all new buildings and renovations implement the latest and best practices in environmental sustainability, such as natural and solar lighting. At MCC I sponsored a board policy that made it a priority for all of our buildings and practices to take environmental sustainability into mind and ensure that there is coordination across all of our buildings to ensure system wide efforts in this area. The County should ensure the same across all of its many buildings.

## **Douglas County Commissioner – District 3**

### **Asit Goswami (D):**

*Website:* [www.votegoswami.com](http://www.votegoswami.com)

*Occupation:* Hospitalist Physician (Family Medicine trained)

*Education:* Family Medicine residency training at Creighton. MD from Marshall University in Huntington, WV. BS in Biological Physics from Washington and Jefferson University in Washington, PA. BA in Religious Studies from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL

*Volunteer Experience:* Gifford Park Neighborhood Association liaison to Gifford Park Elementary School. Vice President Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association. OTOC Housing Action Team. Heartland Workers Center. Nebraska Academy of Family Physician Scientific Affairs Comm.

### **Chris Rodgers (D):**

*Occupation:* Director of Community and Government Relations at Creighton University, Commissioner - Douglas County, Nebraska

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Douglas County Commissioner (2005 - Present)

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Member of Metropolitan Community College Board of Governors (1999 - 2004)

*Education:* Creighton University BA 92; MBA 99 and University of Nebraska at Omaha MPA 2002

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Salem Baptist Church, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc.

## What element of the county's government is most effective, and why?

**Asit Goswami:** All stakeholders must have a voice in wise planning for Douglas County residents. The voter approved 2016 Public Safety Bond issue is a terrific example. The County board met for months, listened to the public, and put the issue to a vote of the people, which passed with overwhelming support. The project retrofitted an existing County building, upgraded the 911 Center to a state-of-the-art facility, consolidated County offices, saved money on leases, and created an energy efficient campus.

**Chris Rodgers:** The Health Department is one of our most effective elements. I think we see it now through our response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

## What are some ways to provide property tax relief? Are there any services you think should be cut, and if so, why?

**Asit Goswami:** The County Board can lower the levy instead of raising it when property values go up. Even though the County has enjoyed a budget surplus for several years, they decided to raise the levy in 2019. Adjustments in the Homestead Exemption will provide disabled citizens and their caregivers property tax relief. With fresh eyes reviewing the budget, we will find efficiencies within existing departments. With a smart Master Plan incorporating zero based budgeting, services will have enhanced value.

**Chris Rodgers:** County Government runs very lean. Ending unfunded mandates from the state can help reduce property taxes.

## What do you see as the three most compelling problems facing your office?

**Asit Goswami:** Coronavirus has disrupted our County, and we will need a transparent plan for a sustainable recovery for our entire community. We need tools like emergency push notifications from Douglas County Health Department. The board meets at inconvenient times for the working public, proposed twice to close public comment and makes community decisions behind closed doors. We demand transparency. Let's reverse the trend of privatizing County government which decreases accountability for public services.

**Chris Rodgers:** Mentally Ill in adult corrections, reforming juvenile justice and preparing public health for its future in Douglas County.

## What should the county do to address climate change issues?

**Asit Goswami:** Climate change begins with retrofitting buildings vs. demolishing and building anew. Building a new downtown jail for our youth with promise without a vote of the people for the largest real estate deal in the history of Douglas County that will increase property taxes is not a priority for our community. To decrease our Carbon footprint, let's renovate the Douglas County Youth Center rather than build a downtown jail. Just like the 2016 Safety Bond which put climate change at the forefront.

**Chris Rodgers:** We should take opportunities to use renewable energy. I think this is the most immediate manner we can address climate change.

## Douglas County Commissioner – District 5

**Maureen Boyle (D):**

*Website:* [www.MaureenBoyleMD.com](http://www.MaureenBoyleMD.com)

*Occupation:* OB-GYN physician

*Current Public Office, dates held:* none

*Past Public Office, dates held:* none

*Education:* Marian High School; University of Nebraska at Omaha, Bachelor of Science in Business

Administration, major in finance; University of Nebraska Medical Center, Medical Doctor

*Military Experience:* none

**Joe DiCostanzo (D):**

*Website:* [www.joedicostanzo.com](http://www.joedicostanzo.com)

*Occupation:* High School Assistant Principal

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* University of Nebraska- Lincoln, B.S. Harvard Graduate School of Education, M.Ed.

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Benson Neighborhood Association, NLC Omaha, Benson Theatre Board of Directors

**Josh Henningsen (D):**

*Website:* [www.JoshHenningsen.com](http://www.JoshHenningsen.com)

*Occupation:* Legal Counsel, Nebraska Legislature

*Education:* University of Iowa College of Law, University of Kansas

*Volunteer Experience:* Metcalfe-Harrison Neighborhood Association, St. Pius St. Leo Education Committee, youth basketball coach

**Michael Young (D):**

*Website:* [www.michaelyoung2020.com](http://www.michaelyoung2020.com)

*Occupation:* Technology Management Consultant & Business Owner | Technology Consulting Solutions.

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Metropolitan Community College Board of Governors, District 2 (2016-Present), Transit Authority of Omaha Board of Directors Chairman (2010 – Present)

*Education:* Metropolitan Community College University of Nebraska at Omaha

*Volunteer Experience:* 100 Black Men of Omaha (Member), Association of Community College Trustees - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Member (representing MCC), Carole's House of Hope (Board President), Partnership 4 Kids (Book/Goal Buddy)

**What element of the county's government is most effective, and why?**

**Maureen Boyle:** As a physician, I'm a fan of prevention first, then treatment. It is prudent to spend a few dollars today to save dollars later. The Douglas County Health Department's WIC program is an example of this. Nutrition and education are provided to pregnant women, infants, and children. The early years are critical in child development. By stimulating growth and learning while young, we set kids up for success. This is not just cost-effective; it is the right thing to do.

**Joe DiCostanzo:** I feel the emergency management agency has been one of the most effective elements of county government. Government tends to work best with multi-agency coordination, and that is at the heart of the EMA. Activities like public alerts and siren notifications can seem very simple, yet there is much planning that needs to be done. As a high school administrator, I know how to effectively prepare and have prepared large groups of people for many different emergency scenarios.

**Josh Henningsen:** Douglas County employees are a hardworking and committed workforce. Unfortunately, the county departments they work for are often hampered by the county board's unwillingness to give them the resources they need to be as effective as possible.

**Michael Young:** The most efficient system within our county government is our revenue collection system and dissemination of funds for our educational systems. We have much room for improvement though, and it's time that we take a hard look at what we do well and what we don't, bringing in a 3rd party to help us evaluate if needed. The issue of Lincoln not taking serious budget constraints to counties and our districts is also a game we can no longer play as we seek to improve our revenue collection efficiency.

**What are some ways to provide property tax relief? Are there any services you think should be cut, and if so, why?**

**Maureen Boyle:** First, look at spending. For example, in HR, it is cost effective to minimize turnover for valuable front-line employees like CNAs, nurses, and corrections officers. It's more economical to keep these workers happy than to replace them. We should have a robust retention program. Second, we could look at more economies of scale between city and county services. Third, due to COVID-19, the county has expanded availability of services online. This can be a new way to do business.

**Joe DiCostanzo:** The continued increase of property taxes is a complex issue, and if it was an easy fix, our property taxes would be lower. The best way to cap property taxes from the county level would be to have a strong strategic plan that include property tax freezes and seeks for ways to better coordinate resources provided to county citizens. Once the strategic plan is being conducted, then there will be savings that should be passed on through property tax relief.

**Josh Henningsen:** High property taxes are most often caused by unfunded mandates from the state and federal government. To provide property tax relief, the county board must develop strong relationships with state and federal representatives to advocate for sufficient funding for all new state and federal programs and requirements. The county board can also engage in a more robust strategic planning process to allow more thoughtful investment to maintain infrastructure and provide services more efficiently.

**Michael Young:** The best way to increase revenue while providing property tax relief in Douglas County is to decrease our inherent cost of operating and be more thoughtful of how to expand margin. One of my 5 Pillars is economic development based on transitoriented design. As Chair of the Transit Authority, I helped execute the 2012 alternative analysis, allowing us to find efficient ways of operating to get better services instead of spending more or cutting essential services. Douglas County can do the same.

