

Pottawatomie Eco-Devo Candidate Questionnaire for Website
The October 8th Forum will be at the Wamego Senior Center 6PM

● What, in your opinion, is the state's role in attracting new businesses and creating jobs in our district

- The state has economic tools that can be leveraged to attract businesses and new jobs to the state. The state must exercise caution with projects because of the large financial risk. I am familiar with the economic incentives process because of my experience as a city commissioner and would use that knowledge. When recruiting businesses, claw backs can be used to assure the company creates the number of jobs promised.
- Adequate housing is a prerequisite for business recruitment. The state should lead the way in assessing housing needs across the state and develop policies to respond to the workforce and affordable housing shortages.
- It is essential that the state assures a quality public educational system and quality childcare to attract businesses and employees.
- Adequate infrastructure is a requirement for recruiting business, too. The state should work with cities and counties to develop long-term plans for transportation, water and infrastructure projects.

● How will you ensure that the state's tax policy is fair while still promoting economic growth?

The state has historically assured a balance of property tax, sales tax and income tax.

Sales tax is the most unfair type of tax for low and moderate-income taxpayers who must spend a higher percentage of their income on these taxes. The state should continue to follow current trends, avoiding risky tax policy, especially constitutional restrictions and flat tax proposals, that would make it harder for the state to pay its bills and to improve Kansas residents' quality of life, including in areas of education, infrastructure, public safety, water and agricultural protections, and other investments that help our communities thrive.

● What policies would you support to help small businesses recover and grow in the post-pandemic economy?

I will commit to lower property taxes.

I will consult local businesses and gather ideas across the district to find ways to help our small businesses, such as expanding broadband availability and developing workforce housing.

Medicaid expansion will help our small businesses thrive with healthy employees and families.

● **What will you do to ensure adequate funding for public schools in both urban and rural areas of the state?**

The children of Kansas are our future. I will commit to fully funding Kansas public schools. The education of the state's 500,000 students is the largest expenditure in the state budget. I can be one more legislative voice to collaborate and work to ensure all students' needs are met.

Public funds should go to public schools. Public funds should not be diverted to private schools and homeschools through vouchers or tuition tax credits. Vouchers hurt rural towns because public schools lose funding.

Local schools are the backbone of rural communities. In rural areas, lower population means fewer students and less funding. Less funding means hard decisions such as consolidation and closing school buildings. We need to find ways to keep these schools viable in our small towns.

● **How do you plan to address teacher shortages and improve teacher retention in our state?**

Teacher shortages are a complex issue, and solutions will be best when all the stakeholders work together. Teachers deserve our respect and gratitude. Leaders in the community, state legislators and parents should recognize the big gains students are making. As a legislator I would highlight all the gains made by the hard work of teachers since the losses during the pandemic. Math scores are now higher than they were before COVID years. In 2023 nine out of ten Kansas seniors graduated from high school – an all time high.

Teachers need competitive salaries, decent benefits and affordable housing. Teachers leave the profession for better paying jobs, but that is not the only reason. They want to make a difference in children's lives. It is discouraging when they do not have the tools and support needed for quality teaching. Special education is not yet fully funded so local school districts are paying the difference out of the general budgets. Let's get special education fully funded.

● **What role should the state legislature play in making higher education more affordable for students and their families?**

Legislators working with the Kansas Board of Regents, the University Provosts and the Governor need to work together on this problem. If the state would take more of the financial burden, then the families would not have that burden.

● **What is your position on Medicaid expansion in Kansas?**

I support Medicaid expansion because many Kansans are going without desperately needed medical care. Veterans are often the ones at risk. Forty- one other states are using our taxes to pay for their Medicaid expansion and are benefiting their economies and helping their people. Kansas is losing a million dollars a day by ignoring this opportunity. Our tax dollars are being spent in those other states! Let's bring them home and take care of Kansans.

● How will you work to improve access to healthcare, particularly in rural areas of the state?

People in rural areas are disproportionately affected by the lack of Medicaid expansion, so expansion is important. According to The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, Kansas has more rural hospitals at risk of closing than any other state our size.

● What are your priorities for improving transportation and infrastructure in our district?

I will support our counties' comprehensive plans for growth and development. I will seek state resources to help with infrastructure, highway improvements and business development. My job as a state legislator will be to ensure that our counties get all the funds possible to support local growth.

● What are your plans to ensure the state's infrastructure is prepared for future growth?

