

PRIMARY ELECTION 2022

# VOTER GUIDE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
THE GREATER OMAHA CHAMBER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS COUNCIL



# MESSAGE FROM THE YP COUNCIL

Welcome to the 2022 Primary Voter Guide presented by the Greater Omaha Chamber Young Professionals (YP) Council. While we are nonpartisan group of Omaha area YPs that do not endorse any political candidates, we believe that civic engagement is an important piece of ensuring our YPs continue to live, work and play in Omaha. Being an informed voter is one of the best ways to stay engaged and advocate for issues important to you, and this guide is intended to help you form your own opinions of the candidates on your ballot.

In the following pages, you will find responses from candidates of all parties and all levels of governing. These responses are direct from the candidates and have been left unedited by the YP Council. If a candidate did not respond to our request to complete the questionnaire, their name will appear and noted with "No response received."



## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2  
PARTISAN | 2-YEAR TERM**

### CANDIDATES

**DON BACON (R - INCUMBENT)** No response received.  
**STEVE KUEHL (R)** No response received.  
**ALISHA SHELTON (D)**  
**TONY VARGAS (D)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR CONGRESS?

#### ALISHA SHELTON

As an advocate for Nebraska, I saw first hand that too often politicians in DC didn't have the same commitment to helping us back home - as a regular citizen, I tried to talk to my Representatives in Washington, D.C., and was unable to directly contact a single member of Congress - that experience is exactly why she's running now. Like many hard working Nebraskans, I know we have been left behind for too long by career politicians like Don Bacon - we deserve better. We need an economic recovery that puts us first. We need quality education and job training programs that help us land better quality and higher paying jobs. We need health care that we can actually afford. And most of all, we need confidence that our Representatives are willing to work together to ensure a bright future for our region and our families.

Washington is forgetting about the Heartland; in Congress, I will always put us first - no matter your political party, income, identity, or education.

I will always put working Nebraskans ahead of big corporations. I will always put families ahead of special

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interests. And I will always be our advocate and put us over partisanship. Just as I learned early on, when you see a problem, you help fix it.

#### TONY VARGAS

My parents immigrated from Peru, and in the U.S., they worked so hard and sacrificed so my brothers and I could get an education and decide what we wanted for our lives.

I can't take what my parents did for granted. That's why I work as hard as I possibly can, every day, so that people can have that same opportunity. That's why I'm running for Congress.

But right now, Washington isn't working for regular people. We're feeling it at the gas pump and the grocery store and it doesn't seem like there is any relief in sight.

Nebraskans deserve access to affordable health care. They deserve jobs with living wages that support a family and allow each generation to have a little bit more. And they deserve a world-class education no matter where you're born.

I'm extremely hopeful about what's possible. We are more divided than we have ever been. But I believe it can be different. We can fight for what's right - for policies that help people. And we can do it with integrity and civility. This is how I've acted as a state senator, and it's how I'll operate as a member of Congress.

### WHAT WILL YOU DO TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE FINANCIAL BURDEN (I.E. MINIMUM WAGE, STUDENT DEBT, INFLATION) ON NEBRASKANS AS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS?

#### ALISHA SHELTON

We need to increase the minimum wage and I would support that bill in Congress. I would also support a study every two years to see how much we need to increase it

every year. This will help alleviate the effects of inflation. We also need to breathe life into our supply chain, by supporting unions and making working conditions better for all workers. We also should support companies involved in the supply chain with the resources they need to move their products.

#### **TONY VARGAS**

From the grocery store to the gas pump, we're all feeling the pain of higher prices across the board. This is a real threat to Nebraskans who are already struggling to recover from the pandemic, make ends meet, and grow. Reversing this trend is and will continue to be a high priority for me.

It's also critically important that we find other ways to put more money back in the wallets of Nebraskans. Wage support, middle class and child tax cuts, lowering the cost of health care and prescription drugs, and lowering the cost of child care are all examples of doing just that.

In the Legislature, I've made it a priority to focus on these issues as well. I've secured tens of millions of dollars to build low and middle income housing, increase healthcare services, and invest more in grant funding that will give more low income students the ability to get job training or go to college.

#### **OUTLINE YOUR PLAN TO MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE FOR NEBRASKANS?**

##### **ALISHA SHELTON**

We should start by making prescription drugs lower. I would have voted for the bill to reduce the price of insulin, but we should do that for other life-saving prescription drugs. We should also work to add the public option to the Affordable Care Act. It was in the original bill and it would cover more Nebraskans if we were to add to it now. We also need to create the pathway to expand Medicaid in every state. We are already starting to see the benefits in Nebraska and we need to protect that.

##### **TONY VARGAS**

Everyone deserves access to quality, affordable health care. That's why I was so proud to fight, and vote, to expand Medicaid in Nebraska. Now nearly 100,000 more Nebraskans are able to see a doctor when they need it and we were able to keep more rural hospitals open. But there's more work to do on this issue. Health care, in particular prescription drugs, is still too expensive.

Let's explore a public option, like allowing more Americans to buy into Medicare, which would lower premiums by increasing competition and expanding choice, while allowing those who like their private insurance to keep it.

We can lower prescription drug costs by allowing Medicare to negotiate with drug companies for lower costs, and extend those savings to everyone in the private market as well. We should also reduce the exclusivity period for prescription drugs, which would bring generics to market sooner, lower costs, and prevent pharmaceutical companies from price gouging.

# **NEBRASKA GOVERNOR**

**PARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**CAROL BLOOD (D)**

**CHARLES HERBSTER (R)** No response received.

**BRETT LINDSTROM (R)**

**JIM PILLEN (R)** No response received.

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR GOVERNOR?**

##### **CAROL BLOOD**

Nebraskans want a governor who will work hard to bring our residents together by inspiring hope and transforming our divisions. The current narrative of US vs THEM is killing this country and meant to distract voters so we never have to solve the real problems like 20+ years of high property taxes. I will bring everyone to the table no matter who they are; what they look like; where they are from or how they identify and create a state government that is representative of all Nebraskans, not just a privileged few, special interest or particular party. I want to be the adult in the room and start talking about the what's really important to Nebraskans, not spew rhetoric or the same old campaign promises.

##### **BRETT LINDSTROM**

It's time for a New Generation of Leadership to lead Nebraska forward. I'm running for Governor to make our state competitive, and one where our children want to grow and stay. As Governor, I will cut taxes and grow our economy. I am tired of Nebraska being 49th and 50th and want to make sure Nebraska not only competes, but leads moving forward.

#### **NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?**

##### **CAROL BLOOD**

1. Problem-solving courts instead of traditional courts focus on one type of offense or type of person committing the crime, such as veteran's court, drug court, domestic violence court, etc.

An interdisciplinary team, led by a judge or parole authority, works in tandem to achieve two goals: Effective case management to speed up case processing. This reduces caseloads and disposition time. This opens up the courts for more serious crimes. The result is reducing recidivism through therapeutic and interdisciplinary approaches that addresses the issues that caused the offense without jeopardizing public safety or due process for the crime.

2. Home confinement requires is an opportunity for non-violent offenders to stay in their homes with the use of an electronic home monitor such as an ankle device to always monitor the offender's movement. There is substantial supervision that may include working, going to programming, urine tests, education and more. This will give the offenders the opportunity to contribute to our state coffers, if working; give them opportunities to be

better stewards within our community; help us to monitor the environment that may have helped influence their criminal behavior and save taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars in unnecessary fees had they been incarcerated.

Nebraskans want people who commit crimes to receive punishment. With that said, data shows that almost that same percentage of people have the expectation that we will rehabilitate them. That is not being accomplished. If we incarcerate non-violent criminals, they enter our prison system and have nothing but time on their hands to learn how to be better criminals. One day, these same people will be your neighbors. Which would you rather have? Someone who has learned to be a better criminal, or someone who has had an opportunity for actual rehabilitation to learn how to be a better citizen and steward to their communities?

#### **BRETT LINDSTROM**

We must address the underlying issues at hand with our recidivism rates that keep inmates returning to prison. Mental health and addiction issues continue to rise and this is the root of the problem. I would like our correctional systems to focus on rehabilitation for addicts and treatment for mental health disorders to give these people a better chance at success once released. Currently, our correctional facilities are at 152% capacity. Building a new prison is one option, however, this comes at a great expense. Compounding this problem, is the lack of individuals willing to staff a new facility. I would not rule out building a new facility in the future, but until we can recruit staff this is not a realistic approach.

#### **EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?**

#### **CAROL BLOOD**

Providing good jobs with great pay and benefits, affordable housing, excellent childcare, providing opportunities for individuals to do better and find creative ways to better train and educate our workforce at an earlier age should all be priorities. Empower young professionals through participation in the process. The 18-to-34-year-olds I talk to, though, aren't going to stay in Nebraska because we cut taxes for the wealthy. In fact, most hardly mention taxes at all and don't own homes because of the costs involved. But most often I hear about the need for good schools, good jobs, safe communities, strong health care systems as well as having lots of fun and interesting stuff to do with their friends and families.

#### **BRETT LINDSTROM**

Nebraska must be inviting for a young professionals and their families by encouraging high wage jobs that provide benefits such as healthcare and competitive pay. A rigorous and quality education system, communities that provide ample opportunities for entertainment and extracurricular activities like athletics and arts are paramount to Nebraska's ability to attract and retain growing families and young professionals alike.

# ATTORNEY GENERAL

PARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM

#### **CANDIDATES**

**LARRY BOLINGER (LEGAL MARIJUANA NOW)**

**JENNIFER HICKS (R)**

**MIKE HILGERS (R)** No response received.

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL?**

#### **LARRY BOLINGER**

I do believe we need some changes in our legal system to bring up to date. My focus is on Law Reform, trying important cases, and working with programs that reduce recidivism.

I am the best choice for Attorney General because I am the only candidate that is willing to update our legal system into the 21st century. I am the only candidate that is willing to conduct law reform.

I have stayed fairly busy in politics for more than 15 years. I have run for local, State, and Federal offices and have argued many policies. I am a Veteran of both the Airforce and Army National Guards. I earned a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Major in Political Science and Minor in Criminology with a concentration in government affairs and civic engagement. I studied a fair amount in law, constitutional law, international law, and police procedures.

Public services and community activities:

- Was on the City of Alliance Planning Commission for several years
- Chairman for LMN Party of Nebraska District 3
- I helped raise funds for Nebraska Boys Ranch, YMCA, ABATE, and the DAVA for disabled veterans.
- Volunteer on the Activate Alliance Initiative. One of the programs I worked on is to create a bicycle share program for the city of Alliance.
- Gave free rental space for the BBC tower to allow internet access for the local government in Alliance, NE.
- Volunteer In Police Services (VIPS). This organization helps the local law enforcement where needed voluntarily.
- Donated training materials to several police departments and law enforcement academies.

I expect to try all important cases. There will not be cases approved based solely on political affiliation. Cases are based on what is a constitutional infraction or a possible infraction. Some examples of cases I would try are:

- Issues of fraudulent enrichment practices and business ethics infractions in our banking industries. This would include extortion of funds from contractors and ethics violations in foreclosure practices.
- I would look into issues of the pharmaceutical companies in price gouging and unethical political activities.
- I would press charges against a government that willfully violates Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001. 1) knowingly and willfully; 2) make any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; 3) in any matter within the



jurisdiction of the executive, legislative or judicial branch of the United States.

- IRS ethics violations and enrichment violations in their billing practices.
- I would look further into the Mead environment disaster and the EPA policy violations. I would look into the responsibility of the corporation and the responsibility of the government. The government has the obligation to act when a company does not.

Law enforcement reform. Continue the education on the Presidential taskforce on 21st Community policing

Bail Reform: There is a problem in our bail system where if you are wealthy you're able to post bail and not see any jail time while if you are poor you go to jail. We need a better program that treats the poor and wealthy as equals when there is a crime committed.

Reform to reduce recidivism: I would support diversion programs.

We need an Attorney General that will fight for the people because the government certainly is unwilling to do that. The Constitution was created to protect the people and limit the government's reach over the people. The law is there to govern the people, but the Constitution is there to limit the government's power.

Some things on the table that are of interest:

- Right to Repair: to argue against the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and restore consumer protection.
- Law reform with a focus on victimless crimes. When possession of marijuana has a higher penalty than rape, that tells me my government doesn't value women as much as they should.
- Remove Truancy as a status offense. Using Mediation between Social Services, the child, parent, and schools has cut recidivism by as much as 40% while the Juvenile court system has increased recidivism that resulted in other criminal activities)
- Reduce marijuana possession penalties. I will try and push to reduce penalties until marijuana is legalized.
- I would want to make sure the policies are done right for the state meatpacker inspectors to allow state-to-state and international sales. There were issues in other states that lacked policies and were denied state-to-state sales and international sales until they were USDA qualified. I want to make sure our business is not stopped because of this. And if the state inspectors are USDA qualified a grant can pay half the cost of the inspector.
- I would like to see marijuana removed as a Schedule 1 drug. The Institute of Medicine presented proof of a medical need decades ago, but politicians refuse to listen to those professionals. A government knowingly giving a false description could be considered a violation of US Code Title 18, section 1001 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- Remove the policy for paraphernalia. It is an empty charge. Anything can be considered paraphernalia depending on how creative you are. Most times it ends up being what I would consider a double charge of possession.
- Remove the charge of losing your license if in possession of marijuana. The charge should fit the crime. If someone was driving while under the

influence, a license suspension would be a fitting penalty. But for simple possession, a license suspension penalty does not fit the crime. It is an overreaching penalty that could violate the 8th Amendment.