### **What do you see as the three most compelling problems facing your office?**

**Maureen Boyle:** 1. The budget. The board exists as a mandate from the state; so are some county services. Managing the budget can be a challenge when assigned projects you have to pay for. 2. Mental health. Needs are intensifying. Treatment options are scarce. The county is the "provider of last resort" and obligated to meet those needs. 3. Criminal justice. We are not consistently meeting the needs of those "in the system". Prevention is more efficient than treatment. The question is how do we go about it?

**Joe DiCostanzo:** Public safety is a top priority. This includes juvenile and adult detention, protecting the public, while ensuring offenders are set up for success after detention. Protecting tax payers by coordinating services to ensure maximum services are being delivered for each dollar being spent by the county. Ensuring Douglas County government is accessible, transparent, and accountable. All county meetings should be moved to the evening and all county business should be accessible online.

**Josh Henningsen:** The courthouse no longer has sufficient space to accommodate the courtrooms, attorneys, and other court personnel necessary to operate efficiently and provide access to justice. The jail is on the verge of serious overcrowding and understaffing issues. The juvenile justice system is poorly coordinated and provides inadequate community-based services. All three of these problems are symptoms of a larger failure over recent decades to develop and implement plans to address future needs.

**Michael Young:** The top three issues I see from the County perspective are: economic development, transparency and, most importantly, communication. It is high time our leaders stop restricting the line of communication – from decisions made in executive sessions to bringing in a Communications Director. An example is the lack of cohesive messaging on the COVID-19 response. A Communications Director can take on a role within the County to talk us through both crises and everyday issues we face as a community.

### **What should the county do to address climate change issues?**

**Maureen Boyle:** Everything possible. We should transition to electric vehicles for the county fleet. Convening with OPPD board members to brainstorm joint projects can be considered. When bidding on projects, preference should be given to contractors proficient in renewable energy. This is a big deal.

**Joe DiCostanzo:** It is essential to take actionable steps now to create a long-term solution to climate change. A plan should be created to set a target of transitioning to a carbon neutral footprint by all county buildings and operations. An example would be transitioning the county transportation to zero-emission vehicles. The county should also lead in creating a cross-sector alliance, in which entities (public and private) would sign on with goals to reduce their carbon footprint in all their business.

**Josh Henningsen:** As a member of the Metro Area Planning Agency, the county has an important role in addressing climate change issues. The county can do more to provide more environmentally sound options for recycling and solid

waste disposal. The county can also do more to push for a more efficient regional transportation system. The county also needs to be more prepared to handle increasingly likely emergencies like severe weather events and flooding.

**Michael Young:** Dealing with climate change is a double-edged sword, requiring a double-edged response. We must take a hard look at what are we going to do to ensure the best services possible while also taking responsibility for our planet. We can be efficient with services and still employ better, more eco-friendly practices. On the Transit Authority I helped bring buses running on compressed natural gas to Omaha. This reduced our emissions by almost 1,800 tons of carbon dioxide per year and reduced cost.

## Douglas County Commissioner – District 7

### **Clare Duda (R):**

*Occupation:* Farmer

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Douglas County Commissioner since 1993

*Education:* B.A. in math and physics

*Volunteer Experience:* 44 years EMT/firefighter with Ponca Hills VFD. 22 years on the Douglas County Health Center Foundation. Still active on both.

### **Mike Friend (R):**

*Website:* [www.votemikefriend.com](http://www.votemikefriend.com)

*Occupation:* Agent-Farm Bureau Financial Services

*Current Public Office, dates held:* none

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska Legislature, District 10 2003 through 2009

*Education:* Creighton University, BA, Mass Communications

## **What element of the county's government is most effective, and why?**

**Clare Duda:** The Covid -19 outbreak has displayed the incredible effectiveness of the Douglas County Health Department and Douglas County Emergency Management as they tirelessly work to ensure residents' safety. All Douglas County departments have coordinated together to provide needed services to the public under challenging conditions. Our preparations are being tested, and essential functions are not skipping a beat.

**Mike Friend:** The administrative function in all areas. County administration is a ministerial responsibility, which requires great attention to detail and sound fiduciary responsibility. Efficient appropriation of funding with the taxpayer in mind is paramount.

## **What are some ways to provide property tax relief? Are there any services you think should be cut, and if so, why?**

**Clare Duda:** The vast majority of Douglas County services are statutory. We have already cut the services I view as unnecessary. Budgeting is a non stop, constant search for any efficiencies we can gain.

**Mike Friend:** Internal auditing of processes and programs are important. Possible redundancy in law enforcement services could be addressed, as well as redundancy in other services between the city and county governments. Interlocal agreements are also a good way to potentially relieve certain redundancies.

## **What do you see as the three most compelling problems facing your office?**

**Clare Duda:** 1. The overcrowded Courthouse and the constantly growing pressures on the criminal justice system; finding consensus to move forward on reforming the juvenile justice system. 2. Meeting the community's growing mental health needs, including in the jail. We must also find a sustainable model for our detox program. 3. We are constantly aware that we have an overtaxed property tax base.

**Mike Friend:** Fiduciary/financial responsibility. The need for property tax relief. Understanding and implementing appropriate taxing authority (utilizing a vote of the people is one example)

## What should the county do to address climate change issues?

**Clare Duda:** I spearheaded installing Nebraska's first methane recovery system, now utilizing that methane for commercial purposes. We were the first government locally to require low impact development. We need to continue seeking energy efficiencies, and with more use of technology to aid in less travel and face to face meetings.

**Mike Friend:** Always implement best practices to seriously deal with our responsibility to be a good steward of the environment.

## Natural Resources District (NRD)

### Papio-Missouri River NRD – Subdistrict 9

**Tyler Berzina (D):**

*Website:* [www.tylerberzina.com](http://www.tylerberzina.com)

*Occupation:* Physics Teacher.

*Education:* Millard South High School (1993); University of Nebraska-Lincoln Bachelors (1998) and Masters (2004) in Secondary Science Education; UNL Assessment Endorsement (2006); UNL Graduate Science Courses (2008+).

*Volunteer experience:* American Legion Post 216; Assistance League of Omaha.

**Patrick Bonnett (R):**

*Website:* [www.patbonnettforprd.com](http://www.patbonnettforprd.com)

*Occupation:* Tax Accountant and Insurance Agent.

*Current Public Office, dates held:* I do not currently serve in public office. However, I am the current Vice-President for the Walnut Grove Condominium Association Regime 1 formerly an S.I.D.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* I have previously served on the Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District Board in Millard from 2012 - 2016. My main priority was getting Dam site 15A done which is now Fr. Flannigan Lake.

*Education:* I attended the Univ. of Nebraska and graduated with a BGSGA - Real Estate Finance & Land Use Economics. My Minors were in Sociology and Military Science. I hold multiple professional licenses and have several post-graduate professional designations.

*Military experience:* I served as a Multiple Rocket and Deep Attack Missile Systems Specialist in the US Army Field Artillery from 1993 to 1996. Then as a Unit Legal NCO in the US Army Reserve from 1996 to 2003.

*Volunteer experience:* I volunteer from time to time for the Red Cross, for my Catholic church St. John Vianney, and for youth sports programs. I have also served on the Millard Business Assoc Board, Future Omaha's Board and co-founded the Millard Alumni Association.

**James Houlihan (R):**

*Website:* [www.Votehoulihan.com](http://www.Votehoulihan.com)

*Occupation:* Accountant

*Education:* Bachelors degree from UNO BSBA emphasis in Accounting.

## What steps will you take to prepare for changes in climate trends that affect natural resource district management?

**Tyler Berzina:** We must prepare for a new normal with an ever-changing climate. Prevention is much cheaper and prudent than cleanup and rebuilding, and we still have far to go from our current vulnerable position. As a NRD board member, I will support the building of flood mitigation measures which will create robust protections against climate change as long as each best course of action is supported by evidence and is fiscally responsible within our limited taxpayer resources.

