

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

Name: Linda Gallagher District: 23 Political Affiliation: R

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Campaign Website: www.lindagallagher.org

Campaign Video Link:

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

I am a free-lance writer and editor. From 2000-2012, I was executive director of a trade association for heating and cooling contractors.

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

Dist. 23 State Rep - 1 term. Repub. Precinct Committeewoman - 7 terms. PTA/booster club volunteer at Shawanoe Elementary, Trailridge Middle & Shawnee Mission NW High Schools. Girl Scout troop leader.

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:

Worked 3 temporary stints at Greater KC Chamber of Commerce in the 1990's, filling in for communications director, and did free-lance writing projects for the Chamber. Also had temp position at KS Bankers Assn.

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

1. Education - public education should be supported and adequately funded.
2. Economic Recovery - Kansas needs comprehensive revenue reform to properly fund essential services.
3. Embarrassment - legislative votes on extreme issues have caused embarrassment for KS & hurt business.

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

The three-legged stool of property, sales and income taxes is horribly out of balance in Kansas. This has created an unfair tax burden on lower- and middle-income taxpayers and has caused the state to fail to fund essential services adequately. We need a comprehensive revenue reform plan that is fair and equitable for all taxpayers and that provides the revenues needed to conduct state business. I did not agree with the income tax changes passed in 2012 and I would support the repeal of income tax exemptions on wages earned by business owners and restoring some or all of the income tax rate cuts.

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):

This is the situation Kansas faces now. The June revenue report is expected to reveal another significant revenue shortfall. First, we need a more accurate picture of the revenue situation than the fiscal 2016 budget projections provided - this shows the unpredictable nature of the 2012 income tax cuts. To balance the budget, in the short term there will have to be cuts in spending that will be very difficult but necessary to make. We are running out of one-time fixes and places from which to sweep funds. And, it will require a reassessment of the income tax glidepath to zero and implementation of a more pragmatic and realistic tax plan to increase revenue.

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 support creation of a new K-12 funding formula that assures equity, school district autonomy, adequate funding, and local authority and funding flexibility. School funding since the recession has not kept up with the rate of inflation, and the block grant funding does not account for enrollment changes or operating cost increases. The previous funding formula necessarily contained weightings for various factors that vary among school districts. The new formula will need to address all of these variables. The process of writing the new school funding formula must include input from all stakeholders in the education system.

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

It is the state's role to provide funding for excellent public higher education so that it is available to all students. I am concerned about the significant cuts to higher education funding by the state this year, due to the ongoing budget crisis, and particularly the disproportionately higher cuts to KU and KSU. This has resulted in sizable tuition increases, and I worry that the cost of tuition may become out of reach for many Kansas students.

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

I am opposed to any use of public funds for private, religious or home schools for K-12 education, whether it be vouchers, scholarships or individual tax credits. Parents have the right to choose to send their children to private or religious schools or to educate them at home, but taxpayers should not be financing those options.

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

I support the existing Promoting Employment Across Kansas (PEAK) program, reinstatement of the High Performance Incentive Program (HPIP) and other Department of Commerce programs. Economic development incentives should be used to bring in companies that are new to the state and that create net new jobs in the Greater Kansas City region, rather than to lure companies across the state line within the metro 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 support maintaining the current dedicated sales tax transfer to the state highway fund for transportation projects and I deplore the practice of sweeping transportation funds into the State General Fund to prop up budget shortfalls. Transportation should not be subject to the appropriations process controlled entirely by legislators. We need to build up the state highway fund once again and renew the T-Works program. There are too many Kansas roads and bridges in need of repair. With the sweeps from KDOT, 25 highway expansion projects have been canceled, and we are maintaining only 200 miles of roads a year rather than the usual 1,200.

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):

Immigration is a federal issue, and state governments and local law enforcement do not have the authority to usurp the federal government's role. However, I likely would support employment-based immigration reforms to assist with workforce shortages in specific industries, depending on the circumstances and the nature of the proposed reforms.

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

State governments generally should not be involved in determining private workplace employment practices and benefits. But, states do have the right to regulate some employment practices in the case of publicly funded construction projects. I believe in free markets that are constrained by as few government rules and regulations as is reasonable and necessary, including job markets.

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

The dire budget situation is the most pressing challenge facing Kansas today. The state no longer has any financial reserves and faces budget shortfalls month after month, resulting in harmful budget cuts. There are no quick or easy fixes for this budget situation, but we must reinstate all or part of the income tax cuts of 2012 and eliminate business income tax exemptions. It will take years to recover from this, but we need new legislative leadership that is pragmatic and policy-focused, not ideology-focused. That will eventually foster true economic recovery and job growth, through creation of a stable business environment for Kansas employers.

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

I have lived in this district for 34 years, owning a home, paying taxes, raising two children and volunteering in their schools. My opponent moved into the district two years ago to run for this seat. As a moderate Republican, I believe my political views more closely match those of this area's voters than do hers. I also have more of a business background than she does, with my experience as an editor for business trade publications and as an executive with a trade association for heating and cooling contractors. Through two legislative sessions, I have worked through the steep learning curve and I am ready to face the challenges ahead.