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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Southwest Metro office

Candidate name

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Election district

49A

Party endorsement

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Educator Pay

1. ESP living wage: Will you support legislation to ensure that all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour?

Yes

2. Due to significantly below-market compensation for teachers, most school districts in Minnesota are having difficulty filling teaching jobs, and state colleges report a continued decline in the number of graduates from teacher preparation programs. Would you support creating a minimum salary for all licensed Minnesota teachers of \$60,000 a year and an \$80,000 minimum salary for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree?

Yes

Pensions

3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds?

Yes

4. Will you support exploring the necessary benefit improvements in order to provide educators with a secure retirement, including reducing early retirement penalties, lowering the normal age of retirement and a career threshold that will help recruit and retain educators?

Yes

5. How will you support efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association in order to expand retirement options?

I would like the state to get back to as close to a system of the rule of 90 system allowing teachers who have taught for x# of years to retire after a long and successful career as an educator for our kids. Teaching is not a career someone can expect to emerge as

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a multi millionaire, but there is that guarantee of after a full career that a pension will be there to continue to pay out so retired teachers can live out their retirement securely and with dignity. So, whether it is finding ways to fund a bolstered and secure pension system through taxing corporations and the rich to additional forms of revenue streams, I support teachers retiring when they need to and to be financially supported when they do.

Health care

6. Do you support educators having access to a mandatory statewide health insurance pool, just like other state workers?

Yes

7. Do you support the current language that allows educator locals to unilaterally seek a bid and join the Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) as the insurance provider for local bargaining units?

Yes

8. All Minnesotans deserve access to affordable health care and publicly managed plans like MN Care and Medicare are some of the most efficient plans out there. The legislature is currently seeking a federal waiver to expand MN Care to more residents. Do you support expanding all public health care programs to include more working people?

Yes

Education funding

9a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.

Yes

9b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.

Yes

9c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.

Yes

9d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.

Yes

9e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.

Yes

9f. Teachers of color: Fund programs to increase the number of teachers of color significantly so teachers providing instruction better reflect the students in our classrooms.

Yes

9g. Student support: Continue providing additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.

Yes

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9h. TDE/Q Comp: Fully fund the 2011 Teacher Development and Evaluation law, an unfunded state mandate, to ensure teacher quality and lift the cap on the Q Comp program.

Yes

9i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.

Yes

9j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.

Yes

Taxes/revenue

10. Would you commit to raising revenue to ensure the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay what they truly owe in taxes so every student, no matter what they look like or where they live, can attend a fully funded public school that prepares them to pursue their dreams?

Yes

11. Education Minnesota believes in restoring fairness to the state tax code by raising revenue from the very wealthiest corporations and richest households and reducing the reliance on local levies to fund schools. Considering your own experience and expertise, are there other progressive, equitable ways to raise state revenue that you would recommend the union consider supporting?

Yes

12. Fully funded schools require adequate and stable revenues. Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base?

Yes

13. A balanced tax code draws revenue from a mix of income, sales, and property taxes. Will you support policies that maintain both adequate funding and a sustainable balance between revenue sources?

Yes

Higher education

14. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?

Yes

15. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?

Yes

16. Do you support DEI efforts on our college campuses and universities?

Yes

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17. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with the cost of higher education?

I have no problem running on a similar platform like Governor Dayton did a decade ago centered around tax the rich. Of course he was rich and could carry that message. Minnesota is a progressive taxation state as it is but we can push the needle further and provide reduced, if not free, tuition at our state colleges. It wasn't that long ago in the history of our state and country that our public university systems were an extremely low cost, if not free, for a person to extend their education past high school. Kids now graduate even from state schools with crushing debt and we need to do better. Consistent tax cuts over time for the wealthy directly correlate with increases in tuition and that is the easiest and quickest way to address the tuition crisis.

18. The North Star Promise is expected to result in an increase in enrollment on our campuses. Many of these students are projected to be disproportionately first-generation students and students from historically underserved communities. As a legislator, what would you do to ensure these students had the support they needed to be successful?

In addition to NSP helping kids from lower economic status families attend higher education schools, we can and should increase support staff and counselors at our high schools with a higher percentage of at risk youth attending those schools. Students should be aware of opportunities their parents may not have had and may not be aware of, should be encouraged to apply and supported in the application process, and have the support in their schooling to be successful so they can attend colleges or universities. And then when at school, having staff dedicated as an extra layer of support if they need it should be layered in - from educational counselors to mental health support as well. We cannot forget how hard it is to achieve success in school if mental health is ignored as well.

19. There are efforts to expand the North Star Promise to Minnesota's private colleges and universities. This would dramatically increase the amount of public money going to private institutions. Do you support the expansion of the North Star Promise to include private colleges and universities?

No

High-quality professional educators

20. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms?

I think anyone pursuing an education degree should have their tuition significantly reduced if not made free altogether. We can also follow a model like the military uses for doctors and nurses where if they provide funding for the education, the educator will live and work in Minnesota with priority to work in disadvantaged districts be them urban or rural districts. Educators enter this profession knowing they will not emerge a multimillionaire and it is a lifelong financial sacrifice but that doesn't mean they should unduly suffer as a result. Providing low cost or free education degrees will go a long way for teachers so they do not have to pay off school loans when they are already paid less than those with comparable professional, masters or Ph.D's. Increasing the base pay to a minimum of \$60K across the board, and increasing funding so districts can have lower student to teacher ratios will also alleviate some stress and financial strain for our educators.

Standardized testing

21. What individual or system-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate to make based on standardized test scores?