**Patrick Bonnett:** To prepare for potential changes in climate and specifically drought, I would investigate opportunities for Water Banking in Nebraska where needed and where it might make sense. Certain climate trends also appear to have impact on our Nebraska managed pollinator colonies and I would advocate for the restoration of the Honey Bee

population which has seen a 50% decline in recent years. I also support the President's advocacy to plant 1 Trillion trees and intend to expand the NRD's tree program.

**James Houlihan:** In order to be the best steward of our financial resources. I will vote to protect our lives, natural property and personal property. Following scientific data will help determine if our part of Nebraska will have future flooding issues or future droughts. Using these best estimates. I will vote to ensure our safety and our children's future.

## **How do you address the concerns of citizens and developers who want access to NRD projects?**

**Tyler Berzina:** As a forward-thinking physics teacher, I encourage, listen to, and support my students to be creative, objective, and innovative while making decisions based on evidence. I want to bring this same spirit to the NRD table when listening to the concerns of citizens and developers as they pertain to NRD projects. I look forward to hearing the pros and cons for specific projects, how developers can enhance project development, and am open to innovative efficiencies which can save taxpayer dollars.

**Patrick Bonnett:** I support the practice of allowing all NRD projects to be generally open to the public unless there is a potential health hazard as may be the case with certain marsh or water quality basins. Developers or other Municipalities sometimes target the acquisition of adjacent land and in those cases there may be certain opportunities for the taxpayer to realize a much greater return on their tax dollar. I would seek out those opportunities. I also intend to audit all Inter-Local Agreements.

**James Houlihan:** I want our citizens to have access to our natural resources. I want to help our younger generations have natural settings and stay here. Family is important. Creating natural settings will help to keep our children close to home.

## **If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Tyler Berzina:** Our community is in need of rebuilding damaged levees, enhancing and expanding flood control measures that were strategized many decades ago and have yet to be developed. Furthermore, urbanization, costs increased by waiting, current flood risks, and our need for recreation all necessitate completion of these projects sooner than later. I look forward to supporting flood mitigation and other needed projects that support the goals of the NRD, as these are well spent investments in our community.

**Patrick Bonnett:** Once elected, I will focus my efforts on the following 7 priorities: Flood Control; Air & Water Quality; Reduction of Soil Erosion and Stream-bed Sedimentation; Storm Water Runoff Control; Provide for High Quality Rural Water Supply; Improve Forrest, Fish & Wildlife Habitat; Provide Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Participation in Solid Waste Management and Recycling Efforts to help extend the Lifespan of our County Landfills which are an expensive burden to taxpayers.

**James Houlihan:** Priorities. 1) Ensure levees are repaired and recertified. 2) Identify

# **Public Service Commission**

## **Public Service Commission – District 2**

**Tim Davis (R):**

*Website:* <http://timjdavis.com>

*Occupation:* Candidate

*Education:* Two diplomas in Construction and Entrepreneurship. These were received from Southeast Community College and Western Iowa Tech.

*Volunteer experience:* Volunteered on the Don Bacon Campaign in 2018 One of the Douglas County Republican Volunteer of the Year in 2019.

**Krystal Gabel (R):**

*Website:* [www.krystalgabel.com](http://www.krystalgabel.com)

*Occupation:* Cybersecurity Technical Writer and Business Analyst

*Education:* Bachelor of Arts in Writing, magna cum laude, Briar Cliff University, 2002

*Volunteer experience:* I am a grassroots volunteer who co-owns the Peace Garden of South Omaha at 33rd Ave & R St, a community garden that grows and gives away free vegetables and herbs to anyone who stops by Free Food Saturdays from June-October.

**Crystal Rhoades (D):**

*Website:* [www.crystalrhoades.com](http://www.crystalrhoades.com)

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Commissioner Nebraska Public Service Commission 2015 – present.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Metropolitan Community College Board 2006-2014.

*Education:* Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, University of Nebraska, Omaha.

*Military experience:* None.

*Volunteer experience:* Chairwoman Douglas County Democratic Party 2016 - Present, National Association of Regulatory Commissioners, Vice Chair of Telecommunications Committee and the Rural Broadband Expansion Task Force.

**Why are you the best candidate for this position?**

**Tim Davis:** When I get elected, I will work to get the most up to date broadband service to the voters ahead of schedule. I will make sure the life-saving 911 system is in place allowing for fast response times. I will work to make sure we have the best rates available for all ride sharing options on the market.

**Krystal Gabel:** I am the up-and-coming conservative candidate who can win the General Election against the incumbent. I am dedicated to becoming a public servant who is transparent and accessible to all Nebraskans. I advocate for limited government and increased freedom from taxation, regulation, and oppressive laws. I believe in protecting all individuals, their natural rights and liberties, and their private properties from irrational establishment authority.

**Crystal Rhoades:** This position requires a detailed knowledge of telecommunications infrastructure, consumer protection law, transportation law, and the ability to understand complex technical topics. I have a proven track record of working with state and federal law and policy makers to produce results for constituents. During my tenure I've worked with the legislature to pass laws that legalized ride sharing, legislation to reduce robocalls, and improved accountability for companies receiving public grants. I

**If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Tim Davis:** I plan to sit down and discuss with the various cellular providers in the market to discuss what issues they are having when it comes to implementing the updated broadband services. I will also look into the Next Gen 911 system to make sure we are getting the best services possible.

**Krystal Gabel:** My priorities are to make the office of PSC work entirely for The People, including our right to freely participate and succeed in commerce. I will encourage a reduction in overbearing regulations and focus on making Nebraska's regulatory bodies more efficient with taxpayer dollars. I promise to find gaps in how PSC and our taxes are managed and push to streamline to reduce taxpayer burden. I am one of many who is saying NO to new taxes and overbearing regulations.

**Crystal Rhoades:** I'll continue to improve oversight of government funds such as 911 and universal service to ensure customers are getting high quality services at the lowest cost. When I started at the Commission the audits for 911 were running 3-5 years behind. I advocated to get those completed so taxpayers would have confidence their money was being spent appropriately. I've also been an advocate at the state and local level to expand access to high speed internet for low income customers and will continue t

## What are the three most important issues your community/county is facing and how would you address them?

**Tim Davis:** District 2 has a number of issues they deal with. First of which is the 911 response time. There have been a number of instances where services took longer than it should have. When I get elected I will review what is needed to make sure Next Gen 911 is up and running to minimize future response time. I will work closely with the telcom providers in the state to make sure that the voters are getting the most up to date broadband services at the best possible prices.

**Krystal Gabel:** 1) Nebraska is facing a mismanagement of taxpayer money. 2) We are passing bonds to make ends meet in education, infrastructure, and public services, yet lawmakers are still asking for money without any sustainable solutions. This must stop. I don't expect our residents to continue paying for everything. 3) We must be resourceful and forward-thinking in how we earn revenue and create jobs, including privatizing utilities as a solution to public sector budgetary problems and taxpayer burden.

**Crystal Rhoades:** 1. Funding and improving 911 call center reliability is critical in Douglas County. Currently our community has the highest call volume and contributes more to the 911 fund than any other county but we receive a fraction of the funding back to support our call center. I will work with other stakeholders to find a more equitable distribution of funding that is based on call volume and population. 2. There are frequent telephone outages in Douglas County resulting from failure to invest in our inf

## Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha (MUD)

### Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 3

#### **Gwen Howard (D):**

*Website:* [www.facebook.com/GwenHoward2012](https://www.facebook.com/GwenHoward2012)

*Occupation:* Retired

*Current Public Office, dates held:* MUD Board of Directors, Current Board Chairperson

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska State Senator, 2005-2013

*Education:* Omaha Benson High School; Midland University, BA; University of Nebraska, MSW, Social Work.

*Volunteer Experience:* Friends of the Library; Member, Dundee Neighborhood Association

#### **What factors would you consider when determining rates and rate changes?**

**Gwen Howard:** We continually address our critical infrastructure integrity, while minimizing the financial impact on ratepayers.

#### **What are the opportunities to improve efficiency for MUD?**

**Gwen Howard:** We have an efficient dedicated workforce intent on delivering clean water and reliable gas services. The more we get ahead of the aging infrastructure, we can reduce breaks that call for emergency repairs and overtime at all hours. MUD does an excellent job maintaining facilities. Fortunately, our pumping stations are mostly elevated and built at a distance that has helped us avoid more severe flood damage.