- Support expansions of drug courts and rehab programs. (Research analysis has shown that this has cut down recidivism by as much as 60%)
- We need proper policies prepared and introduced for legalization.
- Harsh penalties for cybercrimes. (as new technology is created so are online criminal activities). Some cybercrimes are from other Nations and there should be charges filed in international court and hold those countries liable.
- Protect property rights. Many policies need reviewed and argued that were created to give more power to the government and banks to allow more property takeovers. Such as the Substandard and Blighted program, the changes in the tax lien program, and the newly presented LB695.
- I'd like to see higher penalties into the scams that have been created to extort money from Seniors.
- Environment concerns: Many issues have developed where there has been illegal dumping of chemicals that leaked into our water supplies. The companies and the government need to be held accountable for those actions and be held accountable to clean up the toxins and reimburse for any losses. I am also a supporter of the "Laws of the Sea" and the London Dumping Convention which focuses on clean water and stopping the dumping of garbage into our sea.

## JENNIFER HICKS

I am running for attorney general because we need someone in office who will speak up when people's rights are being violated by elected officials who permit violations of the U.S. Constitution and the Nebraska State Constitution to go unanswered. Currently, government is run by people whose priority is to protect their peers in office. We need true servants of the people who prioritize defending the rights of the people. We need officeholders who adhere to their oath.

## HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT ELECTION SECURITY?

### LARRY BOLINGER

Election security has been a concern through many years. The only thing we can do and pinpoint the flaws and try and improve things. In Nebraska we have a pretty fair system where everyone who is registered can vote. County official met the needs of the people during the pandemic and installed mail boxes at county office for voting ballots which created the biggest voter turnout. I would like to see us take note of that and continue to move forward and improving our system. One thing we don't want to do is create a system where voters have to pay to vote or a voting system that would make it inconvenient to vote where Seniors are unable to vote. We do not want to stop people from voting.

Voting policy reform: I know there are different areas that people are arguing to try and push reform. But the number one thing that should always be looked at is if there are policies that get in the way of people's right to vote. If there is a vote on voter ID, then there has to be a policy for

people to obtain free IDs. You can't approve the first policy without the other intact. There are several policies that I would like to improve:

- Allow registration up to the day of the election.
- Require poll stations to be opened from 9 am to midnight.
- Change the policy on sign placement. Current policy says 200 feet from a polling station. I would like it to change and add more wording to it. I would like to see it changed to campaign signs that can not be within 150 feet of the front door of a polling station. This policy is to deter people from putting up signs on the side of the street that the voting polls are on. It allows people that live across the street to put campaign signs on their property.
- Registration for a political party. The policy states that you have to register by December for a party to be eligible to run for office in that part. I would like to dissolve that policy. A new party might not have enough time to file campaign slots due to a policy like that. I would like to see this change to "any person can change parties and run for office in that party up to the final day of registration."
- Improve internet capability and security to allow online voting, and voting through a phone app.
- Early voting should be counted as they are registered. The Secretary of State site should be updated daily to show early voting results.
- Remove the policy that restricts prisoners and people with felony charges from voting. All people have the right to vote. Any type of voter restriction is against the law.
- Ballots will have all candidates listed based on your area not by political party. Candidates from all 4 parties will be listed on each ballot.

With the issue of the CrowdStrike program, I believe it needs to have a considerable review and work on improving the system. We need security, but we have to be aware of suppression. If we create security programs that suppress the votes then there is room to argue to shut down the program. The CrowdStrike is an antivirus /anti-breach program that was created to help stop hacks and viruses. Any government computer would have something similar. There is a question of intelligence. When part of their program is intelligence that means information gathering which could mean privacy or security issues. The program has caught many hacks. Many countries do have government ran hack pods. Russia and China have several that are used against many countries. There needs to be a defense against that.

### **JENNIFER HICKS**

Without the assurances that our voting system is secure, we are not free people. The use of Election Systems & Software (ES&S) services takes the control of our elections away from the people at the state level and gives the federal government a chokehold on how our elections are conducted in Nebraska. Our vote is our voice in government, and unless and until we return to hand counting of paper ballots with no machines, the chokehold of the federal government will persist. I would call for the removal of ES&S services from our elections, and for hand counting of paper ballots without the use of any machines to count the votes.

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# **SECRETARY OF STATE**

**PARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

### **CANDIDATES**

**ROBERT J. BORER (R)**

**BOB EVNEN (R- INCUMBENT)** No response received.

**REX SCHRODER (R)**

### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR SECRETARY OF STATE?**

#### **ROBERT J. BORER**

I'm running for Secretary of State to restore integrity to our elections so that the citizens of Nebraska can have faith that their vote counts and their voice is heard. Since retiring 2 years ago I have been fighting tirelessly for We The People to hold our elected officials and government agencies accountable for actions that have negatively impacted our civil liberties. I'm a natural health advocate, fitness enthusiast, and I love a good fight. People are looking for a fighter to represent them in office, someone who won't back down. As a retired fire captain of 27 years, I love a good challenge and I won't sell out our elections to be run by someone else. The best part of Nebraska is its people, and we're capable of conducting our own elections, not delegating the work to a corporation. I'm ready to get to work to clean things up at the very top. Nebraska needs a Secretary of State who will prioritize people over politics. Nebraska deserves a Secretary of State who will stand up against instituting nationalized elections. I am looking forward to instilling integrity back into our state's elections and restoring voter trust.

#### **REX SCHRODER**

Because I believe the Nov 2020 election was stolen.

### **HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT ELECTION SECURITY?**

#### **ROBERT J. BORER**

A post-election audit is not required by Nebraska Statute. It can, however, be conducted at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Between 2-2.5% of precincts are selected. This audit merely scans the same ballots already counted. What if these ballots were illegally cast? In a world where cybercriminals roam freely and have successfully penetrated both public and private sector entities seemingly every day, is recounting enough?

I contend it is not! If Nebraska plans to continue relying on computerized technology to tabulate our votes, then we are ill-equipped to prevent a cyber-crime, let alone even detect it.

We need to give control of our votes back to the people in our counties. We need to move away from centralized machine control that is outsourced to a third-party vendor. That provides zero transparency. It is my goal, as Nebraska's next Secretary of State, to bring the counting of paper ballots back to the precinct level, hand-counted by We The People instead of ES&S.

#### **REX SCHRODER**

I will fight to clean up the poll books, push voter ID. And throw away the vote counting machines and vote by hand at each precinct.

# STATE LEGISLATURE

NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 6

### CANDIDATES

**MACHAELA CAVANAUGH (D- INCUMBENT)**  
**ELIZABETH HALLGREN (R)**  
**CHRISTIAN MIRCH (R)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### **MACHAELA CAVANAUGH**

I am running to continue working to improve the lives of families and individuals with developmental disabilities.

#### **ELIZABETH HALLGREN**

I am running for the Nebraska Legislature to bring my business experience to the big problems we face as a state. I will focus on updating our tax system and attracting and keeping a strong workforce so our economy is operating at its full capacity and ensuring our tax base is as large as possible. I will represent the voices of our business owners and entrepreneurs to make sure that Nebraska has a business friendly environment to start and grow.

I am also a mom. I want nothing more than to have my adult sons choose Nebraska to start and grow their families, however, Nebraska is at a crossroads. Individually we pay 52% more in taxes than our peer states and we are working with a tax system that hasn't been sustainably updated since the 1960s. This translates to less money in your pocket and a real financial disincentive to work, live, and operate a business in Nebraska. Couple our high taxes with the fact that we have over 40,000 unfilled jobs in our state with historically low unemployment rate and the third highest labor participation rate in the country and the economic future of Nebraska is incredibly uncertain. We need to get to work to make sure it sense to be a Nebraskan.

#### **CHRISTIAN MIRCH**

I am running for office because I want a state where my son will be able to grow and thrive. I am running to ensure that our communities are safe, our law enforcement is supported and taxes are lower. I want to effect true changes to our fiscal policy to ensure that Nebraskans are keeping more of their hard-earned dollars. We need a new voice in our legislature, and particularly a person who is a consensus-builder. I have the real-world experience in law enforcement, in the practice of law as an attorney, and as the owner of a small business.

As a police officer, I have responded to the needs of members of our community when they have been at their most vulnerable. As an attorney, I have worked at the highest level of Nebraska's judicial system and I have seen first-hand where our state laws are leaving Nebraskans behind. As the husband of an OBGYN physician, I understand the immense pressures placed on working mothers and the need for greater access to medical care for some of our most vulnerable community members. As a new father, I know the deeply held desire to ensure that our children are afforded every opportunity for success.

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Once in office, I will use my knowledge, experience, and passion for our community as a foundation to build coalitions and to seek consensus among my colleagues, while holding firm to Nebraska values.

### EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?

#### **MACHAELA CAVANAUGH**

I have had four long standing priorities: Paid Family and Medical Leave for Nebraskans, comprehensive services for children with developmental disabilities, enacting strong LGBTQ+ protections, investing in our strong public schools.

#### **ELIZABETH HALLGREN**

My number one reason for running is to get to work on making sure young adults and families want to be live and grow here. We need to make sure we have a tax system that supports high performing K-12 schools without overburdening our tax payers. We also need to listen to our young workers about what they need to thrive in Nebraska, from access to recreation and cultural opportunities, to quality housing, and childcare.

#### **CHRISTIAN MIRCH**

As a Nebraska State Senator I will work to reduce the regulatory and tax burdens placed on businesses and individuals in our state. By reducing the needless and overburdensome regulations we can reduce the enforcement and adjudication cost to the state while simultaneously reducing the restraints placed on private businesses that often inhibit growth and prosperity.

### NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?

#### **MACHAELA CAVANAUGH**

I fully support Senator Lathrop's LB920, a comprehensive sentencing reform package that works to pre-empt incarceration and ensures that there are robust supports for individuals who are released from incarceration.

#### **ELIZABETH HALLGREN**

We need to implement community-based programing for non-violent, low level offenders that focuses on career training and skills development to reduce recidivism by preparing them for a career after they serve their time.

We also need to focus on access to mental health and addiction services both in the community and in the corrections system so our offenders have the mental healthcare and tools they need to rejoin society and be a productive citizen.

#### **CHRISTIAN MIRCH**

While the question only asks for two ways to help reduce recidivism, there needs to be a comprehensive plan. Nebraska's overall recidivism rate is over 30%, with a recidivism rate of 14% for those who complete probation.

This means the state must take a number of steps. First, we must continue probation programs in place and develop new programs which focus on job training and life skills development. Second, the state needs a reintegration program designed to support inmates transitioning back into society that assists with finding those recently released from prison housing, job placement, and positive mentorship. And third, the state should continue to invest in diversion courts, especially Veterans Court and Drug Court for low-level non-violent offenders. These alternative justice programs have been extremely successful in rehabilitating individuals who qualify.

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 8

### CANDIDATES

**MARYLIN ARANT ASHER (R)** No response received.

**MEGAN HUNT (D-INCUMBENT)**

**KATIE OPITZ (R)** No response received.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### MEGAN HUNT

I've lived in my district and I've been a small business owner here for 18 years, and I am running for re-election because I can see from experience that we need more champions for the middle and working class in the State Legislature. From organizing support and testimony for issues that affect small business owners like Medicaid expansion, paid family leave, and quality public education, to my work with the nonprofit community here in Omaha, to bringing millions of dollars of revenue into Nebraska as an entrepreneur, I have the track record and experience to continue the work Nebraskans need, both in my own district and beyond.

### EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?

#### MEGAN HUNT

Brain drain is a really personal issue to me. I'm a millennial, I'm a business owner, I'm a parent who has chosen to put down roots here in a red state, and I have also lost a lot of friends and peers to other cities where they feel more empowered to achieve their dreams. I am specifically concerned about the drain of Nebraska's creative workers, students, and young professionals because they don't feel the values of our state are compatible with theirs. I want to see our state on the right side of history, with human rights for all Nebraska residents. I want to elect leaders who have a vision for progress instead of reactionaries who gain power by capitalizing on fear. We are innovative, creative people here in the Midwest, and we have the support here—both financial and in our infrastructure—to foster tons of economic development to benefit all of our communities. Our state boasts an engaged and diverse young professional culture, and so many visionaries who are dreaming and doing bigger things than our community has ever seen.

Many young professionals and creatives are here because they recognize the potential in our increasing diversity--

both in culture and industry--and see Nebraska as the best setting for their own story. The Midwest is full of good people. We are hard workers, we are generous with our time and our financial resources, we are humble and willing to learn. It's important for business leaders like me to use their platforms to advocate for policies that give all people equality of opportunity in states like Nebraska, where discrimination against LGBT individuals continues to give them unequal access to the law. Where we're regularly in the news for our embarrassingly unprecedented discrimination against Latinos. When our city appears in newsmagazine lists with titles like "Worst Places to be Black." For the young professionals we want to stay here, or to the companies we want to attract as a city, this is a reason they don't see themselves living here.

We can combat this by electing policymakers who recognize how much our social policies in Nebraska influence our economic strength and sustainability. If we want to have a strong workforce, if we want to have diversity of opportunity and representation of lots of different voices to make our state a stronger player on the world stage, we have to be a place where people can see themselves putting down roots. We have to be a place where people of all ages think, "Yes, this is somewhere where I can really pursue and fulfill my dreams."

### NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?

#### MEGAN HUNT

First, it's time for Nebraska to begin reconciling our failed war on drugs and its negative effects on communities of color by legalizing medical and recreational marijuana, and by allowing people with marijuana convictions to clear or modify their records. We also need to increase parole board hearings and require the parole board to meet more often - I hear consistently from parole-eligible incarcerated people that they can't get hearings. I have also fought for opportunities for incarcerated people to maintain connections with their families, for the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated to develop civic connections to their communities through the right to vote, and for developing avenues to education and employment after release, which helps prevent recidivism.

