

Bedford Republican Club
Bedford Township, MI
734-847-4959

As a candidate to represent the Republican Party in the 2010 General Election, we would like to know your position on issues which are important to us. Some of the issues are federal in scope. However, your position on the following issues will be revealing.

It seems that honesty and integrity are taking a back seat in the political arena. These virtues should not be ignored but embraced by citizens who serve in government. What importance do you place on these virtues? Your comments will be appreciated along with your response to the following questions:

- Are you for or against abortion?
- How do you interpret the second amendment of the United States constitution as it pertains to a U. S. Citizen's right to keep and carry arms?
- How do you propose to reduce the structural costs of Michigan government? (i.e. – pensions, health insurance, highways, prisons, government employment levels)
- How would you plan to handle environmental issues, including the Great lakes?
- Please comment on the fourteenth amendment of the U. S. Constitution, regarding property rights of the individual.
- Please comment of the intrusion of government into private sector business.

Bedford Township, located in the southeastern corner of Monroe County, has a population of 32,000 people with 21,000 registered voters. Your response will be discussed with members of the Bedford Township Republican Club. As the election process progresses, we anticipate personal contacts if scheduling permits, and possible panel discussions.

Thank you,

Rick Steiner
Chairman
Bedford Township Republican Club

Responses to the Bedford Republican Club Questions

By Rick Olson, candidate for State Representative, 55th District
June 2, 2010

I would welcome the opportunity for a face-to-face interview, or even better yet, a panel discussion of the candidates for the 55th District House seat.

Thanks!

- **It seems that honesty and integrity are taking a back seat in the political arena. These virtues should not be ignored but embraced by citizens who serve in government. What importance do you place on these virtues?**

Honesty and integrity are necessary to build trust and solid relationships – whether personal or political. That is one reason I don't pander in my answering questions or make promises simply to please special interest groups, as I intend to do as a legislator what I say in my campaign. My answers in the many questionnaires I have responded to may not always be exactly what the sponsors are looking for, but answers I will be able to live with once elected.

Too many politicians are following the definition of an “honorable politician” – “once bought, the politician stays bought”. Although financial contributions are a necessary evil of running a campaign, I will strive to remain objective in my evaluation of legislation that I will encounter once elected as your State Representative, and to represent our district to the best of my ability.

- **Are you for or against abortion?** Against. My answers to the Right to Life of Michigan questionnaire were all “Yes”, in support of the positions of RLM.
- **How do you interpret the second amendment of the United States constitution as it pertains to a U. S. Citizen's right to keep and carry arms?**

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” This amendment has not been changed and is to be enforced, enabling citizens to keep and bear arms. I do NOT see that it applies only to militia as some people have tried to narrow this protection.

I do not own any firearms and have not hunted since I was in high school. My sports were basketball, soccer, hockey, backpacking and mountain climbing, and when our boys were around, coaching youth baseball, soccer and hockey. I have not felt sufficiently endangered to feel I needed a weapon, and am frugal in my spending, so have not bought one just to have one. But I certainly support the right of others to do so, and especially sportsman who enjoy hunting.

In this campaign, it has been suggested that I become an NRA member, but I have felt to

become an NRA member just for appearances sake in the campaign looked and would be phony. I am not phony and don't think doing anything that even looks phony is a good idea, so I have not joined the NRA. I can be a second amendment supporter without being an NRA member. In fact, I have attempted to help Wayne Blank in some of his efforts as a friend of the NRA.

- **How do you propose to reduce the structural costs of Michigan government? (i.e. – pensions, health insurance, highways, prisons, government employment levels)**

In general, I like the proposals to reduce the cost of government contained in the Michigan Turnaround Plan as suggested by the Business Leaders of Michigan, as well as most of the proposals by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the NFIB/Small Business Association of Michigan. More specifically:

Our wage and benefit costs for state employees and school employees are at levels substantially above those of the private sector. Perhaps we could afford those when Michigan was a rich state, but we now rank 37th in terms of per capita income and we can no longer afford them. The proposed state-wide insurance pool for state employees and school employees with somewhat lower benefits is projected to save somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million per year and should be adopted. This was originally a Republican idea in the Rasmussen Report a few years ago, but perhaps now has a chance to be adopted now that Rep. Dillon has proposed a similar plan. The recent change in school district employee retirement plans was a good step in the right direction. A similar change needs to be made for other state employees. It was ridiculous that the Legislature this year was not able to stop the 3% raise granted to unionized state employees.

Corrections spending is one of the “big three” in state spending, along with education and Medicaid, and must be controlled. I support privatization of our prisons, starting out with at least privatizing the prison food service program which could save millions. Greater use of non-prison sentencing could be used for non-violent criminals, e.g., electronic tethers, home confinement, community service, etc., which would also reduce our costs, as these means are much less expensive than incarceration. As one columnist said, “we need to decide who we are mad at, and who we are afraid of.” Again, state employee wages and benefits need to be controlled, as much of Corrections spending is employee costs.

We must maintain our roads, for at least three reasons: (1) good infrastructure is necessary to encourage businesses to locate in Michigan, (2) we will pay for poor roads through increased vehicle maintenance costs if the roads are not fixed, and (3) it will cost more to replace our roads later if we do not properly maintain them, thus increasing our long-term costs. I would first look to see what we can do to lessen the cost of maintaining our roads. Are maintenance costs too high because of excessive wage and benefit costs for those persons maintaining them? Are the higher load weight restrictions for trucks in Michigan excessively damaging our highways, despite the accompanying increase in the number of axles needed to compensate? Are Davis-Bacon and prevailing wage laws making our road maintenance contracts more expensive than they need to be? But, bottom line, I expect we will need to invest more money into our roads, and that will likely mean we need to pay higher gas taxes

and vehicle registration fees. A combination is likely needed, so that the more fuel-efficient cars pay their fair share of highway repair. The fuel tax on diesel fuel should also be brought into parity with the gas tax, as trucks are the major reason our roads get beat up so quickly and need the expensive repairs.

