

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

Name: **Spencer Kerfoot** District: **23** Political Affiliation: **(D)**

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Campaign Website: **www.spencerkerfoot.com**

Campaign Video Link: **Coming soon!**

Occupation/Work History:

Airfield operations supervisor in Olathe

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

6 years audio-visual technician at Stilwell United Methodist Church
6 years in the Civil Air Patrol

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?

1. Balance the budget, pay down public debt, restore fair tax policy
2. Enact long-term equitable and adequate funding for public education
3. Broaden coverage and affordability of healthcare, especially expanding Medicaid

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

The economy of Kansas is not like that of Texas, Nevada or Florida; an elimination of the income tax, as well as an overreliance on consumption and property taxes, hurt the middle-class and small businesses alike. There must be a balance struck, where no one tax is excessive or eliminated. Above all else, in order to sustain long-term solvency and economic growth, our tax policy must prioritize the middle-class, preserve the adequacy of our public services, and enable public investment in economic development projects.

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):

Outright I believe that a repeal the 2012 Brownback tax cuts and, particularly, the LLC tax exemption suffices immediately to close the state's whole budget deficit and to begin paying down the accumulated public debt. The solution to a given revenue problem is not to end tax deductions, sweep dollars from non-general funds or approve unlimited bonds, but to stimulate job growth and consumer spending with public investments, e.g. jobs programs and public education. "You have to spend money to make money."

What are your views on K-12 school funding? In anticipation of a new funding formula/process, what are your priorities?

Public school funding is currently unsustainable and unconstitutional, i.e. inequitable and inadequate, but it does not have to be so. In order that all students, despite their county residence, receive the same high-quality education and breadth of academic opportunities, Topeka must enact total equalization of state aid and districts' LOBs while maintaining local control and flexibility. I support the old 1992 funding formula, and I wish to enact a statutory requirement that education appropriations adjust automatically with inflation.

What are your views on the state's role with respect to access and affordability of public higher education?

The state constitution makes abundantly clear its mandate that the legislature establish and preserve educational institutions at all levels, and that Kansans be able to utilize those institutions. As such, Topeka has a legal and moral duty to increase funding for our universities, unburden students of excessive tuition, and cultivate new curricula for the 21st century.

What is your position on individual tax credits and other voucher-like programs for private school tuition?

Public monies must be spent only on items benefiting all citizens fairly and without exclusion. Subsidization of a private institution, educational or not, is vastly inappropriate, and is also, in cases of religious institutions, a clear violation of the First Amendment. Furthermore, public education is the cornerstone of social and technological progress, and so it must never be undermined, but be, if necessary, reformed instead of replaced.

What type of economic development policies will you support to encourage job growth and business expansion in Kansas?

Growth requires an environment of free, unlimited opportunities. For a business, I support categorical grants and small business loans; infrastructure investments; keeping corporate income tax low; and, in certain situations, tax abatements. For consumers and workers, I support a decrease in consumption and property tax rates, an increase in funding for public schools and jobs programs, and cost-effective healthcare reforms.

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.

I oppose. The legislature is welcome to appropriate monies from the general fund to an infrastructure project, but dedicated funds should remain dedicated. More to the point, legislators should never undermine public infrastructure in order to subsidize their own failure to budget wisely elsewhere.

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?

The U.S. constitution is clear: immigration policy belongs exclusively to the national government, and no state legislature has justification to enact any immigration policy whatsoever. That said, if visas are issued to fill workforce shortages, the given employer must undertake a good-faith effort to hire American citizens first. Otherwise, I have no issue with employment-based immigration reforms.

What role should state governments have in determining workplace employment practices and benefits offered to employees?

State governments have the ability and duty to enact responsible local solutions which expand on, not fall short of, federal standards. As a body closer to the People than Congress, the Kansas legislature is better equipped to make local laws for local economies, and should consult with business leaders, labor unions and its various county and city governments in order to pass wiser employment laws.

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

Topeka has become a dysfunctional institution, one wrought with extremist ideology, that has undermined fiscal responsibility and economic stability. If we are to preserve future sustainability, we must demand that Topeka end its continual borrowing and self-induced revenue crisis, and instead enact policies actually conducive to business and job growth. That means balancing our tax code, restoring our credit rating, and reinvesting in public programs.

What do you believe most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race?

Above all else, I am unafraid to be an independent mind and am a proven leader. I meet my constituents face-to-face, answer their tough questions, and appear at unscripted events. When elected, I will actually serve my community, enact compassionate policies, and stand up for the middle-class, good business and common sense. What happens today in Topeka affects me greatly, and I will ensure a bright future for Olathe and our state.