#### **If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Gwen Howard:** Continuing to provide open meetings with transparency and an opportunity for public participation. Also, continue to facilitate open communication between the Board, MUD management and our utility employees. Pushing forward on the necessary infrastructure priorities. In times of stress, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, ensuring essential utility services are not shut off.

## What effort would you make to meet the goal of increasing the use of renewable energy?

**Gwen Howard:** MUD is switching more of our fleet vehicles to a CNG (compressed natural gas) fuel source, and we are partnering with Metro Area Transit to bring more buses online to this alternative fuel. MUD continues to be forward thinking when it comes to preservation of the environment and use of renewable energy.

## Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 4

### **Tim Cavanaugh (R):**

*Occupation:* Chief Deputy Treasurer/Retired Omaha Police Captain (25+ years)

*Current Public Office, dates held:* MUD Board of Directors, 1999-now. Three-time Chairman.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* above

*Education:* Ryan High School UNO, C.J./Business Administration Creighton Law School, 1979-80 University of Nebraska Graduate School, MS, C.J./Public Admin Graduate, FBI National Academy

*Military Experience:* Regretfully, none.

*Volunteer Experience:* Rotary Club of Omaha, 17 years, past president and Rotary Foundation Board. Paul Harris Fellow, 3 times.

### **Tom Wurtz (NP):**

*Occupation:* Retired past President MUD

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* BA UNL 1971. Juris Doctorate UNL 1974.

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Knights of Columbus St. Wenceslaus Church. Challenger Alumni Softball (coach) President's Advisory Council UNL. Catholic Charities Board of Directors. Urban League Board of Directors. Governor's Water Policy Council. State Energy Policy Council.

## What factors would you consider when determining rates and rate changes?

**Tim Cavanaugh:** Number 1 is the ability for our ratepayer-owners to afford our services. Safety is a major concern, as well as the delivery of clean water and safe gas transmission.

**Tom Wurtz:** The first duty of a board member is to ensure the district has sufficient revenues to deliver water and natural gas safely to our customers with reasonable rates. I would consider all customer classifications (residential, commercial and manufacturing) to determine if all are treated fairly. We need to retain competent managers and employees, who have an understanding of the complexities involved in the delivery of gas and water to the public. I would also consider the level of customer service.

## What are the opportunities to improve efficiency for MUD?

**Tim Cavanaugh:** I challenged the staff to work toward a two-hour appointment window for service when we implemented GPS on service trucks which allowed for more efficient deployment of service trucks. Also, I pressed for the implementation of online payments. I am very proud of our high bond rating and the high level of funding of the employee's pension fund.

**Tom Wurtz:** The most important opportunity for efficiency is to ensure that the district remains a public utility with local control and ownership by our customers. Privatization would result in an immediate 25% increase in rates. More of our construction and field service personnel should report directly to job sites rather than district facilities in order to increase efficiency. Also the district should conduct a study to search for duplication of functions and continue discounted natural gas purchases.

## If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?

**Tim Cavanaugh:** Ramp up the progress toward water infrastructure replacement within an affordable rate structure.

**Tom Wurtz:** I will make all committee meetings open to the public. I will solve the water pressure problems in west Omaha, particularly in sub district 4. We need to provide better customer service for our customer owners. We need a comprehensive study of our rate structure to make sure we have an appropriate balance between monthly service charges and commodity costs. We need to conduct a comprehensive study of safety and security programs with emphasis on cyber security.

### **What effort would you make to meet the goal of increasing the use of renewable energy?**

**Tim Cavanaugh:** MUD delivers natural gas and water. The exploration of methane gas sources (garbage dumpsites) may be worthwhile.

**Tom Wurtz:** Although natural gas is not technically a renewable fuel source, it is 98% clean burning and better for the environment than other fuels. I will continue to encourage the utilization of natural gas and CNG in cars and trucks. This will reduce our carbon footprint. As past president of MUD, I instituted a program to convert the electrical power source for our regulator stations to solar energy. I would explore the possibilities of converting as much of the electrical usage to solar power.

## **Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha – Subdivision 5**

### **Tanya Cook (D):**

*Occupation:* Public Relations Consultant

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Metropolitan Utilities District Board of Directors, Subdistrict #5

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Nebraska State Senator, Legislative District #13 2009-2017

*Education:* University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Master of Arts Georgetown University, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Omaha Central High School, College Prep

*Volunteer Experience:* Current Board Leadership: Film Streams, Director Coalition for a Strong Nebraska, Leadership Team US Global Leadership Coalition, Nebraska Advisory Committee Previous Boards: United Way of the Midlands Girls, Inc.

### **What factors would you consider when determining rates and rate changes?**

**Tanya Cook:** When determining rates and rate changes, I consider whether or not the increase to customer cost is truly necessary to the responsible management of MUD. I voted "no" to an increase to customer bills at the December 2019 Board meeting.

### **What are the opportunities to improve efficiency for MUD?**

**Tanya Cook:** In my short time as the MUD Director representing Subdistrict #5, I have found that the organization operates with a high level of efficiency and integrity. As I continue to serve, I plan to seek out opportunities for even better communication among divisions along with increased options for customer-owners.

### **If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Tanya Cook:** If elected, my priorities would be to identify ways to improve service to customer-owners.

### **What effort would you make to meet the goal of increasing the use of renewable energy?**

**Tanya Cook:** I support MUD's current comprehensive sustainability plan and look forward to viable renewable energy options as they emerge.

# Omaha Public Power District (OPPD)

## Omaha Public Power District – Subdivision 1

### **Amanda Bogner (D):**

*Website:* [www.amandabogner.com](http://www.amandabogner.com)

*Occupation:* Engineer

*Current Public Office, dates held:* OPPD Board of Directors, 2019 - 2020.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A.

*Education:* B.S. Architectural Engineering, University of Kansas (2002).

*Military experience:* None.

*Volunteer experience:* UNL Architectural Engineering Industry Mentor Corp; The Big Garden; Lindenwood Homeowners Association; USGBC Flatwater Chapter; USGBC Energy and Atmosphere Technical Advisory Group; St. Vincent de Paul; Leadership Omaha Class #39.

### **Peter Sakaris (R):**

*Website:* [www.isssecuritysolutions.com](http://www.isssecuritysolutions.com)

*Occupation:* Cyber Security Subject Matter Expert, Department of Defense

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Education:* MS Information Security-Graduated with Distinction/ BS Physics

*Military experience:* US Navy, Flight Deck Operations, Western Pacific deployments US Army Advisor to the Commander 82nd Airborne Division –Afghanistan Operations Advisor to the US Army Mission Command Training Program FT Leavenworth, KS Member US Naval Institute.

*Volunteer experience:* Member- Downtown Omaha Rotary International Past Chairman- People with Disabilities Committee.

### **Mark E. Treinen (R):**

*Occupation:* Retired

*Current Public Office, dates held:* none.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* OPPD director from November, 2017 through December, 2018.

*Education:* BSBA in accounting from Creighton University CPA.

*Military experience:* none.

*Volunteer experience:* served on boards of Catholic Charities (12 years), Marian High School (6 years), Youth Emergency Services (20 years), Sheltering Tree (1 year).

## **Is increasing the use of renewable energy a priority for you? If so, what is your plan for this increase? If not, why not?**

**Amanda Bogner:** Yes. As a current board member, I have been an advocate for increasing the use of renewable energy. I supported the Power with Purpose proposal which included 600 megawatts of solar. I also supported the revision of Strategic Directive 7 which set a goal for OPPD to achieve zero-carbon in all its operations by 2050. If I am re-elected, I will continue to support this transition and ensure that OPPD continues to provide affordable, reliable electricity.

