

Johnson County Public Policy Council
2016 State Senator/State Representative Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Leesa Gabel District: 14 Political Affiliation: R

Address/City/State/Zip: 906 E. Oakview St., Olathe, KS 66061

Phone: 913-907-5316 Email: leesa@leesagabel.com

Campaign Website: www.leesagabel.com

Campaign Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxXCCPFteXH7YylQMUrpc2g>

Occupation/Work History (last five years - 25 words or fewer):

I'm currently a technical writer for FireMon (an OP company). Previously, I was a freelance/contract technical writer for a variety of local companies.

Other recent political/community experience (25 words or fewer):

I've spent 6 years as a cancer advocate - holding leadership roles with the LIVESTRONG Foundation and Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. I volunteer with Boy & Girl Scouts and the Olathe Junior Service League.

If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held:

n/a

As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (10 words or fewer per issue):

1. Equitably and adequately funding our public schools (K-12 and higher ed)
2. Correcting the LLC loophole to restore a stable and balanced three-legged stool of taxation
3. Keeping guns off college campuses and restoring local control for gun regulations

What are your views on state tax policy? (100 words or fewer):

The three-legged stool of taxation – property, sales, and income – is horribly out of balance, as we have seen in our property tax bills and grocery store receipts, and the continued missed monthly state income projections. The first step is to admit that Kansas has a revenue problem - a problem that Brownback and his supporters brought upon the state. The pointing of fingers to sources outside the state (Obama, Congress, slow economy recovery) needs to stop. It's time we took a pragmatic and reasoned approach to taxation that reflects Kansas common sense.

If Kansas faces a significant revenue shortfall in meeting its budget, how would you proposed to balance the budget? Please be specific. (100 words or fewer):

Repealing the 2012 tax breaks is a start. We absolutely need to put LLCs back on the tax rolls. But raising taxes without also removing the language embedded in statutes that trigger additional tax breaks if revenue growth exceeds 2.5% will simply throw gasoline on the fire. Any serious attempt at reform must address this component.

What are your views on K-12 school funding? In anticipation of a new funding formula/process, what are your priorities?(75 words or fewer):

I will support independence from Topeka when it comes to education funding and policy, specifically with regard to increased local control over our own funding destiny, as well as curriculum development and employment policies. The Kansas Constitution requires a “suitable provision for the finance of education,” and when I raise my hand to protect that Constitution, I vow to oppose efforts to undermine this fundamental priority for our state.

What are your views on the state’s role with respect to access and affordability of public higher education? (50 words or fewer):

Our state’s higher education challenges grow from the same wilted stem as everything else – the budget and the radical tax policy instituted in 2012. When college budgets are cut, tuition and fees go up (5% at KU where my son will attend). The bottom line to more affordable access to higher education is to fix the underlying state budget woes and put the entire state on a firmer footing.

What is your position on individual tax credits and other voucher-like programs for private school tuition? (50 words or fewer):

The Kansas Constitution requires us to provide an adequate public education for Kansas children. Article 6, Section 6, Part C of the Kansas Constitution states that “No religious sect or sects shall control any part of the public educational funds.” Enabling the use of tax credits or vouchers would require amending this portion of the Constitution and I would oppose that action.

What type of economic development policies will you support to encourage job growth and business expansion in Kansas? (50 words or fewer):

I’ll look to my local Chambers (Olathe & Lenexa) for guidance in this area.

Do you support or oppose maintaining the current dedicated sales tax transfer to the state highway fund for the purpose of funding transportation projects, or should transportation be subject to the appropriations process where legislators determine funding levels entirely? Explain. (75 words or fewer):

I definitely support using transportation funds for only transportation-related projects. Diverting funds from T-WORKS/KDOT to fill budget holes prevents actual holes from being filled. Infrastructure suffers as do contractors and their employees who were counting on projects to be funded.

What is your policy position on the state’s role regarding immigration and do you support employment-based immigration reforms to assist with workforce shortages in specified industries such as engineering? (50 words or fewer):

I need to research this topic more. My gut response -- Our nation was formed on the backs of immigrants. Folks here legally - with work visas. If there are jobs to fill that are not able to be filled by a Kansan, then we should look outside Kansas or even the US, if needed.

What role should state governments have in determining workplace employment practices and benefits offered to employees?(50 words or fewer):

I’m unsure how to answer this one as it’s worded – is it referring to state employees? For private businesses, I suppose the state should be involved with unemployment insurance and workers' compensation, and perhaps health insurance (in some form). But the state should not place mandates on hiring/firing or compensation type issues.

What do you believe is the most pressing issue or challenge facing Kansas today and how would you address it? (75 words or fewer):

From the folks I’ve met, aside from concerns of school funding, keeping our roads repaired and safe, and improving revenue, the one issue that rises above all these is that folks don’t feel they are being represented properly. They feel that their representative either has his own agenda or the agenda of the PACs who contribute to his campaign. Emails and phone calls go unanswered or are answered in a condescending manner. That’s not right.

What do you believe most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (75 words or fewer):

I understand the importance of communication; I answer emails and return phone calls. I do not shy away from answering questions in public. I meet regularly with citizens, school and city leaders to better understand how decisions made in Topeka affect them. Also, my vote cannot be bought – I will represent the people of the district, not only those who contribute to my campaign. My priorities are district, city, county and state.