

## Metropolitan Affairs Coalition Candidate Questionnaire

### **Q: How are you going to improve the Michigan economy/business climate?**

A: My focus will be on making Michigan more competitive again in the world economy, and special focus on what we can do for our small business job providers to prosper, grow and create jobs. If I had to pick one group of ideas proposed by any one group, it would be the [Business Leaders for Michigan, with its Michigan Turnaround Plan](#): (in great measure along the lines of Rick Snyder's [Reinvent Michigan: Rick's 10-Point Plan](#))

#### Five Steps For A Better Michigan

- Changing the Way We Manage Our Finances
- Right-sizing & Enacting Structural Budget Reforms
- Getting Michigan Competitive To Attract & Retain Jobs
- Making Investments That Create A Great Job Environment
- Accelerating Job Growth Through Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Of course, the devil is in the details. For example, in the point of "Getting Michigan Competitive to Attract & Retain Jobs" is the notion of drastically reducing or eliminating the Michigan Business Tax and its 22% surcharge. One way to do that is by adopting the [Michigan FairTax](#) (which I happen to like in general, but need to learn more of the specifics), but there may be other ways. For the National Issues Forum style Issue Guide on this topic, see [Reforming the Michigan Tax Structure: Putting Michigan Back to Work](#), which is my site for conducting civil, informed discussion forums on serious, complex and difficult subjects, with the goals of reaching better understanding of others' perspectives and hopefully find some common ground.

But, one thing I am very much in line with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Business is that we must have restructuring of state spending concurrent with reforming the tax structure. We cannot leave in place a bloated bureaucracy and excessive spending on salaries and benefits for public employees and simply fund them better. We must cut state spending to live within our means!

### **Q: What are your key strategies for job creation? What is your position on tax reform?**

A: See above.

### **Q: What steps will you take to balance the state budget?**

A: I will focus on cost control, especially on the wage and benefit levels of state employees and school district employees. Also, our corrections costs need to be trimmed. We need to take a close look at "who we are really mad at, and who we really are afraid of", in looking into how we can trim our prison population as a starter.

**Q: What impact will your plan have on higher education; K-12 education; infrastructure investment; revenue sharing?**

A: If we can get our economy going again, our tax revenues will increase and we will be able to more easily fund our priorities once again. In the meantime, we are all going to have to learn to live on less, because a tax increase may derail the very recovery we are all hoping for. I would support an increase in the gas tax to be able to get the federal gas tax monies, with certain conditions, otherwise it will cost us more to replace our roads than to maintain them.

**Q: What are your strategies for reducing the cost of government?**

A: Wage and benefit cost levels are where the money is. One proposal I like is the idea of a state-wide pool for health insurance for all state employees and school district employees, which is estimated to save between \$500 million and 900 million per year. Actually saving money is preferable to simply shifting the cost which an alternative proposal of requiring employees to bear 20% of the cost would do. I would support PA 312 to require an arbitrator to consider the municipalities' ability to pay in awarding a contract.

**Q: What are your views on shared services/collaboration/consolidation; wage/benefit practices; achieving service efficiencies?**

A: Shared services often have the benefit of saving the cooperating municipalities money, but it is on a case-by-case basis. Any "across the board" edict is not likely to work well. I would support the consolidation of many jurisdictions as well, and the best way to do that is to amend the Urban Cooperation Act to actually encourage cooperation rather than discourage it by raising the cost of government. With the resistance to consolidation at every local level, a voluntary effort is unlikely to be successful, as everyone will protect their turf or "power base". Since no across the board solution is unlikely to work well here either, perhaps a commission similar to the base closing commissions at the federal level might work here in Michigan. But, simply shortage of funds might trigger new ideas, as necessity is often the mother of invention.

**Q: What is your position on term limits?**

A: The current term limits create an incompetent institution too reliant on lobbyists for information. I support the Bipartisan Freshmen Caucus' proposal to keep, but modify, term limits by saying that a legislator could serve up to 14 years in the legislature, but it could be of any combination of legislative service. That is, a state representative could serve for up to 7 two year terms in the House of Representatives. Speakers of the House and committee chairs of complex legislation could then have more time to develop the necessary expertise before assuming those roles.

I have been quoted as saying I am against a part-time legislature. That is not entirely true. I am against a part-time legislature IF coupled with our current term limit structure, as we would be guaranteed an even less competent legislature – the legislators would never have the time to develop any expertise.

Most proponents of a part-time legislature believe that the benefits would come from less damage imposed the less time the legislators are in Lansing. The saying is, “No man’s life, liberty or property is safe while the legislature is in session.”

But, I don’t think that is necessarily true. I worked for a part-time legislature in Washington State. In the rush of a 60 day or 105 day session, I have seen over 200 bills pass the House in one day. I have seen “Christmas Tree Bills” pass in the waning days of a session with well over 100 bills pasted together into one bill, with no legislator having the time to read anything. The part-time legislature idea is a band aid. It is not a panacea. The real solution is electing good legislators who are contemplative and thorough in their review of the bills, with sufficient expertise to know what they are voting for or against.

What I am against is not a part-time legislature, but rather over-simplistic solutions that sound good to serious complex problems.