**Peter Sakaris:** Increasing access to innovative renewable energy solutions and supporting technologies that will deliver reliable power to homes and businesses at a reasonable cost will help the Omaha Metropolitan area continue to grow economically while maintaining our exceptional quality of life. A careful blending of such technologies will dovetail with current plans to attract new businesses to the Omaha area and help our current business sector grow while maintaining and improving the quality of our enviro

**Mark E. Treinen:** Until significant advances are made in renewable technologies to reduce the impact of their intermittency issue, and significant developments are made in battery and other storage technologies (both from a cost and capacity standpoint) some use of fossil fuels will be necessary. OPPD is a very responsible utility from an

environmental standpoint and takes it very seriously. They are constantly monitoring new and developing technologies for future generation needs and grid management.

### **How would you work to ensure transparency at OPPD?**

**Amanda Bogner:** I support the work done by the LWV to get OPPD Board meetings live-streamed and believe that we need to continue to strive for greater public engagement in everything we do. OPPD will need public engagement as it seeks to adjust rate structures, implement the zero-carbon goal, and encourage more electrified transportation. The Board needs to ensure that the public is heard. This means that we need to hold public stakeholder meetings and gather input from customers before creating policy.

**Peter Sakaris:** I would seek to ensure that the public is aware of the issues that the Board will consider through the widest possible dissemination of information regarding the particular issues that the Board will consider. Such dissemination of information should be via print and social media at least two to three weeks before an upcoming meeting with a request from the public for input prior to a Board meeting.

**Mark E. Treinen:** I believe in transparency vis-à-vis the public so long as it does not cause the release of sensitive proprietary and/or competitive data, or information subject to non-disclosure agreements. OPPD conducts business in a competitive national marketplace, and certain information has the potential to harm their position.

### **If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Amanda Bogner:** I will continue to prioritize safe, affordable, reliable electricity. I am currently working on a plan that would reduce bills for 85% of customers. As a mechanical engineer and small business owner, I have spent my career helping companies make smart energy decisions that lower costs and improve business efficiency. As an OPPD Board Member, I will continue to advocate for increasing energy efficiency throughout the district to help people and businesses lower their electricity bills.

**Peter Sakaris:** My first year priorities will be to ensure that we are transparent as possible and that the public is well informed of the issues that will be discussed by the board. I will seek to support the great men and women of OPPD in their initiative to provide reliable power to homes and business at a reasonable cost while seeking new and innovative ways that make technological and economic sense to deliver power to homes and businesses. I will research ways to increase rate payer assistance programs.

**Mark E. Treinen:** Top 3 priorities are: 1. Safety of the employees and the public. 2. Reliable power delivery. 3. Electric rates below the Midwest average by at least 20%. I will define success as a SAIDI measurement of 90 and no general rate increases until that 20% cheaper rate is achieved.

## **Metropolitan Community College (MCC)**

### **Metropolitan Community College – District 3**

**Cameron J. Gales (R):** No response received.

**Gerald Mike Kuhn (D):**

*Occupation:* Assistant Director of Human Rights and Relations for the City of Omaha

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* Master's Degree in Social Justice 2014 Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice 2005

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* 100 Black Men-Mentor for 2 years Volunteer Speaker for at-risk youth through: UNO & UNL, Detroit Metro YMCA, Boys&Girls Club Basketball Coach for at risk youth: Salvation Army & Hope Center Track coach North O Bengals

**Dave Pantos (D):**

*Website:* [www.davepantosformetro.com](http://www.davepantosformetro.com)

*Occupation:* Attorney and Adjunct Professor

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Vice Chairperson, Metropolitan Community College, January 2020-present; Board Member, Metropolitan Community College, 2017-Present  
*Past Public Office, dates held:* Metropolitan Community College, Secretary, January 2019-January 2020

*Education:* JD - Indiana University Maurer School of Law (Bloomington, IN) MSES - O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs (Bloomington, IN) BA - Rutgers College

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Omaha Northwest Rotary Nonprofit Association of the Midlands Nebraska Supreme Court Commission on Children Legal Services Corporation Pro Bono Commission

**How should community colleges differentiate themselves from four-year universities?**

**Gerald Mike Kuhn:** -Community Colleges (CC) should continue to brand themselves as a skills, trades and technical institution of higher learning. This would allow the community colleges to actively search for partnerships with cooperation's, to be a conduit for students to enter the workforce post-graduation. -CC's need to collaborate with local school districts to develop dual enrollments tracks for eligible students. -Finally, CC should collaborate with 4-year universities for students that need 2-year college

**Dave Pantos:** Community Colleges need to provide high quality education to a diverse set of learners. The traditional community college student is by definition "non-traditional." Therefore, community colleges need to ensure that there are no barriers to entry. In a world plagued by student debt, Community College should aim to be low or no tuition. Community colleges should continue to expand dual enrollment at high schools. The relationship between 2 and 4 year schools should be a partnership.

**What should be the qualifications of instructors at Metro?**

**Gerald Mike Kuhn:** Instructors should have adequate knowledge of the discipline they are instructing by either academia at least a bachelor's level and years of experience and/or master's level of academia. I feel that experience in certain disciplines can serve students better than an academic professor in some situations.

**Dave Pantos:** In addition to being excellent instructors/professors, Metro's college professors must be prepared to meet students where they are. Many Metro students are first generation students. Many are food-insecure. Also, for those professors/instructors who are teaching in the trade or certificate programs, they must be up-to-date in terms of the business/economic needs of the community to ensure their instruction provides a quick gateway to high-paying jobs.

**If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Gerald Mike Kuhn:** During my first year, I will build relationships with fellow board members and press issues such as developing a school to work pipeline through skilled labor and trades. Transportation to all three campuses and dual enrollment for students and stipend pay for HS teachers that teach dual enrollment courses will also be a priority during the first year.

**Dave Pantos:** I will prioritize the following: expansion of Pell grants to all students; keeping no tuition increases as much as possible; expanding education options in Washington County and in West Omaha; and keeping the tax levy flat for our district's taxpayers.

**Metropolitan Community College – District 4**

**Christopher C. Costello (R):** No response received.

**Mark V. Holst (D):**

*Website:* [www.facebook.com/MarkHolst2020](https://www.facebook.com/MarkHolst2020)

*Occupation:* Insurance consultant

*Education:* Omaha Westside High School; Associate's Degree, Metropolitan Community College; BA, University of

Nebraska

*Volunteer Experience:* Septemberfest, Cathedral Young Adult Ministry, Nebraska Chinese Association, Latino Police Officers Association

**Zach Reinhardt (D):**

*Website:* [www.zachreinhardt2020.com](http://www.zachreinhardt2020.com)

*Occupation:* Real Estate Analyst & Broker

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* Bachelors of Science in Business Administration, Real Estate and Land Use Economics, University of Nebraska at Omaha 2014

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* MAPA Heartland 2050 Housing and Development Committee Co-Chair, 2018-Present; Citylight Arts Project Board, 2018-Present; Greater Omaha Chamber Young Professionals Council, 2019-Present; UNO Real Estate Program Advisory Board, 2016-Present

**Evan Schmeits (D):**

*Website:* [www.evanschmeits.com](http://www.evanschmeits.com)

*Occupation:* AFL-CIO Labor Liaison, United Way of the Midland; Past: Aide to State Senator Mike McDonnell

*Education:* Metropolitan Community College; University of Nebraska-Omaha

*Volunteer Experience:* AFL-CIO Building Trades Chili Feed, St. Thomas More Knights of Columbus, Vice President of Working Families Caucus, CASA Advocate, Guitarist at Church, South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance, Apollon Art Space Board of Directors, South Omaha Clean-Up.

**How should community colleges differentiate themselves from four-year universities?**

**Mark V. Holst:** Our efforts are multi-faceted. First, we must actively prepare students with skills and knowledge essential for good jobs in our current and evolving workforce. For this reason, we need to recognize the Community College as a driver in our local economy. Second, the college is an invaluable partner in helping students transition from high school to 4-year college or trade programs. Third, Metro offers valuable opportunities for lifelong learning. These are distinctive missions.

**Zach Reinhardt:** Community colleges should differentiate themselves from four-year (often actually five-year) universities by focusing on providing affordable, real-world education that prepares students for good jobs without the crushing weight of student loan debt. By focusing on trade, technical, and job training education, and in doing so, community colleges can set themselves apart by providing instructors with real-world experience that students can learn from.

