

Name: Gordon Bock

District: Washington-1 (Northfield/Berlin)

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

Yes. One issue that concerns me deeply --- and that I have worked vigorously as an advocate for more than a decade to stop --- is Vermont's shipping of nearly 25% of its prison population outside its borders, which has meant putting our prisoners in the clutches of the corrupt private-prison industry (and also severing the ties to the community so integral to prisoners' rehabilitation).

Sending prisoners away from the supervision and custody of professional corrections staff who are Vermont state employees and into a private, for-profit system laden with poor training of staff, high employee turnover and vastly greater incidences of institutional violence --- all with the aim of maximizing shareholder returns and earning dividends from human suffering --- is antithetical to sound public policy and takes jobs from the Vermont labor force.

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

We all deserve to feel safe in our workplaces. The horrific slaying of Lara Sobel in August 2015 highlighted clearly the pitfalls and hazards that a state employee simply carrying out her duties and doing her job can face from a disgruntled client.

In both in the State House itself and in district offices of various state agencies and departments throughout Vermont, there has been deservedly heightened attention and focus on helping to ensure the safety of Vermont's public employees.

Clearly, we do not wish to turn --- and cannot turn --- "The People's House" or all the local sites where Vermonters go to seek the aid of state government into forbidding armed fortresses. However, I am open to learning about, and implementing, sensible strategies and approaches that help our state employees feel that they can perform their jobs reasonably safe from peril or fear.

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

I adhere to, and support, what the current platform of the Vermont Democratic Party says about health care, which means that I "(s)upport the premise that access to appropriate, affordable, accountable healthcare is the

right of every human being regardless of employment, income or age.”
I am open to exploring the implementation of a single-payer system so long as it can be done in a sensible, fiscally sound manner.

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

I was a Wire Service Guild shop steward on the metro desk of United Press International in New York City in the early 1980s. I fully supported then, and have unwaveringly supported since then, the right of workers --- including public employees --- to bargain collectively.

The shorthand phrase “right to work” in itself rankles me, inasmuch as it is a “dog whistle” for anti-worker legislatures and employers really to have the “right to bust unions.”

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

State employees are the hands, feet, eyes, ears and voices that put into place for their fellow Vermonters the statutes and policies that the Legislature passes and that the agencies and departments must implement.

If elected, I will seek the input of our dedicated state workers individually --- as I have regularly done with DOC and AHS employees through my prison-advocacy work --- and through their collective voices in the VSEA leadership.

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

I believe that states need to anticipate revenue shortfalls and endeavor to aim for a balanced budget while preparing for possible downturns in the economy.

I am unsure exactly which “mechanisms” would be most effective in circumventing or forestalling shortfalls (and, as always, the journalist in me wants to: research heavily the issue; find those who know way more about it than I do; ask a lot of questions; actually listen to the answers; ask some more questions based on those answers; try to assimilate all the ideas into productive and sensible law).

One thing is clear: we need to take a longer-range approach to the entire budget process so as better to withstand the bumps and curves that are inevitable in any state’s fiscal and economic future.

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

As I say on my Web site --- www.GordonBock.org --- we need to promote greater opportunity for Vermonters to attain higher education without being saddled with massive debt. This could include creation of a subsidized education based on a promised term of service to the community or the state. We also need tilt the scales from Vermont spending more on the Corrections Department than it does on its colleges and universities; ceasing the export of prisoners to other states could in itself realize a savings of \$14 million to \$16 million that could be better spent on investing in the future of Vermont through giving its future generations the tools they need to succeed in a competitive and increasingly specialized economy.

8. What would you do to ensure the viability of the state college system? We need to promote more of the dual-enrollment programs that can work to ease our high-school students into the Vermont State College system. Increased emphasis on college-readiness programs at the secondary-school level will also help ensure a steady stream of future students heading into the state colleges. So, too, will creating affordable college educations here in Vermont so that more potential students will choose to stay in the Green Mountain State rather than select colleges and universities in other locales.

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

Absolutely. I believe that we need to get the minimum wage up to at least \$15 per hour, and I am open to seeing whether it should then be increased beyond that if \$15 proves not to create a livable wage.

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

VSEA should endorse my campaign for the Vermont House because I align with the ideals of Vermont's public workers and the organization (VSEA) that represents their interests.

VSEA should endorse my campaign for the Vermont House because the words of Samuel Gompers ring as true for me today as they did when Gompers uttered them a century ago: "We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures."

My fervent hope is that the brethren in the VSEA: will help spread the word

about my insurgent campaign to unseat one of two GOP incumbents in this district (who are by no means friends of labor); will share some of its members as volunteers; will host or sponsor events that will shine a light on my candidacy.