As much as I oppose increased taxes, I see the gas tax as more of a “user fee”. If we are not willing to pay to maintain the roads we use, what are we willing to pay for? I would like to see sufficient cuts in other areas of government such that an increase in the gas tax will not be needed to have the state match to receive the return of our Federal gas tax, but I don’t see that as likely. The budget deficits of \$1.5 – 1.8 billion for the 2011 budget stretch on into future years according to all of the economic forecasts I have seen. Drastic action to reduce government spending will be needed and responsible maintenance of our infrastructure.

Act 51 which contains the allocation formula for Transportation Fund dollars needs to avoid further “skimming off the top” for special projects. The formula itself needs to be changed to better reflect the intensity of use of the SE Michigan highways, as a Citizens Research Council report recently showed that Monroe and Washtenaw counties were last and second to last in terms of Transportation Fund allocations.

I would look to the Legislative Commission on Government Efficiency for guidance on potential reductions in government employee levels. There are some areas of government that I would support protection of existing programs, such as inspections done by the Department of Agriculture needed to ship our goods to other parts of the world. I would support the dismantling of most of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, including its Michigan Economic Growth Authority granting of tax credits through its bureaucratic “job announcement” machine, where only about 27 of each 100 jobs promised actually occur, but make for great media events and news articles. I prefer creating a better business climate for all businesses, rather than think that Lansing bureaucrats can see clearly the crystal ball and infallibly pick the winners from the losers. It appears that the “Pure Michigan” ads have been cost effective for the state, and if so, that part of the MEDC I would retain.

- **How would you plan to handle environmental issues, including the Great lakes?**

Michigan’s water resources are one of our greatest assets and will become even more important in the future. Not only are the lakes terrific tourist attractions and wonderful amenities for our residents, but water is critical for so many industries. As the water shortage intensifies in the arid western states, our water will become more and more precious. We must protect that water from the other states’ covetous desires. Similarly, we must protect our lakes from foreign invasive species, such as the Asian carp.

But environmental issues go well beyond our lakes, and often run into conflict with making our state “business friendly”. A balance must be struck between protecting our environment so that we have a wonderful place to live and having a clear, understandable and manageable regulatory environment so that businesses know what they need to comply with up-front so that they can navigate the regulatory process efficiently and timely. An uncertain and

arbitrary approval process often discourages businesses from creating the jobs we need for our state's economic recovery.

- **Please comment on the fourteenth amendment of the U. S. Constitution, regarding property rights of the individual.**

“... No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. . . .”

This amendment has both procedural and substantive effects. That is, under the procedural provisions, a person must have the right to notice of a proposed action that adversely affects him or her and a right to defend against that action. The more controversial provisions relate to the “substantive” area, as this is an area that has seen the greatest erosion in terms of property rights.

A change in law or regulation that severely reduces the potential uses and therefore the value of the property has created a “taking” as surely as if the property has been taken via eminent domain. Politicians often want to do “good things” without having to pay for them. For example, to protect green space or agricultural lands for production, a law might be passed to forbid development of certain lands. A person who was in the path of development and planning to convert his lands to a residential subdivision may be deprived of substantial value of his property – and if recently purchased with that proposed use in the minds of both buyer and the seller and valued accordingly, may incur a substantial financial loss. His 14th amendment rights have just been violated. Because of these effects, I favor incentives created to induce the desired behavior, together with the public at large incurring the cost of these incentives, rather than having the property owner bearing the costs through regulatory takings. For example, the public could buy “development rights” from landowners. Or, environmental groups could purchase those rights.

- **Please comment of the intrusion of government into private sector business.**

The government has grown too large and too intrusive into personal and private sector business lives. A current example in personal lives is the attempt to control the amount of salt we eat. While that might be a good dietary idea for many people, the government has no business telling us what we should and should not eat. This is just one of many examples that could be cited.

Government controls what can and cannot be included in a health insurance contract. Why can't businesses and its employees decide amongst themselves what coverage makes the most sense for them and then allow them to purchase that insurance wherever the business can find it the least expensive? For example, I talked with a Bedford area franchisee that paid more for health insurance for his 5 employees than another Toledo franchisee paid for his 23 employees. Does this make sense if we want businesses to locate in Michigan?

The problem on the federal level is the severe erosion of the limits to government that our Founding Fathers wrote into the U.S. Constitution. This erosion and the current assault on our remaining freedoms is what induced me to re-enter politics after not being involved in politics since leaving Washington State in 1989 to return to Michigan. With 47% not paying any income tax, the multitudes of government employees, the public sector unions and their supporters and the rest of the liberal Democrats, we are in deep trouble if we cannot retain the concept of a limited government, as in a democracy, the producers will be vastly outnumbered. This, coupled with the idea that “some people earn enough” and that we must “redistribute the wealth” is downright dangerous for maintaining our freedoms. Also, if we can be forced to buy health insurance because a majority of Congress and the President say so, where will it end? This massive intrusion into our personal and business freedoms on which our country was based and has prospered must be stopped!