



ARTSERVE

Candidate Information Request

Thank you for completing this brief questionnaire to assist our constituents in getting to know you and your plans for legislative office. Please complete and return the completed form by Friday, June 18 to Mike Latvis, Director of Public Policy by regular mail to ArtServe Michigan, 1 Clover Court, Wixom, MI 48393, by fax to 248-912-0768, or by email to mike@artservemichigan.org. Please attach additional sheets as necessary.

Note: Pre-filled information is based on information ArtServe has obtained through its own research. Thank you for correcting any information that has changed or is incorrect.

1. Candidate Name: Rick Olson
2. District: House of Representatives 55th District
3. Campaign Address: 525 Judd Road Saline, MI 48176
4. Campaign Email Address: OLSON48176@COMCAST.NET
5. Website: http://VOICEFORTHEPEOPLE.NET
6. Campaign Contact Person: RICK OLSON
Phone: 734-944-0794 Email _____
7. Volunteer Coordinator: DAVE SZEWczyk
Phone: 586-212-7703 Email DAVE@VOICEFORTHEPEOPLE.NET
8. Bio:

See attached
9. Brief explanation of your top issues and plans for office:

See attached.
10. Arts and culture is a strong economic driver contributing jobs, supporting local businesses, and contributing to vibrant and strong Michigan communities that attract talent and business investment. Yet, 2010 state arts and cultural funding is at the lowest level of funding since 1974 – ranking Michigan as 48th of 50 states in per capita funding for the arts. What is your position on whether and how increased funding for arts, culture and arts education should be part of Michigan's economic strategies for the future?

See Attached

Artserve attachment:

Rick Olson - <http://voiceforthepeople.net> – 734-944-0794 – olson48176@comcast.net

8. Bio:

My experience in business management, finance, law and legislative support makes me ready to serve as your voice to create jobs.

My focus is improving the business climate by reducing business taxes, lowering regulation and controlling spending. I have been a business manager most of my life. In fact, I went to Stanford Law School to be a better business manager. I worked for the Washington State Legislature for three years and served as an attorney in the Governor's Office before returning to business. We will need experienced and knowledgeable people like me elected who can hit the ground running.

Linda and I are both Michigan natives, who met and married at MSU 39 years ago. We are like boomerangs, as Michigan has thrown us away a few times, but we keep returning to family and friends.

9. Brief explanation of your top issues and plans for office:

Improving the business climate to give all businesses a better chance to succeed and create jobs cannot be done with any single "silver bullet". The comprehensive "Michigan Turnaround Plan" proposed by the Business Leaders for Michigan is a good place to start.

We must first control spending by bringing public employee wage and benefit levels more into line with the private sector so that we can avoid tax increases while maintaining essential services. Corrections costs must be reduced. Then K-16 education, the social safety net and public safety can be adequately funded. Our transportation infrastructure must be maintained to minimize long-term public and private transportation costs. A revenue neutral swap of extension of sales tax to services with a drop in sales tax on products and an elimination of the Michigan Business Tax would make Michigan more competitive and create jobs.

Agriculture, our 2nd largest industry in the state, must be protected and supported by warding off unnecessary and burdensome regulation. Our productive farmland will become increasingly important, as the arid west loses irrigated farm lands as water increasingly becomes a limiting resource.

Improving health and reducing health care costs through making people both more knowledgeable and more accountable for their own lifestyles and their resultant health is necessary to avoid bankrupting us. Health education will help, but financial incentives through consumer driven health care plans are more apt to be successful. Access to affordable health care is essential, but it must somehow be earned, except in emergencies.

Preferred committees include Tax Policy, Transportation, Public Employee Health Care Reform, Insurance, Health Policy, Appropriations, Banking and Financial Services, as they match my expertise which others might not have.

10. Re “arts culture”, economics of the industry and “What is your position on whether and how increased funding for arts, culture and arts education should be part of Michigan’s economic strategies for the future?”

I thoroughly enjoy the arts, particularly attending musical shows. I have performed in 5 shows, four of them being musicals as well. I enjoy singing. I also see music and drama as wonderful parts of the school experience, as they give students additional avenues to explore their talents, some of which may not appear in more academic classes. I don’t support cutting in these areas, as little, if any, is saved because the students must still be with a teacher, and the student to teacher ratio in the arts is usually higher than in more academic classes.

As a professional trained in economics, however, I question whether there is a “multiplier” which exceeds 1 to justify additional taxes to support additional funding for the arts under the reasoning that such a plan is a “job creator”. The best that can be said for spending on the arts as a “job creator” (that is, greater than the job killer through the higher taxes necessary to support the spending) is the desire to have a culturally rich environment into which young professionals who will create jobs in other fields will want to live. For example, the Ann Arbor area is perceived to be culturally rich, and therefore attractive for companies like Google to select as a business location.

I recognize the need for some public support for the arts, as the “free market” is not likely to provide sufficient support to reach some “optimal” level. The “free rider” problem exists, as many are all too willing to allow others to support the arts while taking full advantage of their availability. The problem is that without a pricing mechanism to find the optimal level, some subjective judgments must be made, and in the current era of tight budgets, choices must be made between what is nice and what is necessary. Some arts projects or ventures that are desired by some will unfortunately fall into the “nice” category by others.

In the current fiscal situation the State of Michigan faces, I expect to be quite frugal in judging what is nice and what is necessary. We must maintain at least some minimum level of public support to hold our arts culture structure together to be in position to grow in better times, but I do not know what that level is today. I am open to hearing facts and opposing arguments on this issue to sharpen my understanding and ability to make decisions.