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 10

### CANDIDATES

**WENDY DEBOER (D-INCUMBENT)**

**LOU ANN GODING (R)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### WENDY DEBOER

I decided to run in 2018 because I was sick of the divisiveness in Washington DC and wanted to stop the same thing from happening in Nebraska. In the Legislature, I've focused on bringing people together on the things we all care about, strong schools for our kids, access to affordable healthcare, a fair tax system for hard-working



people and more. I'm running for re-election because we have more work to do and it is more important than ever to protect our nonpartisan unicameral.

#### **LOU ANN GODING**

My time on the OPS Board serving a significant portion of LD 10 was a rewarding and invaluable experience. I met and assisted in solving issues many families and taxpayers faced. I was the board member who identified the OPS pension problems and ultimately testified many times before the retirement committee in Lincoln. I want to take my passion and background in education and business to the legislature. I believe I bring a unique perspective as someone who grew up in rural Nebraska and someone who has served in the largest urban school district in the state.

#### **EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?**

#### **WENDY DEBOER**

It is vital that we have a competitive state where businesses can thrive and create opportunities for young people to find employment and advance in their careers. We need to create a more equitable tax system that works for businesses, but also doesn't leave behind the workers who make businesses successful. We also cannot forget what makes Nebraska great, our low cost of living, and the quality services and community that we live in. I've worked to lower costs of child care, provide strong schools for our kids, ensure neighborhoods are safe, and create vibrant communities that include parks, libraries, and other things that improve our quality of life.

#### **LOU ANN GODING**

- Business incentives for industries, especially those which will expand employment opportunities in Nebraska. I would like to see incentives specifically for manufacturing, technology and data science/consulting that don't currently exist in Nebraska.
- High quality K-12 education. Schools performing below the state average for standardized test scores have a negative impact on recruiting industries and individuals. We need to have more accountability for underperforming schools along with supporting students negatively impacted by those schools. We also need to support school districts across this state which do not receive state funding. Strong communities across Nebraska will help us to attract young families.
- Work to create a balanced approach to low property, sales and income taxes.
- Ensure state statutes support public safety by keeping our communities protected from violent criminals.

#### **NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?**

#### **WENDY DEBOER**

As a member of the Judiciary Committee, this is an issue I've worked on extensively. To address our overcrowding

emergency, we need a comprehensive plan that evaluates our infrastructure, a stronger focus on mental health and helping struggling families to prevent crime from happening, and measures to lower recidivism rates. To lower recidivism rates, we need to ensure programming that allows inmates to address their problems, and focus on education and job training to enable them to be successful in the real world. We also need to expand parole and probation to ensure people have support and supervision as they are readjusting to society rather than being released and having no additional support.

#### **LOU ANN GODING**

My first recommendation is to prevent the incarceration from happening. As a former OPS Board of Education (BOE) member, I am very aware of the challenges many students in Omaha face. Too many children are lured into a life of crime by the time they are 10-12 years old. The gangs promise money, women, drugs and power. We need to hold school districts accountable for meaningful intervention strategies.

- At the elementary level too many students are promoted without successfully mastering the academic standards from the previous grade. High performing charter and public-school systems across the country have developed transition grades to ensure the students who are struggling have extra supports in a smaller classroom with peers at a similar academic level. For instance, a K-1 class covers the remaining material from kindergarten, starts first grade material and sets the students up for success and self confidence when entering first grade the following year.
- One of the most disappointing decisions we encountered when I was BOE president was not establishing a high quality alternative middle school. We were one vote short of moving forward on hiring a third party to provide highly skilled staff to run a program for the students encountering behavior and disability challenges. Unfortunately, this group of students often becomes isolated from their peers and acts out with risky behaviors.
- High school students in Douglas County who have been suspended or are working through the judicial system are often left to roam the streets. While OPS has two alternative high schools, no transportation is provided, and the courts do not require the students to be present in class. Sarpy County requires students to attend an alternative high school. Not being in class and not having the concentrated support of counselors and social workers is a recipe for disaster.

The suggestions I have mentioned are just a few of the steps we as a state should be embracing if we want our youth to become productive members of society. My three sons who are all in their twenties graduated from Omaha Public Schools. I have heard countless stories over the years as well as met far too many young people who have struggled to change the course of their lives.

There will always be people who make decisions which will place them behind bars. One of my sons worked in the trades during the summers of high school and college. We spent quite a bit of time discussing the challenges his co-workers faced. Substance abuse and mental health issues often plague those who are incarcerated or who are

awaiting sentencing. My desire would be to:

- Ensure those who are not violent offenders have resources available to them through faith-based organizations, community college courses, and counseling.
- Provide substance abuse interventions to ensure the individual does not reengage in the same behaviors when they are released.
- Provide incentives to businesses across the state who will hire/train and support individuals who leave the prison system.
- Provide counseling on what healthy relationships should look like. We learned students from difficult home situations who attended UNK were more successful than those attending UNO. The primary driver was separation from unhealthy peer/family influence.

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 12

### CANDIDATES

**BOB BORGESON (R)** No response received.

**HAILE KUCERA (R)**

**ROBIN RICHARDS (D)**

**MERV RIEPE (R)** No response received.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### HAILE KUCERA

I decided to run for the legislature to bring new, fresh energy to our unicameral! As a young American who is pro-liberty and pro-freedom, I want to be a leader that inspires the next generation of Nebraskans to get involved and to prove that one voice can make a difference!

#### ROBIN RICHARDS

I decided to run for the legislature to bring new, fresh energy to our unicameral! As a young American who is pro-liberty and pro-freedom, I want to be a leader that inspires the next generation of Nebraskans to get involved and to prove that one voice can make a difference!

### EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?

#### HAILE KUCERA

A big priority of mine is to lower property taxes for all Nebraskans. I will make Nebraska competitive in being a strong leader in low-cost living, preserving freedoms by limiting the government's role in our everyday lives, and working hard to make Nebraska a beacon for entrepreneurs, apprenticeships, education, and work opportunities. Also, I would like to see an expansion of technical and trade schools.

#### ROBIN RICHARDS

I believe the best way to attract and retain a young talented workforce lies, not only in the offering of competitive salary and benefits, but in the amenities we offer to families. Nebraska often lacks the arts and cultural

offerings that keep young professionals in their city. By infusing arts and culture into our state we can attract and retain a younger more creative workforce, generate a stronger tax base to draw from, and stimulate the local economy.

Education will always be at the forefront of the conversations about young Nebraska families and I will bring my background as school board member, public school mom, and educator to the table. I will use that knowledge of education to help rework the state aid funding formula to fund public education at a higher level and lower property taxes. These items don't have to be tied together. We can have more school funding and lower property taxes. Follow my campaign to find out how!

### NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?

#### HAILE KUCERA

I would like to implement more hands-on training for those incarcerated so they will leave jail or prison with hands-on training programs and job experience so they can re-enter our community as a productive member of society. Beyond that, I believe we should partner with local businesses to provide jobs for those who have been trained in these skills. Lastly, I believe we should equip those who are re-entering society with life skills, such as financial guidance, social abilities, and how to cope with life on the outside.

#### ROBIN RICHARDS

I believe Senator Lathrop was on the right track with the bill he offered this session having to do with prison reform. We are incarcerating people at a higher rate and for longer than we ever have before for the same crimes. We have to consider sentence reduction and a real look at mandatory minimums to see if they have been effective. The studies generated by an independent party shows that Nebraska can not out build it's over crowding problem, without sentencing reform we are just creating a larger problem. I believe in the legalization of marijuana and the freeing of the people incarcerated on charges having to do with possession of marijuana. In 2010, we lost my youngest nephew to a cancer that is being treated successfully in other states through medicinal cannabis. 3 years with him was too short and families, not the legislature, should have the decision to treat their child with the medicine they see fit. By decriminalizing marijuana we would ease the burden on our prisons and give families more choice in cancer treatments.

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 18

### CANDIDATES

**CHRISTY ARMENDARIZ (R)** No response received.

**CLARICE JACKSON (R)**

**MICHAEL YOUNG (D)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### CLARICE JACKSON

TO improve the educational outcomes and options for Nebraska Students, decrease taxes, work to promote public safety and to improve police and community relations .

#### MICHAEL YOUNG

As a father with many years experience as a business owner, on numerous nonprofit boards, and previously elected and appointed to Metropolitan Community College Board of Governors and the Transit Authority for the City of Omaha, I felt my experience working in the community was a great fit to run for legislature. Lastly, with the gubernatorial candidates I have grave concern that we will need logic and reason behind the glass.

### EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?

#### CLARICE JACKSON

Advocate for fair employment opportunities for young professionals that are competitive to incentivize young professionals staying in Nebraska and the lowering of high taxes so that relocation is not desirable.

#### MICHAEL YOUNG

It's time we listen to our community members about what is missing and I would ask the YPs exactly what's needed or missing. From the brain drain to being dubbed flyover country, we must develop services and communities that welcome all walks of life, ages and orientations. We also have to address how we tax our homeowners from a property tax perspective and that means investments from the state level into public schools which are currently being pushed down to the counties and school districts.

### NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?

#### CLARICE JACKSON

Promote and advocate for structured literacy programs inclusive of dyslexia as mass incarceration/recidivism is welded to reading failure and support programs that help people who are returning to communities with employment training/opportunities and mental health support.

#### MICHAEL YOUNG

As a state, we must focus on the 'cause' of prison sentences and not just the 'symptoms'. Justice reform is one of my

five pillars in why I'm running. We know that education and having access to a living wage job is hugely connected to crime, violence and recidivism in our communities. Building a coalition of employers, trainers and soft skill specialists before they come back home is of the utmost importance and that is what I would spend my time and energy on. Lastly, I would work with the current systems in place to see what needs to be focused on inside the prisons. Especially with nonviolent offenders to reduce prison overcrowding.

## LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 20

### CANDIDATES

**STU DORNAN (R)**

**JOHN FREDRICKSON (D)**

**JULIE FREDRICKSON (R)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?

#### STU DORNAN

I believe we all have a responsibility to give back in whatever ways best utilize our abilities and interests.

Public service has always been an important part of my life. Through my work as an FBI agent, serving as Douglas County Attorney, and helping others throughout my legal career, I know the importance and impact of serving others.

My involvement in many community organizations, including having served on the Westside Board of Education, and current service on the boards of ESU #3, Community Alliance, as well as UNMC's Board of Counselors, has provided me the background and experience necessary to address the issues facing our district.

#### JOHN FREDRICKSON

I'm running for the Legislature because I believe that Nebraska is at its best when the Good Life is an opportunity for everyone. This includes having strong public schools statewide, accessible mental health and healthcare services, and policies that are welcoming and inclusive of all Nebraskans so that we are able to attract and retain talent in our state.

I believe that my experience as a Social Worker gives me great insight into the issues people are facing. Too often our policy making relies on emotional hunches. I want to legislate based on data to ensure Nebraskans benefit - and aren't harmed - by our policies.

Lastly, my husband and I are proud parents of a 3 year old son. I want to make sure that he is growing up in a Nebraska where community, kindness, and equality are valued.

#### JULIE FREDRICKSON

We need REAL Conservative leadership in the Unicameral and I was encouraged to run. I love my Country, Nebraska, My God and My family and what's best for them.

**EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?**

**STU DORNAN**

I believe there are two keys to success in this area.

First, our elected leaders must enact laws and policies that incent our young people - and those who have families - to remain in Nebraska or move back if they've left. This includes:

Retaining and attracting more high paying jobs so there are more opportunities with better wages and benefits.

Focusing on affordable housing so young professionals aren't "priced out" of a market they want to live in and excel.

Expanding entertainment and recreational opportunities, especially in our downtown. Encouraging development in all areas of our city to expand employment, housing, and retail services, especially in our economically challenged neighborhoods.

Making Omaha a safer community so individuals and families feel safe in their neighborhoods. When they are, they are less likely to move.

Keeping taxes fair and low, providing expanded mental health services, and providing the needed funding for outstanding public schools are also extremely important.

Secondly, all of us - especially elected officials - must do a better job of welcoming all people and all lifestyles. We do this with our words and actions, and how we treat others.

Omaha's younger workforce is engaged in making Omaha a more inclusive and open city, where everyone feels at home. I believe Omaha has made great progress on making our city more welcoming, but we can all do better.

Whether it be one person or a group of people, we must deal with each other from the standpoint of mutual understanding and greater respect.

Leaders help set the tone of a community and state and I will be part of the work to make Omaha as unique and special as the people who live here.

**JOHN FREDRICKSON**

One of the biggest issues we see in Nebraska is the loss of young talent. Brain drain and workforce retention are major concerns of mine, and I believe that we need to get serious about why young professionals are leaving. This is solved by supporting policies that are attractive to young professionals and their families. These include strong public schools, competitive wages, affordable housing and childcare, and paid family leave, among others. We also need to be creating a culture in Nebraska that people want to raise their children in. That involves leadership that is intentionally welcoming and inclusive to all Nebraskans, modeling kindness and celebrating our diversity and differences, which make us stronger. This is personal for me, as I grew up in Omaha, went on to postsecondary

education in New York, and decided to return with my family. I'm keenly aware of the importance of retaining talent in Nebraska so that we have a sustainable future as a state.

**JULIE FREDRICKSON**

As a 25 year Veteran Nebraskan Real Estate Agent and Broker of a small Business I know first hand how our high Taxes affect decisions to move out of state after Graduation. I also think lowering Property taxes and eliminating state income tax would allow young Professionals to buy homes here. Also, we witnessed a tremendous amount of Government overreach during the Covid lockdowns. Never again do I want to see bars open and churches closed! Our schools should never have been shut down either.

**NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?**

**STU DORNAN**

Your question is very relevant to the near crisis we are facing in Nebraska regarding prison overcrowding. Our state prison system is the most crowded in the country and nearly all prisoners will, at some point, leave prison and re-enter our communities.

Throughout my legal career of nearly 40 years, I have worked in law enforcement, as a special agent with the FBI, as a prosecutor, and as an attorney representing defendants facing jail time. This work has provided me the experience and knowledge to help our state address overcrowding, sentencing reform, rehabilitation, and recidivism.

Specifically, regarding recidivism, I believe we must pursue and improve the following to truly make an impact in encouraging individuals who are tax burdens in prison, become taxpayers in our communities:

Expand and improve local efforts to address gang crime, support mentoring programs, assist with job training and employment services, and any other ideas to enact so people - especially our youth - don't get into trouble in the first place.

Support and expand our successful diversion programs and problem-solving courts so offenders have options to incarceration if they demonstrate a willingness and ability to comply with the program and take advantage of a "second chance".

Greater focus on determining which offenders can be rehabilitated and how that is best accomplished, versus those who must be jailed for the community's protection.

Expand mental health services, especially for our youth, as mental health challenges are often the cause of many in trouble with the law.

To reduce recidivism, we need to do a better job of offering offenders opportunities to develop competency in needed skills so they can reintegrate themselves into productive

community life.

Finally, there are many in prison who have no interest in rehabilitation. We owe it to the public to prosecute and imprison those who are repeat, violent offenders for the protection of everyone in our communities.

#### **JOHN FREDRICKSON**

The overcrowding of our prisons in Nebraska is a true crisis that needs to be addressed. This is both a public safety and moral issue as a society. As a Clinical Social Worker and Mental Health Provider, I am passionate about increasing access to mental health services throughout our state, particularly to folks who have experienced incarceration. I'm also interested in policies that enable folks who have experienced incarceration to have job opportunities (and the services needed to ensure success in these opportunities) so they can be reintegrated into society.

#### **JULIE FREDRICKSON**

I am in favor of trade programs within the Facilities in cooperation with local Businesses and possible union training before release.

## **LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 36**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**RICK HOLDCROFT (R)** No response received.  
**ANGIE LAURITSEN (D)**

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LEGISLATURE?**

#### **ANGIE LAURITSEN**

I am a wife, mother and small business owner within our small community for which I have been an advocate for the last 10+ years. I was elected to Gretna City Council in 2016 and I currently serve on the boards of Lift Up Sarpy County, Concord Mediation and Survivors Rising. I also serve on multiple committees within our community that include, KIDS Committee, Citizens' Committee, Gretna Days Foundation and many others. This will also be my 5th session working on bills in the Legislature pertaining to sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and human trafficking for the state of Nebraska. When we were redistricted into a brand new district, I knew that I needed to raise my hand to serve my community again.

#### **EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT YOU WILL DO IN OFFICE TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA BE SUCCESSFUL IN RAISING THEIR FAMILIES HERE?**

#### **ANGIE LAURITSEN**

Legislative District 36 is known for having a vibrant entrepreneurial business community. As small business owners, my husband Jason (founding member of Omaha Chamber's YP Council) and I work with many of these businesses and one thing people tell us is that they chose Gretna because of our strong public school system, amenities like parks and libraries, and a strong sense of community. As a state senator, I would continue to build upon what we have by lowering our school's reliance on property taxes and directing funds to update our

#### **VOTER GUIDE**

infrastructure as LD 36 will be one of the fastest-growing districts over the next decade.

#### **NAME TWO WAYS YOU WILL HELP REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND PROMOTE REHABILITATION TO ENSURE THOSE RELEASED FROM INCARCERATION ARE RELEASED AS EMPOWERED NEBRASKA CITIZENS?**

#### **ANGIE LAURITSEN**

This is a statewide issue we can no longer wait to address. One thing I would like to address right away is the fact that parole board members have an astonishingly low attendance rate with data showing fewer inmates are paroled when the parole board is largely absent. I am a strong advocate for mental health care. Many Nebraskan inmates suffer from undiagnosed mental disorders. These disorders do not lend themselves well to the harsh conditions in our historically overcrowded prison system. A failure to address mental health coupled with a lack of programming to prepare people for their eventual return to society has resulted in a high recidivism rate.

## **DOUGLAS COUNTY ATTORNEY**

#### **PARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**DONALD W. KLEINE (R- INCUMBENT)**  
No response received.

#### **DAVID PANTOS (D)**

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR COUNTY ATTORNEY?**

#### **DAVID PANTOS**

Nebraska needs criminal justice reform, prison reform, and transparency for the public safety system to work. I believe that true leadership is required to make these changes happen and to make them stick. We learned this week that the incumbent county attorney worked directly against legislative efforts to address prison overcrowding, and it's time that we elect a leader who will promote change, not impede it. The racial disparities in sentencing and incarceration in Nebraska are the worst in the nation and it's time to stop kicking the can of prison reform down the road. I have lead Nebraska's statewide Legal Aid program, I've served as Vice-Chairperson of Metropolitan Community College of Nebraska, I've served as Board Chairperson of the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands, and I am in court every week defending tenants against eviction. I believe we desperately need a change of leadership in the County Attorney's office and my record of service, leadership and legal experience make me the candidate to be that change.

#### **NAME SPECIFIC WAYS YOU WILL HANDLE PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY CONCERNS WITH INVESTIGATIONS.**

#### **DAVID PANTOS**

Under my watch the Douglas County Attorney's office will be the most transparent government office in Nebraska.



I will immediately make all records (except those that violate privacy laws) available through online FOIA requests and ensure that our statistics and metrics are reported quarterly in a public and easily accessible fashion. Then, I will hire a third party independent transparency auditor to recommend ways to continue to be the most publicly transparent government agency in the state of Nebraska.

## **WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE TO OVERCOME FOR THE DOUGLAS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE?**

### **DAVID PANTOS**

We must push the ball forward on criminal justice reform and prison reform while also ensuring public safety. I believe that our prison crisis is connected to reduced public safety and we need to take that issue on immediately. This legislative session ended up making the problem worse. Criminal justice reform died this session and it was Don Kleine who killed it. It's my job to work collaboratively with leaders to reanimate CJR and make it a reality for Douglas County and Nebraska as a whole.

# **DOUGLAS COUNTY SHERIFF**

## **PARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

### **CANDIDATES**

**GREG GONZALEZ (D)** No response received.

**AARON HANSON (R)** No response received.

**WAYNE HUDSON (D)**

**GEORGE MERITHEW (R)**

## **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR COUNTY SHERIFF?**

### **WAYNE HUDSON**

I'm running for Douglas County Sheriff because I deeply care about this community and this profession of law enforcement. As a lifelong resident of Douglas County, someone that was raised and educated in North Omaha, and a career law enforcement professional, I'm in a unique position to understand a lot of the issues between the community and law enforcement. As your next Sheriff, I will continue to bridge the gap between the community and local law enforcement. I will hold community conversation sessions throughout our community so ALL voices are heard.

My professional resume reflects many years and solid dedication to the profession of law enforcement; it shows that I'm a constant student of the profession, and a dedicated community servant. I strongly feel that with my military experience in the United States Air Force (Honorable Discharge in 1992), my formal education, BS Criminal Justice & MS Public Administration, along with my total body of work and progressive leadership and management positions (current Chief Deputy Sheriff responsible for the day-to-day operations of the DCSO) have all uniquely prepared me for the challenges, duties and responsibilities for the position of Douglas County Sheriff.

## **VOTER GUIDE**

I'm deeply committed to community engagement/policing and being a positive role model for our youth. Along with being an active mentor with the 100 Black Men of Omaha, I also volunteer hundreds of hours each year interacting with the youth in the community. I have initiated or been a part of several community engagement and policing initiatives to include: Cuts & Conversation, Shop with a Cop, Teen Summit, Community & Law Enforcement Forums, Operation N.E.T.S., Student Celebration Day, and many others. Each of these is designed to break down barriers between local law enforcement agencies and the community.

Although I don't do it for the awards and accolades, I have been recognized for my community work by being selected as the Douglas County Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Living the Dream award recipient, Urban League Leadership Award in Government, the CPACS School of Public Administration Alumni award for Excellence in Public service, and 2021 Inductee to the Northwest High School Hall of Fame.

In today's ever-changing climate, communities need law enforcement personnel that can work with other leaders to safeguard citizens and present a positive image to the public. Law enforcement personnel must be guardians of the community as eloquently stated by the great philosopher Plato in his vision of a perfect society "In a Republic that honors the core of democracy the greatest amount of power is given to those called Guardians. Only those with the most impeccable character are chosen to bear the responsibility of protecting the democracy".

As your next Douglas County Sheriff I will ensure all employees of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office are held to the "impeccable character" standard, to include myself. There will never come a time you will ever question my honesty, my integrity, and professionalism. Most of all you will never call into question my overall commitment for the citizens of Douglas County and the employees of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

### **GEORGE MERITHEW**

To provide the voters of Douglas County a true conservative choice for Sheriff. I firmly believe in the 2nd Amendment, including Constitutional Carry, Stand My Ground laws and the Castle Doctrine. I am also a fiscal conservative who will spend money in a careful manner, according to best law enforcement practices with an eye towards maximizing taxpayer funds. I also want to promote high professional and ethical standards that are fairly enforced with transparency in operations.

## **WHAT ARE WAYS LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN INNOVATE IN THE FIELD OF POLICING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PUT OMAHA ON THE MAP IN A POSITIVE WAY?**

### **WAYNE HUDSON**

There are several initiatives that local law enforcement agencies can do to really take policing in Douglas County to the next level and really expand the law enforcement and community relationship. Listed below are items that I feel could be done immediately in Douglas County and have a great impact on the community and the citizens of Douglas County.

**PROPOSAL #1: ESTABLISH A SHERIFF/CHIEF COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** The Sheriff/Chief Community Advisory Committee (SCAC) would be established under the direction of the Sheriff/Chief. The Committee would be created to act as a resource for the Sheriff/Chief in the formation of strategies, development of community policing concepts, community engagement activities, and increasing public awareness. The committee is intended to provide a forum for discussions concerning community issues and the goal is to have a broad spectrum of viewpoints represented. The mission of the SCAC would be to act as a resource for the Sheriff/Chief in the formation of strategies, development of policing concepts, and increasing public awareness to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Douglas County.

The committee will consist of 10-15 key stakeholders, comprised of a diverse cross-section of active community members throughout Douglas County. These members will represent a range of interests and experience, which may include business owners, educational leaders, non-profits, public relations, faith community, youth representation, and more. **COST/FUNDING SOURCE:** No Cost

**PROPOSAL #2: ESTABLISH A SHERIFF/CHIEF INTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** The Sheriff/Chief Internal Advisory Committee (S/CIAC) would be established under the direction of the Sheriff/Chief. The Committee would be created to act as a resource for the Sheriff/Chief in the formation of crime fighting and community engagement strategies, development of policies and procedures, keep the sheriff/chief abreast of happenings within the agency, and raise awareness into the inner workings of the agency. The committee is intended to provide a forum for discussions concerning department issues and the goal is to have a broad spectrum of viewpoints represented. The mission of the S/CIAC would be to act as a resource for the Sheriff/Chief in the formation of crime fighting and community engagement strategies, development of policing concepts, and increasing internal awareness to improve the quality of life for all agency personnel.

The committee will be comprised of a diverse cross-section of agency personnel representing all ranks both civilian and sworn and union personnel. **COST/FUNDING SOURCE:** No Cost

**PROPOSAL #3: ESTABLISH A SHERIFF/CHIEF CITIZEN ACADEMY AND YOUTH ACADEMY**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** To increase community relations, as well as educate the residents of Douglas County by providing information regarding how law enforcement officers perform their duties, a Sheriff/Chief Citizen Academy is an excellent opportunity. This is also an opportunity to continue programs aimed at minority residents and newcomers to Douglas County. In addition, this program would be used as a recruiting mechanism for those minority groups (ethnic and gender) that are underrepresented in local law enforcement agencies.

To increase relations between local law enforcement agencies and youth in the community, a Youth Citizen Academy (YCA) would be created. Similar to the adult Sheriff/Chief Citizen Academy, the YCA would introduce the youth in the community as to how local law

enforcement agencies perform their day-to-day duties and responsibilities. The YCA could also encourage minority youth to seek law enforcement as a career.

**COST/FUNDING SOURCE:** The costs for this program are minimal. The classes could be held in the agency, and the only cost would be for overtime if the classes are conducted after normal shifts. The only other costs would be for refreshments for the participants. The YCA could be taught by School Resource Officers when school is in recess during the summer. There would be a graduation upon successfully completing the training. A graduation certificate and polo shirt with the citizen academy logo would be presented to each graduate. Partnerships with local businesses and service organizations will be sought to underwrite the cost.

**PROPOSAL #4: ENHANCE AND ESTABLISH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS ACTIVITIES**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** To continue to build relationships between local law enforcement agencies and the citizens of Douglas County, law enforcement agencies should provide opportunities for positive community engagement activities. The activities are done to further build relationships, humanize both groups, and build mutual respect. The community engagement activities should include: Cuts and Conversation, Shop with a Cop, Cops and Bobbers, Coffee with a Cop, Coloring with a Cop, Operations N.E.T.S, Step Up Program, Community Easter Egg Hunt, Student Celebration Event, Teen Summit, Trunk or Treat, and National Night Out just to name a few. These programs will be conducted in all areas of Douglas County. **COST/FUNDING SOURCE:** The costs for these programs would be minimal; the higher expense would be for overtime if the activities are conducted after normal shifts. Local businesses and other civic groups would be asked to help offset the cost for the programs.

