

May 26, 2016

1. Should the work of State government be performed by State employees?

Of course. Like with all government work if the mission is clear and focused and communicated properly to employees than no one will do a better job than government employees.

2. As an elected official, how would you improve the overall safety of state employees?

The legislature needs to work to preserve the rights of employees to work for their own safety within fair labor negotiations. No one understands the risks better than those on the front line.

3. What is your plan to make the health care system more fair and equitable for working Vermonters?

I believe single payer needs to be the ultimate destination for many reasons, however it will likely be necessary to work towards this goal in steps. I support a public option on the exchange as the next step to move our healthcare system towards true equality and affordability.

4. Will you support collective bargaining and vote against "Right to Work" legislation in any form?

I support the right of employees to organize to secure their own safety, fair pay, and treatment. I can't say I will always support every one of your positions, but will stand behind your right to negotiate your own working conditions at the bargaining table and will stand against efforts to tilt that table against you.

5. What do you see as the role of State employees and how would you support them in their role?

State employees are the face-to-face representatives of our collective government. Every interaction with a state employee is an opportunity for citizens to understand the importance of the role of our government. The legislature needs to constantly express its appreciation for its state employees and above all make sure that each department has a clear purpose. I worked as a Park Ranger in the National Park Service for a number of years and there were long periods of time when the larger purpose of my job and park were unclear. That is a failure of leadership. Our State Government must lead the way in defining the purpose of each area of its reach and if it is successful there, I am 100% confident our state employees can carry it the rest of the way.

6. What mechanisms would you put in place to avoid budget shortfalls?

Constant re-evaluation. Times change, and we need to constantly re-visit areas of expenditure to ensure that they still make sense and are still fiscally responsible. We also need to be very careful about enacting new expenditures. To your real question though, would I support laying off State Employees to close budget shortfalls? The answer is in cases of departments or areas of expenditure we still find useful, No. I believe that if we have undertaken as a state to do a service, it needs to be done well. Understaffing

places like the DMV, our courthouses or universities is not in line with that principle. If, however a service is antiquated and no longer useful, or technology can be utilized more effectively then I would support re-visiting those expenditures.

7. What approach would you take to make higher education more affordable for Vermonters?

As much as I would like to think that taxpayers could understand the value of investing further funds in our higher education system, the opportunities to have that dialogue are few and far between. Having been a school board chairman for 8 years, the quality of our secondary and elementary education is high, but also very inefficient. We must utilize the concept of district consolidation within Act 46 to free up resources that can be re-invested in our higher education system to lower costs. Having the 2nd highest in-state tuition in the nation is unacceptable. So many of the bright people I went to school with left the state to afford college and never came back. We have to stop thinking of public education as ending at 12th grade and start to picture our pre-K and higher institutions as part of the total package.

8. What would you do to ensure the viability of the state college system?

Same approach as above in large part, by re-investing our realized savings through re-aligning our secondary and elementary districts, however in the list of overall priorities, the state college system needs to be high and if additional expenditure is needed, I will support it. The colleges are essential in allowing lower and middle income Vermonters a path to higher pay. Every dollar spent on our colleges benefits the entire state.

9. Do you support a livable wage for Vermonters? If so, what do you think that amount should be?

I do. I have no set figure in mind. Our counties differ greatly across this state and that needs to be taken into account. As a small business owner I want to pay my employees a fair rate, but I don't want to go out of business paying a wage to support the cost of living in a more expensive county than my own.

10. Briefly state why the VSEA should endorse you and describe the type of assistance that you would be seeking from a VSEA endorsement.

Your decision to endorse me is entirely up to you. Having been a government employee I understand the both the incalculable value they can add, but also how easily they can be undermined by poor leadership and purpose from the top. As a legislator I would work to ensure that State employees have strong guidance and support from their legislators and that the right to negotiate your safety, pay, and working conditions be preserved on an equitable basis.

Respectfully Submitted by;

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