**Evan Schmeits:** Metropolitan Community College (MCC) is one of the prominent institutions in our community. MCC can be a stepping stone to a four-year degree, but it is so much more than that. It plays an important role in expanding Nebraska's workforce. A four-year degree is not necessary to support a family: look at the salaries of skilled tradespeople like electricians & plumbers. The old mentality of "Work Smart, Not Hard" does not apply anymore in 2020. Beyond the trades, MCC has crucial medical programs.

**What should be the qualifications of instructors at Metro?**

**Mark V. Holst:** Instructors should have the necessary skills to be good communicators and classroom leaders. But ideally, MCC instructors also bring extensive real world experience and learned knowledge about the subject matter they are teaching. In the classroom, the instructors are on the front line in delivering student-centered education. This helps the college remain focused on that student learning goal, responding to community needs, and managing resources responsibly.

**Zach Reinhardt:** Because of its focus on real-world education, the qualifications of instructors at Metro should include real-world experience in the topic at hand, whenever possible. Industry involvement at Metro is key to providing students with real-world knowledge. An ability to translate the actual experience in each industry into the classroom should be a priority for any instructor at Metro. While an instructor's educational background should be considered; actual industry experience is equally important.

**Evan Schmeits:** It is my understanding that Nebraska's Department of Education ensures that educators of credit classes have, at a minimum, a master's degree. Changing that would require a change in state policy or state law. Instructors of trade and/or vocational classes should be proficient in their area.

### **If elected, what would be your first-year priorities?**

**Mark V. Holst:** To work with my fellow board members toward implementing the MCC strategic plan, for continued sustainable growth and progress at our College. As the only candidate in the race who graduated from Metropolitan Community College, I am committed to educational programs that sustain a robust economy and help attract new and better jobs to our community. Working together, we'll find our most effective opportunities.

**Zach Reinhardt:** My first-year priorities will focus on supporting the important work Metro is already doing. Metro doesn't need someone to come in and fix it. I will be a board member that works to promote all the good that Metro is doing in our community and more ways for the college to make a positive impact. I will be a champion for the students, providing guidance to ensure that Metro continues to fulfill its mission of delivering relevant, student-centered education to a diverse community of leaders.

**Evan Schmeits:** In my first year, I have a few priorities. They are: 1) Get more high school kids interested in the trades by expanding partnerships; 2) Push for MCC to offer reduced-price, on-campus child care for full-time students; 3) Keep tuition flat and make sure our taxpayer dollars are being used wisely; 4) Work with interested parties to make sure Metro Community College's RN graduates can begin their career at Nebraska Medicine. Currently, Nebraska Medicine requires nurses to have a bachelor's degree.

## **Learning Community Coordinating Council**

### **Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 2**

**Carol L. Hahn (D):** No response received.

**Nathan S. Zingg (D):** No response received.

### **Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 4**

**Allen Hager (R):**

*Website:* [www.facebook.com/hagerforlc4](http://www.facebook.com/hagerforlc4)

*Occupation:* Sr. Application Analyst

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Learning Community Coordinating Council 2012-current

*Education:* B.A, Louisiana State University M.B.A., Tiffin University

*Military Experience:* Air Force

*Volunteer Experience:* Former Treasurer, Youth Emergence Services, Former Vice-Chair, Omaha Metro Medical Response System (OMMRS) Medical Board

**Lisa M. Schoenberger (D):**

*Occupation:* Digital Marketing

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Universidad del Salvador (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

*Military Experience:* N/A

**Josh Wigginton (R):** No response received.

## How do you envision the future of the Learning Community?

**Allen Hager:** I believe the Learning Community will continue to provide Early Childhood Education learning opportunities for families in poverty. The collaboration of school districts is vital to the Learning Community success. It's a partnership that has changed since the origins of the body for the better. School Districts see the need for parental engagement and early childhood success that given children a chance to be successful.

**Lisa M. Schoenberger:** I think this is a really exciting time for the Learning Community. I am inspired by the possibilities that the formation of a foundation opens up to continue to deliver programs that are proven successful at a much larger scale. I think the Learning Community has really stepped up to the plate to respond to issues caused by COVID-19 for families in our community and I think that will go a long way in continuing to build positive public relations and showcase its important role.

## In your own words, what is the mission of the Learning Community?

**Allen Hager:** The Learning Community empowers children and families to eliminate the achievement gap through early childhood education, family programs and programs that can help a family both in education and career.

**Lisa M. Schoenberger:** The Learning Community helps support our outstanding public education system by providing resources for programs that enhance the educational experience for students in Douglas and Sarpy counties. It enables districts to tap into and share resources to better address needs in early childhood education, staff enrichment and family involvement, which are all major contributors to the overall education achievement of all of our students.

## How can the Learning Community improve outcomes for all students?

**Allen Hager:** Continue to offer high-quality programs that balance taxpayer resources with the needs of the at-risk community that we serve. The Learning Community is looking at a 3rd Center that would be located in an area where multiple districts could benefit. I look forward to hopefully work on that and continue to be a steward of our finite resources.

**Lisa M. Schoenberger:** The Learning Community has a connection with all 11 school districts, which gives it the unique opportunity to have a very broad impact. By helping connect a local philanthropic community with a single touchpoint that can impact all districts, with the formation of a non-profit, the Learning Community can now help level up educational opportunities at scale without an increased taxpayer burden. The Learning Community will continue to understand and adapt to the unique needs of each district.

## Learning Community Coordinating Council – District 6

### **Andrew Brock (R):**

*Occupation:* Financial Services

*Education:* Ralston High School, 1997; B.S., UNLV, 2008; MBA, Midland University, 2017

*Military Experience:* United States Navy 1997-2004

*Volunteer Experience:* Boys and Girls Club Stock Market Challenge, Habitat for Humanity Home Builders Blitz

**Tim Hall (R):** No response received.

## How do you envision the future of the Learning Community?

**Andrew Brock:** I envision the future of the Learning Community to ensure that all kids across the two counties have access to a free, and equitable early childhood education regardless of their socioeconomic status. I also envision the board to be respectful of tax payers dollars to make sure they are spent in the most efficient and effective ways.

## In your own words, what is the mission of the Learning Community?

**Andrew Brock:** The mission of the Learning Community is to partner with the school districts of Douglas and Sarpy County to implement more effective practices to measurably improve education outcomes and achieve academic success without regard to social or economic circumstance. It is also to enhance communications to effectively advocate for our mission. With increasing community awareness we will build support for the Learning Community and early childhood education.

## How can the Learning Community improve outcomes for all students?

**Andrew Brock:** The Learning Community can improve outcomes for all students by impacting three areas: classroom quality, family engagement and early childhood education. I believe the greatest impact is from birth to Grade 3.

# Bennington Board of Education

**Terri Calabro (R):** No response received.

**Tim Dreessen (R):** No response received.

**Joshuwa Hannum (R):** No response received.

### **Darren Siekman (R):**

*Website:* [www.facebook.com/dsiekman1](http://www.facebook.com/dsiekman1)

*Occupation:* Vice President, Valmont Global Irrigation

*Current Public Office, dates held:* 2002 to Present, Bennington Public School Board District #59

*Education:* Bachelor of Science, Agriculture; University of Nebraska, Lincoln

*Volunteer experience:* Maplewood Methodist Preschool Board; Bennington Public Schools Foundation Board; YMCA Coach, Bennington Athletic League Coach

### **Allyson Crossman Slobotski (R):**

*Occupation:* Tax Attorney

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* University of Nebraska - Lincoln - Juris Doctorate; Texas Christian University - Master of Accounting; Texas Christian University – BBA Accounting & Finance; Omaha Central High School

*Military experience:* None

*Volunteer experience:* Women's Center for Advancement - first Guild President; Midlands Mentoring Partnership - Treasurer; Bennington Elementary PTO Board Member; Newport Landing Homeowner's Association - Treasurer; University of Nebraska - Omaha Sorority Academic Advisor

## How can schools use technology to foster better equity and educational outcomes?

**Darren Siekman:** During my time on the board, we have invested to become a "1 to 1" school system. In grades 7-12 students are issued a chromebook and in the elementary schools we have combinations of computer labs and iPads which provide a device for every student. However, the best thing schools can do to foster equity is investing in early childhood education. Making sure that each child begins their educational journey with a strong foundation is the best predictor of future success.