**PROPOSAL #5: ESTABLISH A RAPID RESPONSE TEAM TO VIOLENT CRIME**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** Violent crime affects more than just the victim and their family, it also affects the neighborhood in which it happened. The Rapid Response Team to Violent Crime (RRTVC) would respond to ALL major violent crimes and assist the community in which the crime occurred. The RRTVC would provide wraparound services to the neighborhood in hopes to eliminate further trauma. The RRTVC team would consist of the following: law enforcement personnel, clergy, social workers, mental health therapist, trauma specialist, adult/juvenile psychologists, and other health/trauma specialists. **COST/FUNDING SOURCE:** The costs for this program would be minimal; all participating individuals/agencies would volunteer their time. This type of system is being used in other cities with great success.

**PROPOSAL #6: Establish a CADET Program**

**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** Local law enforcement agencies should establish a partnership with local community colleges and local high schools. The high schools should have a career academy (OPS high school Northwest has a Criminal Justice Academy) for students to attend. The law enforcement agency would provide sworn instructors (School Resource Officers) to the school to teach criminal justice classes at the career academy. At the end of the year, those students that have successfully passed the course, would be eligible to apply for a full-ride scholarship provided by local community colleges (Federal

forfeiture rules allow for law enforcement agencies to help fund this type of program).

While the student is attending the local community college, they will also work as a law enforcement CADET with a local law enforcement agency. This will give the student some practical work experience while at the same time giving them a small taste of what law enforcement is like. Upon graduating from the community college, and if the student is now of age to be a law enforcement officer (21), the student would get points towards testing for the agency. This is what is called “growing our own.” Instead of a school to prison pipeline, we would establish a school to employment pipeline. COST/FUNDING SOURCE: The costs for this program would be minimal; federal forfeiture funds would pay for the bulk of the program.

**PROPOSAL #7: Establish a Restorative Justice Program**  
**PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:** Restorative Justice Program is a system whereby law enforcement and the criminal justice officials take a different approach at addressing certain crimes. Currently, a person that commits a crime must be in the criminal justice system to be allowed a chance at diversion. In our present system, the victim of the crime have very little input as to what it would take to make them feel “whole” again.

Restorative Justice is a program whereby law enforcement identifies the suspect and victim, and if they both agree in certain cases, the matter is turned over to a mediation center for discussions and resolution. For example, let’s use a situation whereby law enforcement catches a young person damaging a car. Currently, law enforcement would do a juvenile referral and the youth is put into the criminal justice system. Under a Restorative Justice model, the law enforcement officer refers the case to a mediation center. The mediation center will work with both parties to ensure a successful resolution in the matter. In a Restorative Justice model, the victim gets an opportunity to speak to the suspect and let them know how the crime affected them. Also, the youth must do something to “atone” for their actions. If the youth successfully completes the program the paperwork is never filled with the criminal justice system. Adopting a Restorative Justice type system WILL have a dramatic effect on the disproportionate amount of minorities currently in our criminal justice system. Under my direction and leadership, the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office is working with Douglas County Criminal Justice officials to put together a Restorative Justice pilot program for Douglas County.

For more information on Restorative Justice please review: Seema Gajwani and Restorative Justice - YouTube

### **GEORGE MERITHEW**

As the largest Sheriff’s Department in Nebraska, the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office (DCSO) should be setting the standard for Sheriff’s Offices statewide. This should be through innovative implementation of new state training requirements that maximizes in-house training that can be replicated and shared with other offices. DCSO should seek to leverage its location in the metro area by working with other law enforcement agencies to maximize and share training resources. Another way to do this is through public/private partnerships that allow private businesses and individuals to enter into mutually beneficial

partnerships that allow for official department benefits while minimizing taxpayer costs. DCSO can improve its community services by engaging with the community. With the passage of the Constitutional Carry law in Nebraska, DCSO could offer firearms safety classes to the public in order to maximize the number of citizens receiving firearms training when these types of classes are no longer mandatory.

### **WHAT SPECIFIC CHANGES WOULD YOU PROMOTE IMPLEMENTING TO ENSURE PROPER LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING AND PREPAREDNESS FOR THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC?**

#### **WAYNE HUDSON**

After a few controversial interactions between different communities of color and law enforcement agencies across the United States, then President Barak Obama formed a blue ribbon committee called The President’s Task Force on 21 Century Policing to review policing practices in the United States. The committee was made up experts in their profession to include:

- Charles Ramsey, Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department
- Laurie Robinson, Professor, George Mason University
- Cedric L. Alexander, Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Public Safety, DeKalb County, Georgia
- Jose Lopez, Lead Organizer, Make the Road New York
- Tracey L. Meares, Walton Hale Hamilton Professor of Law, Yale Law School
- Brittany N. Packnett, Executive Director, Teach For America, St. Louis, Missouri
- Susan Lee Rahr, Executive Director, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission
- Constance Rice, Co-Director, Advancement Project
- Sean Michael Smoot, Director and Chief Counsel, Police Benevolent & Protective Association of Illinois
- Bryan Stevenson, Founder and Executive Director, Equal Justice Initiative
- Roberto Villaseñor, Chief of Police, Tucson Police Department

The Task Force produced a document that broke the findings down into 6 Pillars called:

- Building Trust & Legitimacy
- Policy & Oversight
- Technology & Social Media
- Community Policing & Crime Reduction
- Training & Education
- Officer Wellness & Safety

The Training & Education Pillar has 13 recommendations with some recommendations having multiple action items. I have reviewed these recommendations and have found that most of them are geared toward ensuring interactions between law enforcement and the community is less confrontational. As Sheriff, I would have my agency draft and adopt policies and procedures that address each recommendation listed in the report. I would use my newly formed Sheriff Community Advisory Committee to review relevant training policies and procedures to ensure I receive public input. It is critically important that the law enforcement CEO be as transparent as possible about policies and procedures that may/will have a direct or indirect effect on the general public.

Please see Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing | Office of Justice Programs (ojp.gov) to review the Training & Education Pillar and to review the entire report. The Building Trust & Legitimacy Pillar is another area that if implemented would have a dramatic positive effect on police and community relations.

### **GEORGE MERITHEW**

I firmly believe both Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) certification and de-escalation training for all law enforcement officers. These two critical skills would serve all officers and deputies in increasing the likelihood of successful interactions when the situation becomes heated. Having the skills to successfully access a mental health crisis or verbally de-escalate a situation is crucial in achieving positive interactions with the public. I also would enforce fair and impartial treatment of everyone deputies encounter. This can be done by reinforcing the law enforcement oath of office and code of conduct until it becomes muscle memory, much like the armed forces does with its Code of Conduct and the Army does with its values. Ingraining these codes and values in deputies thought process ensures that they will treat the public with respect and dignity throughout the encounter. I also believe strongly that community policing and public volunteering, such as through the PACE and Special Olympics programs, increase the positive interactions between law enforcement and the public. I would encourage and allow deputies the time and opportunity to participate in these endeavors.

## **LEARNING COMMUNITY COORDINATING COUNCIL**

**NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

### **DISTRICT 1**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**BRENDA BANKS (R)** No response received.  
**RYAN COHAGAN (R)** No response received.  
**GERALD MIKE KUHN II (R)**  
**BRIAN THOMMES (D)** No response received.

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LCCC?**

#### **GERALD MIKE KUHN II**

I am running for this seat because I am extremely passionate about education and I am aware the barriers to education in my district and other districts around the city of Omaha. Currently, there is a huge gap in academic achievement between districts in this city and I no longer want to sit on the sidelines and make social media post about the disparities. I want to be a part of the solution. The only way I can think of to close the academic achievement gap is for people who have experienced these barrier and made it through get involved to make choices for the younger generations.

### **WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?**

#### **GERALD MIKE KUHN II**

There are several things that I plan to do to support diversity & inclusion and optimize accessibility in our schools from my seat. I promise to always look at issues and initiatives objectively and analyze how they will effect everyone so we can move forward to close achievement gaps. I commit to being focused on ensuring students have the resources they need to be successful. I commit to ensuring that the Learning Community is being responsible with the resources they have ensuring monies are allocated to closing the achievement gaps in our educational system.

### **HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?**

#### **GERALD MIKE KUHN II**

One of the essential functions for this seat is approving the budget. I will ensure that I ask questions about how the money is being spent for technology and where the technology is going and why. If kids have the tools they need and dedicated educators to teach them, there chances for success dramatically increase. All children deserve the same chance to achieve their goals. As a board member I will be intentional about the equity of resources.

### **DISTRICT 3**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**MARK HOEGER (D - INCUMBENT)** No response received.  
**SALLY OTIS (NP)**  
**CHRIS TOOKER (R)** No response received.

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR LCCC?**

#### **SALLY OTIS**

Education has been my passion and career for the past 20+ years. As someone who grew up in Omaha attending public school before the Learning Community was created, I was curious about the work they do in early childhood education with a focus on equity and support for families living in areas of high poverty and wanted to learn more. I've been attending Learning Community public meetings for the past year and have learned a lot and am very supportive of their work with partner organizations to support families, education professionals, and public school administrators.

When I learned that a current council member in my district was not planning to run again, I felt my skills and perspective would benefit the work Learning Council does and I would be able to apply my interest in education and civic engagement in a way that would benefit Douglas and Sarpy county communities.

## WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?

### SALLY OTIS

To support diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, I will approach my responsibilities to the Learning Community Council with a community-first mindset. I want to ensure that the Learning Community partner organizations are responsive to the families, professionals, and districts they engage with. Partner organizations need to demonstrate active engagement with families and education professionals in the creation of programs. Additionally, I'm committed to being available and listening to community input about Council decisions and I will actively examine what perspectives may not be represented so that any barriers might be addressed.

## HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?

### SALLY OTIS

Learning Community partners have done an excellent job in identifying where technology is useful for programs both for student achievement and to support participant access or when it is not appropriate and more personal interaction or other forms of educational approaches are best. When programs or approaches that incorporate technology are proposed to the Council, they must demonstrate applicability and the specific benefits that they provide in achieving the organization's goals and objectives. Typically, programs proposed for the Council's approval incorporate research and findings that support the approach being proposed.

# METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM

## AT-LARGE

### CANDIDATES

KRISTEN DUPREE (D)

JOHN HORSECHIEF (R) No response received.

JOHN M. MCCARTHY (R)

CORNELIUS F. WILLIAMS (D)

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR MCC BOARD OF GOVERNORS?

### KRISTEN DUPREE

I decided to run for this seat because I felt the current board member was not engaged in serving the community in a meaningful way. I reviewed meeting minutes and attending a board meeting and it became clear to me that my values align with the mission of MCC. I understand how

## VOTER GUIDE

important access to affordable education is to achieve financial stability. As a millennial and a mom, I know how frustrating it can be to have student loan debt while trying to save for your own child's college education. I am committed to keeping tuition at MCC low, so the community has an affordable alternative to higher education.

### JOHN M. MCCARTHY

I have grown up in Omaha, our family roots run deep here. I've reduced my involvement in our business McCarthy's One Hour Heating and Air Conditioning and Benjamin Franklin Plumbing and have the time, energy, and commitment to another passion I have, The Skilled Trade Shortage Today.

### CORNELIUS F. WILLIAMS

I believe that it is important to have people on College Board that understand education and the role it plays in the future of our communities.

## AS A BOARD MEMBER, HOW WILL WORK TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES SO WE CAN RETAIN GRADUATING STUDENTS HERE IN THE OMAHA?

### KRISTEN DUPREE

I support the development of business advisory boards to keep employers actively engaged in MCC's programs. These will be mutually beneficial as employers can help influence the skills and programs so graduates are equipped with the knowledge necessary to succeed in their field.

I think there is an opportunity for a formal mentorship program so future graduates can form professional relationships with those accomplished in their field of study.

Job fairs are important, but a more engaging supplement is for companies to sponsor case studies competitions for STEM related fields. This offers an opportunity for the employer and students to get to know each other in a simulated working environment that can provide value to the employer as well as the prospective employee. I would leverage my network to identify partnerships with local employers to help facilitate these opportunities.

### JOHN M. MCCARTHY

I'm very proud of what we have done in bringing people to Omaha, and Building our company and the city. As far as opening up the possible on-line training to all area's that then requires the student to take a number of months live in Omaha, and be sponsored by a current regisstered business that MCC has approved for hiring this person.

I also think that MCC needs to keep better recorded on all students who graduate, or the ones who teach graduation but do not go thru the graduation ceremony

### CORNELIUS F. WILLIAMS

One of the goals of a community college is to help build the workforce of the community it is located by helping train people to fit the jobs of the local area and to help give people skills to start their own business. Currently MCC has many such programs at all of its campuses, and as a



board member I would work to continue these programs and create new ones as needed. One way to do this is to help recruit existing businesses and corporations to have offices and Manufacturing in the MCC area of service.

## **WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY AT MCC?**

### **KRISTEN DUPREE**

1. I'm committed to fighting against proposed resolutions that would negatively impact diversity & inclusion such as anti-CRT curriculum or any other efforts meant to continue the oppression of marginalized communities.

2. I'm committed to partnering with local lawmakers to increase access to highspeed broadband in areas of our city that have been denied economic opportunities due to redlining. Since we have seen increased dependence on online learning, this is important to increase equity for these communities. The North and South Omaha Recovery Act provide a great opportunity for this upgrade.

### **JOHN M. MCCARTHY**

At this time I have not had the handbook that MCC has on this topic, but in my working with the advisory council, I feel that the school is in full control and I'm not aware of and problems in this area."Equality and Diversity should be supported for their own sake"

### **CORNELIUS F. WILLIAMS**

Currently MCC allows anyone to enroll and take class which allows all to take classes that they may need or want to take to help them be successful and fulfilled. MCC is more than a college for people to continue their education after high school, it has classes that people can take who did not complete high school, allowing many to take part in things that they find personally uplifting. I do believe this to be one of the most fundamental working parts of a great community college.

