

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

Name: Neil Melton
District: HD 21

Political Affiliation: Republican

Address/City/State/Zip:

Phone: 913-205-3542

4112 W. 68th Terrace Prairie Village, KS 66208

Email:

melton4staterep@gmail.com

Campaign Website: www.neilmelton.com

Campaign Video Link:

Occupation/Work History (last five years – 25 words or less): Mortgage lending and real estate investments

Other Recent Political/Community Experience (25 words or less): Overland Park Rotary Club, Sen. Jerry Moran Re-Elect County Co-Chair, Vice Chair of Johnson County Young Republicans, Former Chair Northeast Johnson County Conservatives, DeVile 75 HOA Board

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:

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

- 1. Coming up with a sustainable school finance formula**
- 2. Balancing the budget**
- 3. Improving our Mental Health system**

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

We need to stay competitive with low tax rates, but we also have to offer stability and a balanced tax structure that is predictable to attract businesses. Many business owners are not paying taxes on their wages, many of which are not creating jobs or reinvesting the money back in their business. This policy has to change. Some call it the “LLC Loophole”, some say the policy was always intended. Either way it should change. In short, if some citizens have to pay taxes on their income, everyone should have to pay.

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

It depends on how significant it is. Since we can't predict the future, and often times our estimators get it wrong, we have to be willing to adapt based on the circumstances. Sometimes it's appropriate to move money from other areas of state government where there may be a surplus. Raising tax rates should be the last resort in most cases, but sometimes it can be difficult to come up with other realistic options at the last minute. Being proactive versus reactive is the best way to avoid this. In recent years we have seen some of these budget issues coming, but there has been a level of denial, or the lack of willingness to address some of these issues on the front end, it appears.

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

There should be adequate funding per pupil from the state, and while I'm open to some "weightings" they need to be simplified, and not given out in a manner that encourages unnecessary district spending. We don't need 285 superintendents in the state. We should consolidate administrative functions, and streamline other processes at the time we craft a new formula. The remainder of funding can continue to be made up by local property tax dollars, with no restraints from the state on what the electorate in a particular school district can choose to spend.

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

We need to determine what a sustainable, predictable funding stream is for the colleges and universities. There are a lot of other reasons why college tuition has increased so much that the state subsidies have little or nothing to do with, but we must do our part as the state to work together.

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

The traditional public school system works very well for many students, and not very well for others. Particularly when it comes to low income students who want better opportunities than what their parents can afford, and are trapped in a low performing public school based on their zip code, I believe it is the just thing to do to open up doors for them to seek better educational opportunity.

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

We have to find the proper balance between a competitive tax structure, high quality education, infrastructure, and quality of life services and amenities. We also need to take a look at some of the tax incentives we give companies to come here and work with our Department of Commerce to see what's working well, and do more study on the net economic impact of these type of incentives.

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 less)

At the very least there needs to be more oversight and legislative review on the budget for KDOT, and while we need to fund good roads, some argue this has become a "slush fund" for contractors. I don't know to what extent this is true, but many have made the case that not every project that comes up on the agenda is entirely necessary. We need to have a robust debate about this issue and present all sides.

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 less)

We have to be asking why we can't fill these jobs with our own citizens, when we still have a significant amount of the population not participating in the work force. If there is a demand for workers, we have find a way to fill those positions, but also encourage our own citizens to develop these skills, or ask why they are not willing to work these jobs, and in some cases would choose not to work at all. We must do a better job of preparing our own citizens for these types of jobs, but I am open to any ideas that will aid in filling the positions.

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

I think it's appropriate for the state to put in place some workplace employment practices, but should generally leave those decisions to private business, unless there is some

widespread concern with employee benefits and treatment, at which time the legislature can debate and determine what is in the best interests of the overall electorate on that particular issue.

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

We have to get on a more sustainable predictable path with our state budget. We need more balance in our tax structure in our state, and I will work to improve it. We need to craft a school finance formula that isn't in constant litigation. We also need to do further review on the recommendations from the Alvarez & Marsal study commissioned by the current legislature. I am of the belief that we can find agreement on some of these recommendations, and save money in our state government that can help balance the budget and be reinvested in areas of state government that need it, such as mental health.

What do you believe most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race (75 words or less)? I don't know very much about my opponent and can only speak for myself and my approach to state government. I am not looking to go to Topeka and take a political posture. I am looking for the best solutions for our state and am willing to work with others, whoever they are, whatever political faction or side of the aisle they come from, to debate different ideas and find common ground. Topeka has become too polarized. Too many are beholden to their own ideology, and write others off that do not agree with their worldview. If we're going to improve the political discourse in our state, we have to stop impugning one another's motives, not take disagreements personally, and keep constituents and the greater good of our state in the forefront always. This is the attitude I will bring to Topeka.