**Allyson Crossman Slobotski:** Technology should be used to ensure students receive individualized education that meets their needs and evaluates their successes. Using technology to provide training for our teachers and administrators enhances the educational experience for all. As technology becomes more and more critical to life after high school, we need to make sure all students have the tools to be successful and starts in the district.

## What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?

**Darren Siekman:** Common sense and vigilance are the best tools we have. We are very fortunate in Bennington to have a highly engaged community of parents and community members who "watch out" for each other. The addition of a school resource officer has already proven effective in key situations, Deputy Baker is awesome. Last but not least, being prepared with a comprehensive safety plan that regularly gets reviewed and tested is a key initiative in place.

**Allyson Crossman Slobotski:** Ensuring the safety of students, teachers, and all staff employed by the School District begins with leadership from the Board of Education. I would commit to working together, collaboratively, to ensure proper planning and adequate training is in place. I would emphasize the importance of communication, technology, and employing best practices in the area to do what is necessary to ensure safety for all. It is important everyone believes in the plan and truly feels safe at work everyday.

## What role, if any, should charter schools have in the Nebraska educational system?

**Darren Siekman:** While I have not done much research on charter schools, I would ask which students are we trying to serve and what is the desired educational outcome from a charter? The strength of public schools is the ability of local constituents to make decisions which are best for their kids and community. Would a charter school still allow that input? School funding and property taxes are always a challenge in Nebraska, could a charter school be funded in a way that is not detrimental?

**Allyson Crossman Slobotski:** As a graduate of Omaha Public Schools and with children in Bennington Public Schools, I'm a huge public school supporter. Nebraska is very lucky to have a fantastic public educational system well known for its diversity and quality education. While Charter Schools may be a helpful tool in other states with struggling public school systems, I do not believe adding charter schools in Nebraska will enhance the existing system in such a way that it warrants a role.

# Omaha Public School Board

## Omaha Public School Board – District 7

### **Jane Erdenberger (D):**

*Website:* [erdenberger4ops@.com](mailto:erdenberger4ops@.com)

*Occupation:* Retired OPS high school teacher and lawyer

*Current Public Office, dates held:* None

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None

*Education:* University of Nebraska - Lincoln BA {1975}; George Washington Law School JD [1978]; University of Nebraska - Omaha BS [2000]

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* Nebraska Education Finance Authority Board [two terms]; Omaha Education Association Board [three terms]; OPS One City One School District Task Force; CASA; Belle Ryan PTO; Jackson Elementary PTO; Aksarben and Leavenworth Neighborhood Associations

### **Flint Harkness (D):**

*Website:* [www.harkness4ops.com](http://www.harkness4ops.com)

*Occupation:* Special Education Teacher

*Current Public Office, dates held:* NA

*Past Public Office, dates held:* NA

*Education:* Bachelors of Science in Secondary Education Masters of Science in Secondary Education Completing course work for a Masters of Special Education and Education Leadership

*Military Experience:* None

*Volunteer Experience:* I have worked with Team in Training with the Leukemia Lymphoma Society to raise money for cancer research.

**Keegan Korf (D):**

*Website:* [www.KeeganForOPS.com](http://www.KeeganForOPS.com)

*Occupation:* Metro Smart Cities Coordinator at Omaha by Design

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* Bachelor of Science in Communications – Journalism; PR/Advertising – University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Master of Arts in Teaching – College of Saint Mary Master of Education in Teacher Leadership and Learning - Midland University

*Military Experience:* N/A

*Volunteer Experience:* Mayoral Appoint Board Trustee (Secretary/Treasurer) for the Omaha Public Library, Founding Board Member (Vice President) of Felius Cat Café, Mentor with Girls Inc. of Omaha, Member of the Hanscom Park Neighborhood Association

**Grant Sorrell (D):**

*Website:* [www.grantsorrell.com](http://www.grantsorrell.com)

*Occupation:* United Way of the Midlands

*Current Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Past Public Office, dates held:* N/A

*Education:* University of Nebraska-Omaha Bachelor of Art, Political Science Masters of Science, Political Science

*Military Experience:* N/A

*Volunteer Experience:* Mentor, Partnership 4 Kids Child Advocate, CASA for Douglas County Emerging Leader, United Way of the Midlands Engagement Council, Greater Chamber of Omaha

**How can schools use technology to foster better equity and educational outcomes?**

**Jane Erdenberger:** Better equity and educational outcomes require curriculum meeting each student's abilities and goals. Computers and a list of websites are insufficient. Certified teachers create lesson plans reflecting state standards, assess individual needs and identify websites for lab demonstrations, research projects, unique lectures, virtual field trips, graphic design and current events individualized to stimulate each student and prepare him/her for today's workforce and to responsibly use technology.

**Flint Harkness:** Technology if the great equalizer. It allows students to overcome their weaknesses so that they can highlight their strengths. I am someone that has benefited from technology personally. I have struggled with my spelling and grammar my entire life and technology has allowed me to earn advance degrees in education even though the writing of what seemed like an endless amount of papers was required. The key to good technology use in the classroom though is innovative lesson design.

**Keegan Korf:** Technology resources should be an embedded part of any school budget and we should be shifting to digital resources and away from expensive and antiquated textbooks. We do know that not every students has access to take-home devices or in-home Internet, but while they are in school, the technology resources need to be available to them. Effective technology use means supporting students in growing their critical thinking and collaboration skills using new tools for learning.

**Grant Sorrell:** As we move towards more technological-based learning, it is imperative that we elect leaders who believe in the advancement of technology and believe it can help improve student outcomes. We must ensure - however - that these technology opportunities are available to all students, not just some. We need to elect leaders who can work with teachers and administrators to develop technology-based curriculum that can help us improve student learning for all students across our Omaha Public Schools.

**What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?**

**Jane Erdenberger:** District policy limiting building access to students and staff and monitoring guests must be regularly updated and consistently applied. But safety also requires that daily interactions of students and staff are based on mutual respect that is modeled by every staff member, frequently discussed in the classroom and consistently expected in the building and at school events. This helps the school community address bullying, identify at-risk students and create a positive learning environment.

**Flint Harkness:** The safety of all is key to creating a productive learning environment. Chaos and fear create anxiety. Quality teachers, clear guidelines for discipline, trauma-informed teaching, and access to mental health professionals can greatly improve safety for all in the classroom.

**Keegan Korf:** School boards who work broadly with state and federal legislation to impact gun laws in addition to using funds to increase support staff for mental health services in schools as opposed to additional police officers are ways to start. Tackling student trauma and mental health is critical. Finally, the most direct impact to school safety is a positive culture through strong administrative leadership which enables teachers to thrive and to build trusting relationships with their students

**Grant Sorrell:** We must take every measure possible to ensure the safety of our students and teachers. As a parent, I know how important it is to send our children to school where we feel they are safe. I do agree that there should be procedures and grounds for the removal of a student from class in response to disruptive student behavior either directed at the teacher or another student. I believe that there should be a written plan of action that is to be followed aimed at protecting the students and staff.

### **What role, if any, should charter schools have in the Nebraska educational system?**

**Jane Erdenberger:** Nebraska's public schools are among the best in the nation. Research shows that charter schools usually do not perform better than public schools with comparable student populations and testing requirements and may increase segregation.

Charter schools that receive public funds create a resource shortfall for public schools that are required to meet educational mandates. Problems theoretically addressed by charter schools can be best solved with innovative public education.

**Flint Harkness:** Honestly, I am a strong believer that charter schools do more harm than good. With that in mind, I would say they have no place in the Nebraska Educational system.

**Keegan Korf:** Charter schools and vouchers don't belong in Nebraska. Period. Our public schools are the lifeblood of our state and we intend to keep it that way.

**Grant Sorrell:** I would continue to oppose all legislation that provides vouchers or tax credits for families to attend private schools, along with strong opposition to the formation of charter schools within our state. Nebraska has a rich history of proudly supporting public schools, and as a board member I would continue that best practice. It is my belief that taxpayer money should be used to improve public education, not used for vouchers or for the opening of charter schools.

