

2022 EDUCATION MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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DATE: 6/15/22

LEADERSHIP

As Secretary of State, it will be your job to demonstrate leadership on issues that are important to working families, educators and students. What leadership qualities and experience do you possess that make you qualified to be the Secretary of State?

Having served in the legislature for 10 years prior to serving as Secretary of State I have a lot of experience working with Ed MN and teachers in my district (and now across the state) to advance their priorities. Upon being elected SOS, I toured all 87 counties in my first year, meeting with people all over the state, including teachers. During my tenure as SOS MN has regained it's rightful place as #1 in the country in voter turnout, we have doubled the number of languages that election materials are translated into, and I'm especially proud of the advances we have made both in high schools and public universities/colleges engaging students in the democratic process through the Democracy Cup and other competitions.

Throughout the campaign, what do you foresee as the key issues regarding this race?

Obviously the usual issues surrounding voting rights, which is foremost the focus of my office. Protecting and defending the freedom to vote for all eligible Minnesotans. Period. However, the most foreboding is this cloud of disinformation that we are all fighting. The lies surrounding the 2020 election, and what they have caused, are poisonous and corrosive. Standing up and speaking truth in the faces of these lies has become something that is incredibly important not just in this campaign, but in my official duties as well. I would rather be talking about how we can and should move to automatic voter registration, which could register hundreds of thousands of eligible Minnesotans who are not currently registered (or automatically update their registration when they go to the DMV, for example), or how we should allow

for pre-registration for our 16 and 17 year old residents, or moving to true early voting, or how we should restore voting rights for those who have left prison behind. But unfortunately my opponent preaches to the gospel of the Big Lie, and I have to spend a lot of time combatting the lies she and her allies are spreading.

What is your vision for voting rights in Minnesota? As Secretary of State, what will be your top priorities?

I may have foreshadowed it a bit with the last question, but there's no question we can continue to remove barriers between Minnesotans and the polling place. The translation of election materials was a good step, but automatically registering voters when they go to a government entity (such as the DMV) and renewing their drivers license or another document that requires their address would change from an "opt-in" to an "opt-out." It's a simple change, but it means Minnesotans would have to intentionally choose not to register to vote, and that would remove a major barrier between engaging the 20% of eligible Minnesotans who didn't vote in the 2020 election. Pre-registering 16 and 17 year old Minnesotans would mean they are automatically eligible to vote once they turn 18, and research shows if you are taught "good habits" early, and vote when you first have the chance, you are more likely to be a lifelong voter than if you don't vote early and in subsequent elections. These reforms and more are all possible, but have not been possible to pass through the state senate.

What will you do to make voter registration and voting easier and more accessible? With whom will you partner in achieving this goal?

Again I appear to be answering the questions in advance, but on top of being able to register online, you should be automatically registered to vote when you go to the DMV or another government office. And if you're already registered, it should automatically update your registration. However, we are willing to partner with anyone (and have throughout my tenure as SOS) in order to help engage more eligible Minnesotans in our democracy.

What communities are currently underrepresented among Minnesota voters? Are there things that can be done to specifically engage underrepresented communities?

By far, communities of color and lower income voters are underrepresented. My office has spent a lot of time working to address this problem, but this is going to be a team effort. As I mentioned above, automatic voter registration would remove one barrier from the path of this underrepresented pool of people. But more work is needed. It's one reason I and my campaign team have been so heavily invested in the apartment program that the DFL is running, guided by Andrew Virden (a former staffer of mine at the legislature when I was chair of the elections committee in the state house). Apartment dwellers are by and large renters, and renters skew toward PoC and lower income people by overwhelming margins. They are transient, and move every 1.7 years, but that means that we need to get into these apartment buildings, knock on the doors that we have good data for (and update it if it turns out to be incorrect) and then "blind knock" the doors we don't have information on. That way we

can register that voter and help engage them in the process. It's hard work, but it's incredibly important to me and to our campaign.

There have been legislative proposals that would limit the amount of money a school district could ask voters to approve in a levy and changes that limit when a levy question could be placed on the ballot. What is your view on these proposals?

I oppose legislation of this kind that would handcuff school districts. The best policy is to leave to school districts the choices about how much to ask from their voters, and under what circumstances. Then let the voters decide.

The Secretary of State has the ability to be a leader in celebrating and championing the voting process and important aspects of civics and citizenship. What would you do to reach out to young people, including students, and new citizens through the office? Are there specific initiatives you would like to implement? For example, placing voting locations on college campuses and automatic voter registration.