MCC also is a place where many cultural events take place throughout the year, and I greatly endorse that this practice continues

## **DISTRICT 1**

### **CANDIDATES**

**PHILLIP KLEIN (R - INCUMBENT)** No response received.  
**MARK STOJ (D)**

### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR MCC BOARD OF GOVERNORS?**

#### **MARK STOJ**

When I was 22, I was working paycheck to paycheck overnight, unloading trucks, in a warehouse in harsh weather and under poor management. I was scared that this is what I would suffer through for the rest of my life. I decided to take night classes at Metro, and I graduated with my associate degree.

Metro helped change my life. Today, I have 20 years' experience as a manager of a credit union serving Creighton University and the College of St. Mary. I have a master's and a bachelor's degree in business and decades

### **VOTER GUIDE**

of experience with college students, professors, and staff. My son is in high school taking Gen Ed classes at Metro, and I have nephews who graduated from the Electrician and IT programs. I also spent many years as a community leader in some of the most crime-ridden and poorest areas of Omaha. I want to use my education, experience, and leadership skills to help others to improve their lives.

### **AS A BOARD MEMBER, HOW WILL WORK TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES SO WE CAN RETAIN GRADUATING STUDENTS HERE IN THE OMAHA?**

#### **MARK STOJ**

Brain Drain is a serious challenge for the Greater Omaha Metro Area as thousands of young professionals have left over the last few years. They have moved for more promising careers, social lives, incomes, and opportunities to start and grow successful families. We can have that all here. As a board member, I can use my networking skills to create partnerships with businesses that have cutting edge, modern opportunities to bring their jobs to the well-trained, highly educated, up-and-coming professionals of our area.

I will work with the Chamber's Young Professionals to promote this organization and efforts to solve this issue. My wife, Jennifer, and I met while serving on the board of a young professionals organization in Omaha, so this type of group has a very personal importance to me and my family. We have seen the positive results first-hand. I will also address the other side of the issue where businesses need to understand how to provide and communicate what is needed. The college needs to evolve a clear Mission Statement that includes a commitment keeping students and graduates in the community. We need to bring that mission to fruition.

I have a unique perspective that brings together the different parts of Omaha. I was born and raised in South Omaha and have spent most of my professional career working in North Omaha. I continue to be grounded by my friends and family in both parts of town and will be an advocate for their needs.

I also received the Ten Outstanding Young Omahans (TOYO) Award when I was 31 years old for my leadership in the community and the financial industry. I have had many opportunities to uproot and leave my hometown. However, my commitment to my education, my career, my family, and my community kept me rooted here.

### **WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY AT MCC?**

#### **MARK STOJ**

Diversity includes a wide range of factors such as race, religion, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and much more. I will continue to support the diversity events at MCC like the annual International Fair and the Diversity Matters Book Series. These allow students to open their eyes to other cultures, ideas, and people as well as mingle with them face to face. I will also support month-long events like Black History Month and National Disability

Employment Awareness Month. I take this seriously. As a young professional, I spent 15 years volunteering for blind people with Radio Talking Book. My accounting professor at MCC was a blind man, who overcame his disability, to share his knowledge that I use every day. I will support inclusion and optimize accessibility at MCC for all staff and students. I will promote equal opportunity in hiring and events like seminars, projects, and workshops for all stakeholders of the college. I will support scholarships for students and concurrent enrollment for all area high schools especially in lower income areas where I have spent much of my life.

I realize your time is valuable and limited. Thank you for taking the time to read my answers. If elected, you will always find me approachable and interested in your perspectives. I ask for and would be honored to have your support.

Mark Stoj  
402-932-STOJ (7865)  
Follow me on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook

## DISTRICT 2

### CANDIDATES

**ERIN FEICHTINGER (D- INCUMBENT)**

**JON TUCKER (R)** No response received.

**TAMMY L. WRIGHT (D)** No response received.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR MCC BOARD OF GOVERNORS?

#### ERIN FEICHTINGER

I'm running for re-election because I believe deeply in the mission of MCC to provide relevant, student-centered education to a diverse community of learners. This means keeping MCC affordable by making sure the cost of our education is not prohibitive, accessible to all of our neighbors by providing flexibility and support in learning, and exceptional in our responsiveness to the needs of our community. MCC is one of the great equalizers in our community, leveling the playing field for those who are underrepresented in education and in the workforce, and who are disproportionately impacted by unemployment and underemployment. District 2 has the highest unemployment rate and number of households living below the poverty line. I ran for MCC Board of Governors to be a part of changing that.

### AS A BOARD MEMBER, HOW WILL WORK TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES SO WE CAN RETAIN GRADUATING STUDENTS HERE IN THE OMAHA?

#### ERIN FEICHTINGER

I believe MCC already does a better job than most higher education institutions in training our future workforce and ensuring they have access to jobs here in our community. That really is at the heart of our mission, and we do a lot of work to ensure that particularly the students in our trades programs are immediately connected to good-paying jobs here in the Omaha area. Just to name a few - our auto tech programs are connected to all the local dealerships, welding technology is streamlined into Omaha area

companies like Valmont, and our re-entry programs work directly with the City of Omaha to increase access to jobs for returning citizens. I believe that increasing access to our dual enrollment programs helps demonstrate to Omaha students that we care about them, we care about the community, and we want them to stay here and grow in our community. That said, we can always do better in this regard. MCC is unique in our ability to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the workforce and of the Omaha area. We need to ensure that we remain affordable so that students choose MCC and in so doing, choose Omaha. We also need to remain accessible and adaptable to student and community needs by providing flexibility in the way students learn, and work to build even more relationships across the business community to show that MCC students can meet the changing needs of our local economy.

### WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY AT MCC?

#### ERIN FEICHTINGER

As our dual enrollment programs grow, I would like to see MCC be more intentional in reaching students and school districts that have traditionally had less access to higher education as a result of systemic issues exacerbating poverty. Our dual enrollment program allows for students to graduate high school with their Associate's Degree and provides a pathway to higher education that has so far been implemented in mostly wealthier school districts. I'd like to see us expand this program into more OPS schools so these students have the same opportunity as students in District 66 or Millard. Of all the MCC districts, District 2 has the highest rate of unemployment and poverty, and dual enrollment programs can start chipping away at that number so long as we make these programs more available to students in not only District 2, but across our community.

I would like MCC to have a more equitable and comprehensive family and sick leave policy. In addition to this just being the right thing to do, comprehensive family and sick leave policies are proven to increase equity and diversity in hiring and retention. MCC has an outsized influence in the future of our community because of our focus on workforce development, and I believe we have the opportunity to use that power to model for businesses and for our students that an equitable family and sick leave policy is not only possible, but necessary for our economy.

## DISTRICT 3

### CANDIDATES

**TYLER FAUSSET (R)** No response received.

**MAUREEN K. MONAHAN (D- INCUMBENT)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR MCC BOARD OF GOVERNORS?

#### MAUREEN K. MONAHAN

I grew up watching my family fight for my disabled brother's right to an education. My Father ran for the State Board of Education to open those doors for my brother and

every other child in Nebraska. Likewise, MCC's doors are open to everyone. Some students gain skills to go from the minimum wage to the living wage. Other students attend MCC for up to 2 years of coursework at a much lower rate and transfer to a 4 year college. A Board member makes critical decisions about the programs and costs at MCC. As a Board member keeping those doors open and relevant to the students' needs is why I am running for this office.

**AS A BOARD MEMBER, HOW WILL WORK TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO LOCAL BUSINESSES SO WE CAN RETAIN GRADUATING STUDENTS HERE IN THE OMAHA?**

**MAUREEN K. MONAHAN**

A very high percentage of our Graduates remain and work in our area. MCC partners with existing businesses and incoming businesses to train the workforce they need. That is a result of years of hard work of meeting with local, regional and national employers to find out the skills and education we should offer to provide the workforce they need to locate and grow in Omaha. MCC has earned the trust of our business, government and education leaders. Board members need to make sound decisions that keeps MCC funded and able to provide an affordable education if we are to keep that trust. Trust is key to local businesses hiring graduates of MCC.

**WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY AT MCC?**

**MAUREEN K. MONAHAN**

If our community is to attract new employers and grow, our graduates must reflect the diversity current and new employers seek. State law prohibits specific minority scholarships and grants. MCC has one of the most diverse student bodies and faculty in Nebraska through other means. MCC actively recruits at a young age in targeted communities to make students aware of the opportunities MCC offers. Board members need to expand and support that recruitment. MCC must continue to foster and grow an environment where students and faculty have both open and confidential ways to identify barriers and offer solutions. Mentorships for students and faculty as well as with employers assist in the success of our students, particularly for growing a more diverse environment. No student or faculty member should be concerned that their identity is a barrier to an MCC education or job. Embracing diversity not only prepares the workforce employers seek, but prepares that workforce for the diversity they will find in a modern workplace.

# DOUGLAS COUNTY WEST BOARD OF EDUCATION #15

NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM

**CANDIDATES**

**KELLY HINRICHS (R-INCUMBENT)** No response received.

**JAMIE JORGENSEN (NP-INCUMBENT)**

**JJ SWIERCZEK (D)**

**JAMES TOMANEK, JR. (R)** No response received.

**WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?**

**JAMIE JORGENSEN**

Ensuring our school is providing the best and safest education possible while being fiscally responsible with local tax dollars.

**JJ SWIERCZEK**

First and foremost, I'm running for the betterment of the students in the Douglas County West School District. I aspire to do everything in my power to ensure they are receiving the very best education coupled with enriching experiences so they can confidently take the next step in their life post-graduation.

**WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?**

**JAMIE JORGENSEN**

We continue to provide and seek ways to include diversity and inclusion through education, activities and support of safety in our school district. It is critical to our growth to ensure we provide the best education for ALL students.

**JJ SWIERCZEK**

Throughout my career, I've seen firsthand the benefits of holding diversity, inclusion, equity, and belonging paramount in building a high performing team operating in a welcoming culture. It's no different in our school systems. I will be working closely with our Superintendent and other board members to ensure that diversity and inclusion is a guiding principle as we execute policies, approve budgets, and make strategic decisions for the advancement of our district.

**HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?**

**JAMIE JORGENSEN**

The fine balance of technology and programs to ensure success is completed with our administration team. We as a board ensure that we provide programs that require the newest technology with cutting edge information as well as hands on training. Our goal is to provide each student with

the best well rounded program in high school providing them with success in the next steps of their lives regardless of what that may be.

### **JJ SWIERCZEK**

I've been able to have a successful career in the technology sector starting from when I graduated with a degree in Information Systems from Nebraska Wesleyan University. I started off as a Developer and through continuous learning and hard work, I've been able to assume more senior level leadership roles at Lincoln Financial Group and PayPal. Through my experiences, I've learned the importance of striking a balance between the benefits of technology and proper governance. As a candidate for the School Board, I would bring my knowledge and experiences into the Boardroom as we navigate such topics.

## **ELKHORN BOARD OF EDUCATION #10**

### **NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**BRETT ELLIOTT (R)** No response received.

**AMY PARKS (NP- INCUMBENT)** No response received.

**LISA PITTS (R)** No response received.

**NANCY ROGIC-GREUFE (R-INCUMBENT)**  
No response received.

**SALEH QULAGI (D)**

**PATRICK ROY (R)**

**LUTHER STARKS (R)** No response received.

**KARA TERI (D)** No response received.

**JERID TINGELHOFF (R)** No response received.

**MARK WORTMAN (D)**

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?**

##### **SALEH QULAGI**

I am passionate about our children's education and providing the best tools to succeed. I want to help the Elkhorn community without any expectations in return. Also want to help increase the teachers pay.

##### **PATRICK ROY**

Elkhorn has a large population of young families and young professionals. I believe it is critical to have someone on the school board who fully understands what it is like to be a young professional and a young family in Elkhorn. As the only young professional and as a soon to be dad running for this office, I am running to be a voice for these individuals and their families.

##### **MARK WORTMAN**

Education has been my lifelong obsession and I, after retiring from the teaching profession last June, would like to give back to the community that has given me so much.

#### **WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?**

##### **SALEH QULAGI**

Incorporate diversity in lesson plans & give the best tools to help succeed (technology)

##### **PATRICK ROY**

One area I will focus on is students with special needs. Over 12% of the Elkhorn student body has some kind of disability or special needs. As someone who has dyslexia, I understand what many of these students are going through. I want to ensure they have the same access to the best education and opportunities as everyone in Elkhorn Public Schools.

I also want to work towards students in Elkhorn Public Schools taking the US Citizenship Test. This would help students have an appreciation for how our system of government works, but also an understanding and appreciation of what immigrants coming to the US are going through and an understanding of what these individuals are required to do to become US citizens.

##### **MARK WORTMAN**

Elkhorn has been a leader in Nebraska for accommodating special needs students and I believe that mission should be continued. Everyone deserves the benefits of a quality education.

The curriculum of Elkhorn Public Schools has provided, and should continue to provide, a diversity of authors and perspectives in its classes. Elkhorn is a fabulous community but students should be aware of the complex world outside their city limits.

#### **HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?**

##### **SALEH QULAGI**

By providing the most advanced technology and using the right resources can benefit them by becoming well rounded citizens.

##### **PATRICK ROY**

I will work more closely with Metro Community College and other entities to ensure students have access to all of the newest technologies and an appreciation of what kind of job opportunities exist from these new technologies.

##### **MARK WORTMAN**

While students in Elkhorn Public Schools have access to the latest computers available, technology is only a small part of a well-rounded education. Nothing can replace reading, writing and communication skills to enhance a lifetime of personal and professional success.

# OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

NONPARTISAN | 4-YEAR TERM

## SUBDISTRICT 02

### CANDIDATES

**BRIANNA FULL (D)**

**MELVIN MUHAMMAD (NP)** No response received.

**SHARNELLE SHELTON (D)**

**MARQUE SNOW (D- INCUMBENT)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?

#### BRIANNA FULL

I decided to run for the school board because I see that OPS has especially suffered over the past three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID exacerbated the issues they already had trouble with and made them ten times worse! Recent mental health statistics have shown that both teachers and staff are really struggling in this area.

I believe that I have a unique perspective and voice as a former youth that went to OPS K-10th grade and aged out of the foster care system. I know what our most needy students require to succeed because I was one of them. My experience as a community organizer, educator, and policy advisor at the Nebraska Legislature has given me the tools I need to oversee the success of the school district.

The four priority areas that I will focus on are addressing the staffing shortage, getting the students back on track academically, addressing the school-to-prison pipeline, and increasing transparency and community involvement in the decision-making process of the school board.

#### SHARNELLE SHELTON

As a north Omaha native, mother, mentor, and community advocate I made the choice to run because I am passionate about service and community and I want to have a direct impact in preparing our children to be successful leaders of the world.

#### MARQUE SNOW

To continue the great work that the school district and board established with Dr. Logan, I have had the honor to serve on the school board since 2013 and lead the Superintendent search as well as serve as School Board President 2017-2020.

### WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?

#### BRIANNA FULL

One of the first action items I want to take on in regard to supporting diversity and inclusion is addressing the

school-to-prison pipeline. Black students and students with disabilities experience discipline and arrests at 3-4x the rate of their white and non-disabled counterparts in OPS.

Second, I want to make sure that the OPS office of Equity and Inclusion is reestablished and a new director is hired. I've gotten feedback from several teachers upset that the current DEI efforts are not robust and that OPS lacks resources in this area. I want to take a deep dive into this as it's hard to believe that a big entity such as OPS doesn't have a stronger DEI presence integrated into their systems.

#### SHARNELLE SHELTON

I will support diversity and inclusion and optimize accessibility in our schools by committing to collaborating with community organizations and leaders that provide training and resources that support equity. I will also commit to intentionally try to foster a culture within the district that recognizes systematic inequities, cultural differences, and minimizes bias.

#### MARQUE SNOW

I've always been an advocate of diversity and inclusion. I personally developed the diversity and inclusion plan for our school districts 2014 Bond and 2018 Bond programs to include 9% (2014) and 14% (2018) to allow SEBs (Small Emerging Businesses- Tier1 & Tier2) to be able to effectively participate in the great work that lies ahead.

### HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?

#### BRIANNA FULL

Now that each OPS student has their own iPad with internet access, we can utilize this to make sure that students develop skills that are required for 21st-century occupations. However, we also need to make sure that there is a balance between virtual learning and in-person learning without screens. "Screen time" doesn't just apply to recreational apps, but to educational apps too. We have to find the sweet spot for virtual/in-person learning strategies.

#### SHARNELLE SHELTON

I will ensure that students continue to use technology responsibly, respectfully, and safely in preparation to leave a digital footprint that they can be proud of. I will also make sure that policies are established making sure that technology is used moderately and not in replacing lesson plans and curriculum.

#### MARQUE SNOW

Our district IMS team and HR team work tirelessly to recruit and retain top tier staff to ensure that we are always on the cusp of technology from Khan Academy to Apple logistics as well as Microsoft supported classrooms. All school students currently have access to a personal device to help them with their learning at home, they also bring these devices to school to allow them to effectively learn how to use them. Our robotics program at North High and King Science is ranked best in the region and allows our students to compete in China and across the country displaying their talents.



## SUBDISTRICT 06

### CANDIDATES

**HINA D. AGARWAL (D)** No response received.

**JEANNE JONES (D)** No response received.

**NANCY KRATKY (R-INCUMBENT)** No response received.

**BRIAN M. PARIZEK (NP)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?

#### BRIAN M. PARIZEK

I am a current resident of OPS District 6 and have had a long involvement in the district. I am a 1986 graduate of Burke HS; in 1991, I received a BS in Criminal Justice and a Minor in Philosophy from UNO. Since 1992, I have been a certified law enforcement professional, serving and protecting the communities in Douglas County (since 1998). My children also attended and graduated from OPS schools (Joslyn, Beveridge, and Burke). Throughout those years, besides accompanying my daughters on their scholastic journey, I was involved with each of the schools and supported their efforts to provide my children with an exceptional education and learning experiences. My experience with OPS and our family members dedication and involvement with public education is extensive. I believe in the public school system and know that it can do a better job of educating and preparing students to being successful in life. I also believe that that OPS must be more transparent and responsive to the parents and stakeholders in the school district.

### WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?

#### BRIAN M. PARIZEK

OPS does not have an issue with supporting diversity and inclusion; what they need to improve is student learning and achievement. This school board and administration needs to focus their investment, instruction, and curriculum on providing students with a high quality, appropriate, and well-rounded education that allows them to successfully pursue their occupational and career interests.

### HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?

#### BRIAN M. PARIZEK

Since early 2020, the response locally and nationally to this 'pandemic' has demonstrated that a reliance on technology (remote instruction, masking, social distancing) has diminished student learning & academic performance, and encouraged more behavioral issues. Students need access to the learning tools that technology offers, but keeping the students in the classrooms & schools and engaged with their teachers should be the focus going forward.

## WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

### NONPARTISAN | 6-YEAR TERM

### CANDIDATES

**TERRY BUCKMAN (NP)**

**KRIS KARNES (R-INCUMBENT)**

**JESSICA POWELL (R)**

**ADAM YALE (D-INCUMBENT)**

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?

#### TERRY BUCKMAN

I have skills and experience that I can bring to improve our schools.

#### KRIS KARNES

I am running for the school board because I think strong public schools are critically important to our community. I have two young daughters who attend Westside and, as I near the end of my first 6-year term, I am proud of what we have achieved and I look forward to continuing to work hard for our students, staff and community. As a homeowner and taxpayer, I understand the important balance between strong schools and fiscal responsibility. And as a parent I am passionate about ensuring that every child has access to an outstanding public education. I have experience working with complex organizations and making difficult decisions, and I am a hard worker and good listener who cares deeply about education and our community.

#### JESSICA POWELL

The reason why I decided to run for the Westside Board of Education was to be a Liaison for the Minority population our district has. Our district brings in 30% of their diverse population from students living outside the district (mainly impoverished Northside) but being provided district education without anyone being able to be in a position to lobby for them.

Westside adopted a We Side movement focusing on Diversity and Inclusion but I believed in order for the concept to work as intended then the movement would need to start from Top down. It's one thing to say you are embracing Inclusivity and Diversity Education but the people that influence decisions are not the people that reflect the people they are representing.

I wanted to be able to change this dynamic altogether and by being elected to the Board of Education would allow me to collaborate with other Board Members to make even more efficient decisions with the District resources that serves the needs of all we include to represent. This includes our IEP students and any other underrepresented student, staff, or community member of the district.

**ADAM YALE**

I believe that a strong public education system is critical to supporting all of the values that we hold dear in our society.

Democracy, capitalism, knowledge economies and having informed electorates do not work effectively without strong public education.

I am running again because I want to continue to try to make a difference in the lives of students and support public education.

**WHAT ARE TWO SPECIFIC ITEMS YOU COMMIT TO DO TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AND OPTIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR SCHOOLS?**

**TERRY BUCKMAN**

We need more mental health resources in our schools to support all kids across all socioeconomic and demographic boundaries. Secondly, I want to find more opportunities for parents to be involved in the process.

**KRIS KARNES**

Westside has a long tradition of leadership and excellence through diversity and inclusion, and as a board member I will continue to support initiatives which expand these efforts. First, I am very proud of the District's We-Side initiative, which aims to promote a sense of belonging for all students. For example, We-Side has also, among other things, focused attention on our Unified activities to give more opportunities to our special needs students and to celebrate their success, and has highlighted our expanded efforts to recruit a more diverse staff that better reflects our student population. We have also opened community dialogue around diversity and inclusion, and will continue to prioritize these efforts as stated in our new strategic plan.

Second, I will continue to ensure that our students who are struggling with mental health issues are not marginalized by expanding our Mental Health Task Force so that we can better understand the issues they face, and by working to ensure that our students have increased access to mental health services.

**JESSICA POWELL**

I commit to listening to Students, Staff, Faculty and Community for issues and bringing these topics to Board for discussion and initial review. I commit to having an open mind and to use my Due Dilligence in empathy to understand what is needed.

I am committed in working with the other Members of the Board to develop, decide and execute proposals and actions that will embrace, and enhance the lives of not just the predominant majority but every member that is represented in the district.

**ADAM YALE**

Westside wants to be a leader in embracing diversity, inclusion and accessibility. I am proud to be the Board representative to the District's WE-SIDE Steering Committee. The committee's sole purpose is to promote belonging for all of the District's stakeholders.

Through the committee, we have begun, and will continue, to use data to guide District processes, staff development, staff recruitment and student achievement and well-being. Some of our goals have been: 1) to identify and address bias (using items such as AP/Honors class participation, disproportionate disciplinary data and any achievement disparities) to develop action plans; 2) recruit and retain a talented staff that reflects the diversity of our student population (which we are addressing in part by developing a comprehensive "Grow Your Own" para-to-teacher program and broadening our recruiting efforts); and 3) expanding curriculum and activities for students with special needs (more Unified activities, more adaptive classes- art and PE as examples- both of which include special need students and student peers.

I work directly on the Grow Your Own program and Art for ME (our adaptive art class) and will continue to do so. Success in this era requires maximum engagement and inclusion of all of our stakeholders, and I believe the District can be a leader in this area. Our leadership sees this as a strategic goal, and the values of inclusion, and specific measurable goals around it, are written into our strategic plan.

**HOW WILL YOU HELP ENSURE SUCCESSFUL BALANCE IN TECHNOLOGY USE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS GROW TO BE WELL-ROUNDED DIGITAL CITIZENS?**

**TERRY BUCKMAN**

Many of our students are already getting a lot of "technology," but are they getting the right technology at the right time? I want to move toward some "non-traditional" educational methodologies; more outside education - math and science specifically.

**KRIS KARNES**

Westside has long been a leader in educational technology with our groundbreaking 1:1 technology initiative. Nevertheless, our District leadership has always felt strongly that technology is not a replacement for a quality teacher; rather, technology is a tool for teachers to use as they see fit. I view technology as a tool for innovation and connectivity, but it is our outstanding educators who determine how and when to best utilize this tool in order to maximize student achievement. I am also concerned about overuse of technology and the effect it has on young minds, as well as the dangers of social media. I have supported the District's efforts to ensure that our students understand the risks associated with social media and cyberbullying and how our families can address these challenges, and I hope to expand opportunities for further discussion of these issues.

## JESSICA POWELL

Although we do a great job with this matter currently with the provisions we make to students by providing the technology that we do. I would say I would want to enhance our student knowledge not only with personal finance skills but digital financial management. The way we do school and work has completely revamped over the last few years and to keep our children competitive means we need to start teaching them futuristic methods of working and using money. This means teaching them how to safely use Fintech accounts and introduce them to Cryptocurrency and how to use wallets as this is becoming a trending norm. This is just one example. I also would ensure that all families have access to sufficient wi fi to be the most successful even while the student is outside of the classroom they will be able to efficiently to research and complete their work without interruptions. The district does a wonderful job with providing hotspots but those hotspots doesn't guarantee speed and connectivity and often because the school provided hotspots don't generate revenue the connection often is not as efficient. In both these scenarios it will take me working with Students, Parents, Community to gather the necessary information and presenting this information to the Board so that together we would be able to navigate these concerns and devise a plan that supports the needs of all the students the district represents.

## ADAM YALE

The District has been a firm believer in the value of technology. We were the first District in Nebraska to implement 1:1 technology K-12 (every student has a computing device).

That said, technology is merely a tool, and staff and students need proper training and education to optimize the value of the tool. The Board has supported technology-specific training for staff, and we will continue to do so. This helps ensure that students use technology for specific educational endpoints and that the use of technology is integrated into lessons seamlessly. We want technology to support critical thinking, not serve as a substitute for it.

I am a firm believer in, and will continue to support, our digital citizenship programming. Our curriculum weaves in lessons about citation, sourcing and source credibility starting at the elementary level and continuing through graduation. In addition, we have brought in outside programming to augment these lessons for both students and parents, addressing topics such as social media behavior and hazards, cyberbullying and overdependence on screens. This is a societal challenge and we will have to continue to address it.

# METROPOLITAN UTILITIES DISTRICT OF OMAHA

NONPARTISAN | 6-YEAR TERM

## SUBDIVISION 6

### CANDIDATES

**JOHN S. MCCOLLISTER (R)**

**MIKE MCGOWAN (R-INCUMBENT)**

**DAN RYBERG (R)** No response received.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RUN FOR THE MUD BOARD?

#### JOHN S. MCCOLLISTER

I enjoy public service. My three decades of experience as a MUD director and two terms as a state senator gives me a leg up on the competition in the 2022 election for MUD director.

Specifically, the utility must continue to be a leader in making Omaha a more vibrant and welcoming place for companies, families and individuals of every sort to participate and enjoy an incredible array of life experiences in our community.