## **Omaha Public School Board – District 9**

### **Tracy Casady (D):**

*Occupation:* Human Resource Specialist

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Omaha Public Schools Board of Education, Subdistrict 9

*Education:* Master of Arts, Communication - University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2012; Bachelor of Arts, Journalism/Public Relations, Creighton University 1997

*Volunteer Experience:* Relay for Life of Greater Omaha, volunteer Girls on the Run, Run Buddy

**Erik Servellon (D):** No response received.

**Kay Wainwright (R):** No response received.

### **How can schools use technology to foster better equity and educational outcomes?**

**Tracy Casady:** Technology is key in our schools for so many reasons and is an area that is constantly changing. Having the right technology and continuing to keep the technology up-to-date is critical. Our schools use technology each day to teach students and prepare them for the future and any career they may choose - technology is everywhere. Technology is for everyone, it has no bias and it does not discriminate. Technology is key to providing ALL students the best possible educational outcome.

## What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?

**Tracy Casady:** Safety has become an issue that is much larger than it once was with regard to our schools. Now, we face safety concerns in every facet of our schools, from the front door to our playgrounds. Many positive steps have been taken to increase the safety of our students and staff. Ensuring that our budgets allow for funding for new technology that supports safety, such as video security devices for our entrances, SRO's in our most vulnerable schools and building security personnel, to name a few.

## What role, if any, should charter schools have in the Nebraska educational system?

**Tracy Casady:** I am in favor of school choice and parents making the best choice for their family. Charter schools are a viable choice for many, but they are at a cost. Public schools are free, they are available to all and are a wonderful education choice! I believe that state and local taxes must continue to support our state's public schools. Our public schools are vital and necessary for so many who would otherwise not be able to afford an education. Public schools need continued financial support.

## Westside Board of Education

### **Dana Blakely (D):**

*Occupation:* Teacher

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Westside Board of Education, 2014-present.

*Past Public Office, dates held:* None.

*Education:* BS in Political Science from Santa Clara University, BS in Secondary Education from University of Nebraska Omaha, MS in Curriculum and Instruction from Peru State College.

*Military experience:* None.

*Volunteer experience:* Food Bank of the Heartland, Salvation Army Kids Cruisin' Kitchen, Sunset Hills Community Club

### **Edgar Hicks (NP):**

*Occupation:* Grain Marketing(ret.), youth mentor

*Current Public Office, dates held:* Humanities Nebraska (appointed January 2020)

*Past Public Office, dates held:* Westside High School (Principal Search Committee)2004, Douglas County Cooperative Extension/UNL (1996-2000), USDA Committee on Small Farms 1999-2001), Nebraska Rural Development Commission (2007-2010)

*Education:* Pace University BBA (New York City), Southern University (Baton Rouge)

*Volunteer experience:* History Challenge (Judge-yearly) 100BMO, Mildred Brown Memorial Study Center, Carver Grange of Omaha, Whispering Roots, No More Empty Pots, USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Administrative Council, American Philatelic Society

**Beth Morrisette (R):** No response received.

## How can schools use technology to foster better equity and educational outcomes?

**Dana Blakely:** We are in a very unique moment right now, so I think this answer is changing even as I respond. Technology, both in and out of the classroom, can level the playing field by putting a device in the hands of students who may not have access to one otherwise. It can also provide successful outcomes for students with disabilities. It develops a useful life skill. Currently, it is allowing students to access ongoing education while schools are closed. I am concerned about students without access.

**Edgar Hicks:** A: Since 1982, when we outfitted an elementary school bus with a computer creating a mobile lab, Westside Community Schools has embraced technology. When I hear "equity" and "outcomes" I am thinking more along the lines of improving using technology for better health monitoring and social safety of our students. District 66's "Philosophy of Technology" is fostering an area along with the utility of current staff. Anticipating current nature of work changes we are dealing with a new health enviro

## What can be done to ensure the safety of students and teachers in our schools?

**Dana Blakely:** I believe the ability to control who goes in and out of a school is important. I campaigned for a successful facilities bond for Westside that allowed secure entrances to be put in our elementary schools and the middle school. School resource officers help in keeping our students safe. Anonymous ways to report security concerns are also essential. I think the ability of students and staff to develop strong connections is also good. As a school board member, this is my greatest priority.

**Edgar Hicks:** Along the use of technology, there is a popular national interest in the application of social media monitoring as a safety resource that may have support. While I have caution for application at elementary school level, at the high school level there may be more applicability, but also with privacy invasion caveats. More appealing may be last years collaboration (and 24 hour availability) of Safe2Help that is currently developed and being shared in over 180 Douglas County schools. UNO SCCJ grant

## What role, if any, should charter schools have in the Nebraska educational system?

**Dana Blakely:** They should play no role. Our public schools are absolutely the best. It is our privilege to educate ALL students, and one of the greatest features of our society. I remain committed to lobbying the legislature on behalf of fully funding our public schools. I am sure the discussion around charter schools will continue. I would hope that future discussions would be data-driven, and more than anecdotal. Accountability of charters is a concern, as is accessibility of charters by all students.

**Edgar Hicks:** As a product of 12 years of parochial school education in Louisiana, I am open to any discussion of school choice and an outreach mission by a charter school. However, In this years Unicameral, LB1202 "Opportunity Scholarship Act" calls for the use of tax credits. Currently, I am opposed in all forms, any legislation that has financial implications towards our public schools mission. Again, there may be a role for charter schools in the Nebraska educational system, but please not tax dollar\$

# Special Issues Ticket – Ballot Questions

*In addition to candidates for office, some voters will see a "special issues ticket" on their ballot. The ballot question below will be on the ballot for voters who live in Omaha.*

## Special City Of Omaha Election \$200,000,000 Street Transportation Bonds

You must vote "Yes" to both ballot questions in order for the street improvements to occur:

### Question 1

Shall the City of Omaha be authorized to issue and sell general obligation bonds in the amount of two hundred million and no/100 dollars (\$200,000,000) for the purpose of providing funds for payment of the cost of streets, including neighborhood, collector, and arterial streets in all seven (7) city council districts, and bridges, the approximate cost to the taxpayers of the City of Omaha if this proposal is approved to be two hundred million and no/100 dollars (\$200,000,000) plus interest payable on said bonds to be paid from the fund for principal and interest payments on the indebtedness of the City of Omaha as proposed in the notice of election?

Yes or No

### Question 2

Shall the City of Omaha be authorized to increase the property tax levy rate by up to \$0.035 per \$100 of assessed value in order to pay for the general obligation bonds in the amount of two hundred million and no/100 dollars (\$200,000,000) issued for the purpose of providing funds for payment of the cost of streets, including neighborhood, collector, and arterial streets in all seven (7) city council districts, and bridges, as proposed in the notice of election?

Yes or No

## Millard Public Schools Bond Election

*In addition to candidates for office, some voters will see a "special issues ticket" on their ballot. The ballot question below will be on the ballot for voters who live in Millard.*

"Shall Douglas County School District 0017 in the State of Nebraska (a/k/a Millard Public Schools) issue the Bonds of said District in the principal amount of not to exceed One Hundred Twenty-Five Million Dollars (\$125,000,000) for the purpose of paying the costs of: facility security improvements and related technology; constructing capital improvements and additions to and/or making repairs and renovations of existing district buildings and facilities; constructing, acquiring and installing parking, and other site improvements for such buildings, facilities, and additions; and providing the necessary furnishings, equipment and apparatus for such buildings, facilities and additions, such bonds to be issued from time to time, to be sold at such price or prices, to bear interest at such rate or rates, to become due at such time or times and to have such other terms and provisions, all as may be fixed and determined by the Board of Education of the District; and

"Shall the District cause to be levied and collected annually a special levy of taxes against all the taxable property in the District sufficient in rate and amount to pay the interest, principal and premium on said Bonds as the same become due?"

FOR said bonds and tax or AGAINST said bonds and tax



# Online 2020 Voters' Guide: Vote411.org

Voters' Guide-Douglas County  
Brought to you by



Funding Generously  
Provided by