KDOT and state economic development funds will be important to assure that infrastructure is well planned. Area local governments should be partners as the area continues to grow.

In the last census Pottawatomie County's population grew by 17 percent, so we know this area is going to see growth. Combined with the Animal Science Corridor, planning is critically needed so that orderly growth continues along I-70 and along Highway 24. An important goal is protecting agricultural lands as well as keeping the beauty that draws people here to visit and to live.

● What is your stance on gun laws, and how would you balance public safety with Second Amendment rights?

Citizens deserve to feel safe in their school, shopping marts and events. We must pass common sense legislation including:

- 1) Banning the sale of semi-automatic guns meant for warfare
- 2) Requiring background checks on all gun sales

● What specific changes, if any, would you propose to the state's tax structure?

I oppose a flat tax. I want to make sure we have the funds to keep our state adequately funded.

● How will you ensure that the state budget is balanced without cutting essential services like education, healthcare, and public safety?

We should not allow the state to ever lose its financial standing again.

Tax cuts must be done judiciously so as not to throw these critical services in jeopardy.

● **What steps would you take to support Kansas farmers and the agriculture industry, which is vital to our state?**

Kansas agriculture is the largest economic driver in the state and our farmers and ranchers deserve the best support of state and federal programs. Working with other agricultural organizations and elected officials, I will secure cost-sharing, grants, subsidies and other appropriate supports.

● **How will you address the challenges faced by rural communities, such as population decline and lack of economic opportunities?**

Current and past governors have worked hard to strengthen our rural communities with limited success. I will partner with local organizations and President Linton's K-State 105 plan to clearly identify tools and policies for opportunities in our rural counties.

● **What role do you believe your office should play in addressing the potential Jeffrey Energy Center closure?**

There will be a need for the Jeffrey Energy Center to continue. Potential new sources of energy beyond coal are developing, but plans are not in place yet to close Jeffrey Energy Center. As your legislator, I will be a part of the process for a balanced plan for our sources of energy.

● **Do you support further investment in renewable energy sources like wind and solar?**

I do. But cooperation, compromise, and creative ideas will be required. Local leadership and businesses will likely provide the impetus for green projects and development.

● **What steps will you take to address the lack of affordable housing in our district and across the state?**

There are successful models of solutions for affordable workforce housing in our counties. The redevelopment of an existing historic building in our area is a prime example. The Pottawatomie County Economic Development Cooperation described how a range of partners, including private developers, local and regional banks, state housing agencies, and community organizations worked together and used Kansas housing grants and incentives such as the Kansas Housing Investor Tax Credit (KHITC) and other resources provided by the Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Housing Resources Corporation, and the State Historic Preservation office. The project aimed to address affordable housing needs in the area while fostering economic development. This is an example of strong partnerships, careful listening, and shared resources to solve problems.

● **How would you work with local governments to ensure housing policies are fair and accessible to all Kansans?**

I was on the Flint Hills Regional Council. They are advocates and grant-writers for all the local governments in the seven-county area. That is an example of the kind of collaboration needed to plan for fair and accessible housing policies in Kansas.

● How do you plan to improve healthcare, education, and job opportunities for veterans in the state?

Support for and keeping Veterans informed of the sales and property tax relief for disabled veterans, scholarship opportunities, and on-the-job training for veterans. The state should continue to financially support these programs and help to coordinate various efforts.

● How will you support workforce training programs that prepare Kansans for the jobs of the future?

The first step in preparing a quality workforce is high quality education in K-12 schools. I firmly support funding our public education. Post secondary education is required for most quality jobs of the future. This includes university education and technical education, apprenticeships, and structured on-the-job training. I will work with all entities to ensure our business and industry have a qualified workforce to help meet their goals.

● Why do you believe you are the best candidate to represent this district in the state legislature, and what is the one key issue you would prioritize if elected?

I believe in the people of Kansas – their abilities, their hard work ethic, and their dedication to family and community. I have had a nonpartisan political career, and I have worked hard to bring people together to serve the community on the city commission and the many boards and committees I have worked on. I listen to everyone and talk to constituents about the issues that are important to them. I do my best to make decisions based on the best solutions. I have been meeting with people in my district in each county, just as I have taken time over the years to meet and listen to people of all walks of life. During this campaign I have traveled the district to learn about this constituency and what is important to them.

I have three key issues: Policies that focus on keeping Kansans and their families healthy, a strong public education system, and fiscal responsibility so that the state does not lose its financial standing again.