#### MIKE MCGOWAN

I worked for Northern Natural Gas Company for 36 years in the utility business - I truly know and understand the utility business. I am the INCUMBENT candidate running for re-election. I have served on the MUD Board for 9 years - serving as Chairman of the Board in 2012 and 2021. No other candidate has the knowledge, experience and commitment that I can bring to the Board. One of my key messages is that I am NOT A CAREER POLITICIAN. I only want to work on the MUD Board to utilize my knowledge and experience for the benefit of the Omaha ratepayers! I am proud of the accomplishments of the Board. MUD is very strong financially with strong credit ratings (with significant amounts of interest savings), strong cash reserves, and the employee pension FUNDED at 97%. I would like to serve another term to ensure safe & reliable water and natural gas service at the lowest cost possible! I

### WHAT WILL BE YOUR FIRST PRIORITY TO ADDRESS RISING ENERGY COSTS ONCE YOU TAKE OFFICE?

#### JOHN S. MCCOLLISTER

Climate change is an existential threat to the world. CO2 traps heat which results in more frequent and severe wildfires, hurricanes, heat waves, floods, droughts, and storms. Those living in poverty are the hardest hit by climate change despite being the least responsible for its cause. Renewable energy, wind and solar generated electricity, are the lowest cost zero carbon producing sources of energy available. Passage of my priority bill in the Unicameral, LB824 in 2016, allowed wind and solar companies in Nebraska to thrive by removing 1930's regulatory barriers. Since passage, these companies have

invested over \$3 billion dollars to build wind and solar electricity generating facilities in NE. Therefore, my decades of experience on the MUD Board and my two terms as a state senator sponsoring pro-environmental bills gives me a unique perspective to provide unrivaled leadership at MUD.

#### **MIKE MCGOWAN**

I have served on the MUD Board for 9 years. MUD has not raised natural gas rates for 5 years! The increase in cost for water service is primarily due to the increase in sewer fees which MUD collects for the City - and is reimbursed for the cost of such collection. In a recent national survey, MUD ranked 2nd lowest out of 40 national utilities in natural gas rates and 16th lowest in water rates. I want to be re-elected to the Board so I can continue to work with the MUD management to maintain its aggressive cost management. In addition I would like to continue and grow the revenues for MUD from new alternative sources like Compressed Natural Gas. Cost controls and revenue growth will result in the lowest cot rates possible!

#### **WHAT IS ONE AREA WHERE OMAHA CAN IMPROVE TO BECOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT AND ECO-FRIENDLY?**

#### **JOHN S. MCCOLLISTER**

MUD must continue to provide safe and affordable natural gas and water to the City of Omaha. As a customer driven utility, it is absolutely essential to maintain high levels of customer service. The lead pipe situation in east Omaha and the sewer relocation projects will require continued diligence and creative solutions by the MUD Board of Directors. The utility also needs to evaluate an opportunity to serve finished water to the City of Lincoln to the betterment of both cities. Finally, the utility will need to participate in efforts to reduce its carbon footprint by expanded home weatherization programs for customers

#### **MIKE MCGOWAN**

MUD needs to continue to improve on the efficiency of natural gas appliances and to work with OPPD and other utilities to provide backup natural gas service to assist in their wind and solar farm effort.

## **OMAHA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT**

**NONPARTISAN | 6-YEAR TERM**

### **SUBDIVISION 5**

#### **CANDIDATES**

**DAVID GOLDSMITH (R)** No response received.

**CRAIG MOODY (D- INCUMBENT)**

**KEVIN RYAN (D)**

#### **WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO RU FOR THE MUD BOARD?**

#### **CRAIG MOODY**

My five+ years on the board have been some of the most fulfilling work of my life. I'm proud to say we have

accomplished quite a bit. The board set a long-term goal of net zero emissions by 2050. The district is in the early stages of executing on its Power with Purpose plan to add significant solar capacity with natural gas backup. We hired a new CEO, Javier Fernandez, who is an exceptional leader. Decommissioning of the Fort Calhoun nuclear plant is on time and on budget. We held firm on five straight years of no general rate increases (although a modest increase was required in 2022), and the district continues to be an industry leader in reliability, safety, economic development, customer service, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

I have no doubt that OPPD is headed in the right direction - towards a clean and climate-friendly future that also provides customer-owners with reliable, resilient and affordable service. And while the vision for OPPD's future is clear and true, much work is needed to get there. Our work now turns to implementing that vision, which is arguably more difficult. It requires deep knowledge of the industry, smooth navigation road ahead, learning from our challenges, and pragmatically moving the organization through the transition. Knowledgeable leadership will be critical to carry OPPD through these times of significant industry change to ensure we are better on the other side.

Priorities in the next six years include but are not limited to:

- Executing on Power with Purpose, which includes adding 400-600 MW of solar and the on-time and on-budget completion of two natural gas generating stations to back up all the clean energy being added
- Following through on the commitment to transition the North Omaha Station from coal to natural gas
- Examining and improving our rate structure so as to maintain affordability while positioning rates to be future focused
- Planning for and beginning the deployment of advanced (smart) metering technology
- Learning from and potentially expanding the district's pilot program aimed at decreasing the number of customer-owners experiencing an energy burden
- Maintaining OPPD's status as an employer of choice and investing in our people so they are fully prepared and equipped to succeed in the future
- Completing the decommissioning of the Fort Calhoun Nuclear Station on time and on budget
- Continued upgrades to the district's grid distribution and management system to maintain good reliability and resiliency
- Exploring ways to become a digitally-driven organization, which includes deploying technologies to seamlessly interact with customer-owners on their terms in the ways that they prefer
- Pursuing policies, technologies, and rate structures to catalyze the adoption of decentralized electricity generation (e.g., customer-owned solar and batteries) and electric vehicles
- Developing and deploying more programs to help customer-owners achieve greater energy efficiency
- Continued vigilant mitigation of cybersecurity risks
- Playing a meaningful role in our service territory's efforts to decarbonize and in the community's exceptional economic development efforts
- Always keeping a focused eye on safety - Continued expansion of utility-scale clean energy and exploring utility-scale batteries with an eye toward accelerating

the district's reduction of greenhouse gasses...all while maintaining affordability, reliability and resiliency! I'm energized by what lies ahead and look forward to continuing this work. The transition OPPD is going through is significant and happening much faster than most people realize. Having board members who are knowledgeable and highly engaged is critically important to ensuring the transition is successful.

#### **KEVIN RYAN**

I'm running because I want to be able to work on the OPPD Board to make the Board a more public friendly entity. I want to make sure everybody's voices are heard as we transition into more renewable energy sources, and work to maintain strength and reliability in our public power. I'd like to help achieve this while keeping costs as low as possible, especially for those who can least afford an increase in their electricity bills.

#### **WHAT WILL BE YOUR FIRST PRIORITY TO ADDRESS RISING ENERGY COSTS ONCE YOU TAKE OFFICE?**

#### **CRAIG MOODY**

I believe history is the best predictor of the future. To that end, I'm proud to say that OPPD did not increase rates for five consecutive years (2017 - 2021). And while a rate increase was found to be necessary in 2022, I'm satisfied that it was a very modest rate increase (equivalent to \$3/month for the average household).

The board's strategic direction related to rates is focused on affordability with a directional rate target of 20% below our peers. While we haven't achieved that audacious goal yet, OPPD has some of the least expensive rates when considering all OPPD's rate classes (residential, commercial and industrial).

However, I think the rate you pay per kilowatt hour (kwh) is less important than what you pay per month. That's why the board and I are paying particular attention to other affordability indicators. As an example, we have examined the prevalence of energy burden within our residential customers and found the figure to be too high. As a such, we're piloting a program specifically aimed at decreasing the number of OPPD customers experiencing an electricity burden. I'm hopeful the program has a positive impact and can be expanded in the future.

Another key strategy to achieve greater affordability is through energy efficiency and conservation. The district has increased the number of programs aimed at helping its customer-owners use less energy, and these programs should continue to expand in the future.

An ongoing strategy to keep rates down is efficient stewardship of our customer-owners' financial resources. The district runs a pretty tight ship and is always pursuing opportunities to be more efficient with its resources. This is part of the ethos of the organization and will continue into the future.

Finally, OPPD played a critical role in helping its struggling customer-owners navigate the financial challenges brought on by the pandemic. The district works closely with partners from across the community to provide assistance and minimize barriers to obtaining help.

#### **VOTER GUIDE**

#### **KEVIN RYAN**

I would like to focus on how to lower the rising costs of energy by focusing on the OPPD budget as a whole, identifying which energy source mix is most economical for customers, and working on what consumers can do to lower their bills through consumption innovations, private environmental use of power, and programs to help those who need it the most.

#### **WHAT IS ONE AREA WHERE OMAHA CAN IMPROVE TO BECOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT AND ECO-FRIENDLY?**

#### **CRAIG MOODY**

There are many areas where Omaha can be more sustainable! I make my living helping large institutions pursue greater sustainability (see [verdisgroup.com](http://verdisgroup.com)), so this is an area of great interest for me.

Starting with OPPD first, under the board's leadership, the district completed its first comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory recently. Doing so is an important exercise to get true accounting of one's emissions, which then informs actions to reduce those emissions. Not surprisingly, the largest source of the district's emissions are its fossil fuel generating plants (e.g., coal, natural gas, fuel oil).

Our focus is on transitioning our generation away from fossil fuels and toward cleaner sources such as wind and solar. Notably, OPPD is at approximately 40% renewables today; a significant advancement from where it was when I joined the board 5+ years ago! We've made great progress while keeping rates affordable and maintaining system reliability. But there's more work to do...which is why the district is in the planning process of adding 400-600 megawatts of solar to the system.

There are other areas for the district to continue driving down emissions, including the sizable fleet of vehicles and trucks. Many have already been transitioned to hybrid or fully electric, and more are yet to come.

OPPD has also been supporting our customer-owners in pursuing greater energy efficiency and sustainability. Of particular note:

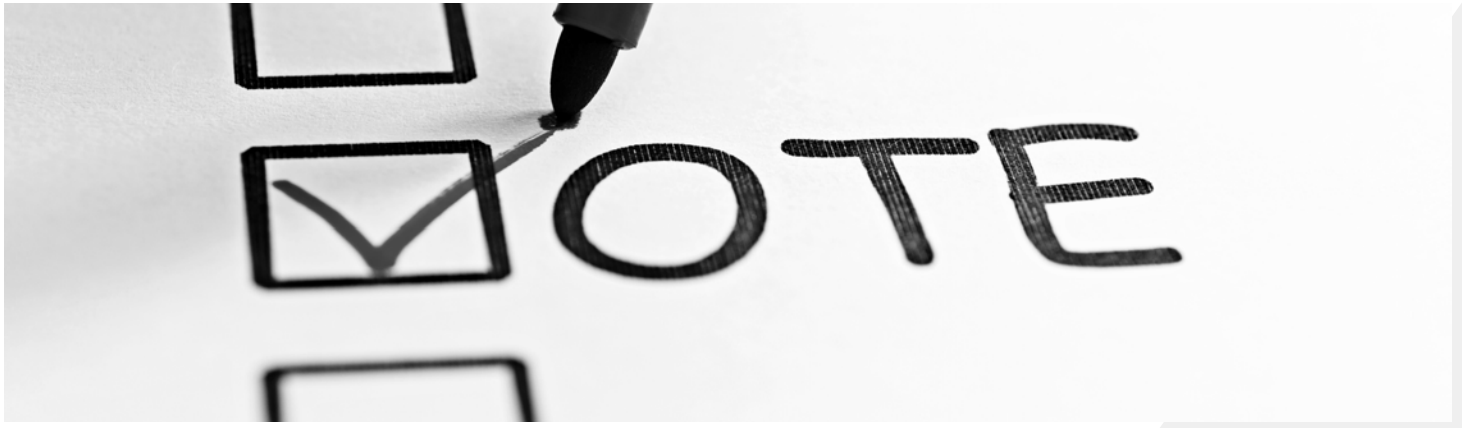
- rebates to customers who purchase new EV and/or EV charging stations
- several energy efficiency programs, including smart thermostat rebates
- improving the onsite solar generation rate so that adding solar to your home or business is now more financially advantageous

There are many more ways that greater sustainability can be pursued in Omaha outside the walls of OPPD. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is big part of the reason why I pursued this office. It remains one of my five top priorities. See all five of them in more detail at [craigmoody.org](http://craigmoody.org).



**KEVIN RYAN**

One area where OPPD can help to make Omaha more efficient and eco-friendly, would be to give customers more control over their individual power decisions. As I talk to people in the Omaha area, so many people want to find ways that they can create more power for themselves, but they find the cost, regulations, and complexity to much to handle. I'd like to learn more about how people could work through these issues, and how OPPD can help individuals who want to help themselves, and the environment at the same time.



Thank you for reading the 2022 Primary Voter Guide from the YP Council, and thank you to the candidates who responded to our questions.

We have included below a list of resources you can use to find more information regarding voter registration, vote by mail and important election dates.

**NEBRASKA SECRETARY OF STATE  
ELECTIONS DIVISION**

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 94608, Lincoln, NE 68509-4608

**Location:** 1221 N Street, Ste 103, Lincoln, NE 68508

**Phone:** (402) 471-2555

**Email:** [sos.elect@nebraska.gov](mailto:sos.elect@nebraska.gov)

**Website:** <https://sos.nebraska.gov/elections/elections-division>

**DOUGLAS COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION**

**Location:** 12220 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144

**Phone:** (402) 444-8683

**Email:** [https://www.votedouglascounty.com/contact\\_us.aspx#email](https://www.votedouglascounty.com/contact_us.aspx#email)

**Website:** <https://www.votedouglascounty.com/>

**SARPY COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION**

**Location:** 1102 E 1st Street, Ste 1, Papillion, NE 68046

**Phone:** (402) 593-2167

**Email:** [eethington@sarpy.gov](mailto:eethington@sarpy.gov)

**Website:** <https://www.sarpy.gov/659/Election-Commission>