Oh absolutely. I have been very proactive in engaging students and young people. One way is by establishing the "Democracy Cup" which is a competition between college campuses to see who can achieve the highest percentage of voter turnout on their respective campus. I've already gone on at length about the importance of automatic voter registration and pre-registering 16 and 17 year olds. To be quite honest, there's almost nothing that energizes me more than connecting with young people who are really excited about getting engaged in the democratic process, which is why this work has been so rewarding for me.

Since the 2020 election, we have seen attempts by the former President and his allies to discredit and even overturn valid election results, intimidate election workers, and sow mistrust in our election processes. How has your office responded to these efforts? What role do you believe educators and schools play in combating this type of disinformation about our elections?

Our office has been as proactive as possible about getting the truth out to Minnesotans, and here it is: the 2020 election was fundamentally fair, accurate, honest and secure. Period. In fact, we just launched an "election facts" page on our SOS website to help dispel falsities about our election system and help explain the safeguards that are in place to ensure our elections are secure and trustworthy.

As for educators and schools, that is a terrific question. Frankly, you all have been put in an incredibly difficult position for the past two years. Beyond just COVID and all of the difficulties transpiring from it, you were under fire for CRT and other absurdities. That makes it hard for educators to stick their neck out and say "sorry, but that is false and this is the truth" without angering parents or maybe even the school board or other higher ups. However, as much as is possible, educators being able to reach and explain the truth about our elections, and how secure and safe they are, is incredibly valuable. As I mentioned earlier, young voters learning to vote early in their lives makes them much more likely to be lifelong participants in our democracy, and our educators and schools play a crucial role in that.

What can the Secretary of State's office do to encourage voting registration amongst high school students and to encourage voting on the part of eligible high school and college students?

I have answered this above. 😊

STATE BOARD OF INVESTMENT

As Secretary of State, you would serve on the State Board of Investment. What will be your role and your priorities while serving on this board?

I have always taken my role on the State Board of Investment extremely seriously. My primary mission is to help ensure that state pension fund investments are sound – to maximize retirement security for beneficiaries. That means making decisions about staffing, asset allocation, investment policies, and long-term investment strategies. The stakes are high. My priorities have been to ensure consistency, to focus on long-term returns, and to aim for stability.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Recently, there have been many bills that would ask the tax payers to approve and defeat constitutional amendments on a variety of topics. What do you see as the role of the Secretary of State in regard to constitutional amendments?

The Office of Secretary of State has only a small formal role in the constitutional amendment process. But I strongly feel that we should not seek to accomplish by constitutional amendment what can be accomplished by passing an ordinary law through the legislative process. Statute can be changed relatively easily to adapt to changing times. But an amendment to the constitution is like writing in permanent ink. We should only amend the constitution when absolutely necessary. In fact, I support making it harder to do – by requiring more than a simple bare majority of each legislative chamber to put a question to a statewide vote. Having played a leadership role in both of the 2012 “Vote No” campaigns (against the ban on marriage equality and against the imposition of a harsh government-issued voter ID mandate) I know the dangers of too easily politicizing the constitutional amendment process.

WORKING FAMILIES

What will be your top three campaign priorities that will assist working families, and why?

As I like to say, all roads lead to the ballot box. Whether your number one issue is inflation, housing, education funding, a woman's right to choose, gun violence, or anything else, you have to go to the ballot box to vote on those issues. By protecting and defending the freedom to vote for all eligible Minnesotans, I'll help working families express their priorities at the ballot box as long as I'm Secretary of State. I would also say that automatic voter registration, and true early voting would really help

working families. Busy parents and folks with busy jobs love the ability to vote absentee without needing to swear under the penalty of perjury that they're going to be out of town on election day, and true early voting would simply streamline that process by allowing your vote to be tabulated immediately, instead of on election day along with all other absentee ballots. And as I mentioned previously, automatic voter registration would take one thing off of working families' plates by either registering them automatically for the first time, or automatically updating their registration if they've moved.

I would also say, while this isn't exactly a "kitchen table" issue, I think defending our democracy from the full on assault that it is currently under is important for working families as well. That's one of my biggest priorities as SOS and as a candidate for the office.

If elected Secretary of State, what specific actions would you take to encourage more workers and their families to vote?

I would start by reminding them that their vote is their power. To fail to use it is to surrender their power to someone else. I would also emphasize that voting is not merely some sort of good deed or act of charity, like giving blood. It's an act of self-interest. Whatever a voter's priorities, they aren't going to get very far without electing people to public office who share their views and values. Finally, I would remind them that voting has never been more accessible. Voting from home, for example, is now widespread. People can vote from their kitchen table, and on their own schedule.