Standardized testing is a double edged sword. We need a system where we can evaluate educational outcomes without bias but also a system where educators and districts aren't solely focused on teaching for the sole purpose of passing a test. Critical thinking and analysis should be layered in as a teaching goal even if it cannot be specifically evaluated by concrete metrics. We need to focus on training students' brains to think out of the box and creatively so they can enter their adult lives and the working force ready to take on unforeseen challenges. Continuing to evaluate based off standardized testing, I don't believe will ever really go away, but as we progress as a state and society we need to reevaluate if this is working and find ways for other modes of instruction and learning to foster healthy, independent, and creative thinking minds for the next generation of workers and leaders.

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Honesty in Education

22. Most educators believe students should have access to a wide range of age-appropriate books that include relatable characters and situations that reflect the diversity of Minnesota families. However, certain politicians and big money groups are trying to remove books from school libraries across America, particularly books with LGBTQ+ characters or those that deal with racism in America. How should Minnesota protect its students' freedom to read?

I support any legislation making it illegal to ban books that reflect the diversity of families and society as a whole. Education and access to information is the very core of our public educational system and we cannot block students access to a wide variety of view points and thinking.

23. Education Minnesota believes all students should have the freedom to feel safe and welcome in their public school, no matter what they look like, where they're from, how they pray, transgender or not. Do you agree?

Yes

24. Students bring many needs into their public schools, but our union believes they all deserve the freedom to grow with the help of support for their mental health and with lessons in how to recognize and control their emotions, which is sometimes called social-emotional learning. Do you support increasing support for students' mental and emotional health in public schools?

Yes

Time to Teach

25. The planning and differentiating that teachers do daily needs more time. Most after school "prep" is filled with meetings. The current statute falls short of the time needed for preparing lessons. Will you support adjusting this statute to increase prep time?

Yes

26. Will you support legislation that protects an educator's prep time so it can't be used for meetings or having to sub for colleagues?

Yes

27. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and attend required meetings?

Yes

School safety

28. Creating incentives for school administrators to enforce districts' codes of conduct without bias and/or creating accountability measures for those who don't?

Yes

29. Increase reporting and transparency in worksite safety when reporting physical injuries and emotional trauma in the workplace?

Yes

Union Rights

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30. The ability of workers to come together in union and bargain collectively has been vital for reducing wage gaps by gender, building the middle class, and limiting wealth inequality in Minnesota. Do you support expanding and strengthening workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively?

Yes

31. Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to organize, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access and activities at worksites or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?

Yes

32. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

Opposing anything that even smells like a right to work piece of legislation as an easy first priority. As long as I am able, I will defend the right for any and all workers to form a union without antagonism or pressure campaigns from their employers or outside organizations. Collectively bargaining is a basic right all workers should have free and fair access to and I will not only support this in legislation but if it comes to it will gladly join the picket lines and stand alongside teachers who have no choice but the exercise their rights to go on strike. I saw this first hand when I was in high school when the Red Wing teachers were briefly on strike, and just recently joined and supported the teachers standing outside Minnetonka High School and administrative office demanding negotiation talks progress toward a contract in order to avoid a strike as their last option. I am glad a contract was eventually negotiated and will work to ensure all contracts negotiated by the unions are fair and accepted by administrators.

Privatization

33. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses?

Yes

34. Will you support policy changes that will ensure a stronger accountability system with necessary oversight and reporting to ensure quality management and instructional practices in charter schools?

Yes

35. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?

Yes

Your role as a legislator

Have you visited a public school in your district in the past year? If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as a legislator? If not, when did you last visit a school? Would you like us to help arrange a visit?

I am a coach for Minnetonka Middle School East's cross country running program (actually on the school district pay roll for this) and a voluntary coach for the Minnetonka High School's nordic ski program. I work with others who are teacher-coaches and interact and talk with them on the regular about their jobs and of their concerns for schools and the educational system - sometimes meaning I am starting and running practice by myself when the teacher-coaches are having to work through student and/or administrative issues past their normal working day that bleeds into the coaching time. I have also been a guest presenter to Eden Prairie high school, Minnetonka Middle School West, Minnetonka Middle School East, White Bear Lake High School and quite a few others in my current role as Campaign Manager for the Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters - joining teachers to give my side of the sulfide-ore copper mining debate in northern Minnesota when teachers would like our perspective alongside the mining industry's side. I enjoy working with students and know first hand what a full day of teaching the same material to 5 different class periods means. Extrapolating that out for a full year's worth of work and then a full career's worth of work has really

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given me a perspective of how much work it is to actually be an educator and has only made me appreciate and respect our hard working educators even more. Our teachers need all the support we can give them and I will do everything I can to do so as a legislator.

What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations and individuals do you go to for your information?

Education Minnesota would be my top go-to for issues relating to public education and I really am not saying that solely as a way to garner favor in this questionnaire. The first part of my career was as a political campaign worker and campaign manager and we always asked for and enjoyed the support of Education Minnesota for my candidates. Your working knowledge of what it means to be an educator translates directly into an effective and trustworthy organization that advocates at the capitol for educators needs. I would also need to hear from the administrative side on what their challenges are, particularly with funding, shortcuts to funding, and what we need to do so their schools and educators are supported. And of course parents and school boards plan a big role and I will work to seek their input and advice for what they are hearing and needing as well.

How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are elected/re-elected? If you disagree with us on an issue, how will you communicate that?

Open door policy to everything and anything EdMN needs and I will lean on your expertise to guide my legislative work. If there is an issue I disagree with I will openly and transparently discuss with EdMN's lobbyists, leaders and teacher advocates so potentially we can work toward solutions. I can already foresee potential issues with open enrollment and the related budget implications. I would represent Minnetonka, where my kids go and which I will acknowledge is fairly...shall we say known, for their open enrollment push. So as the representative of that school and those parents, their interests may differ from the needs of Minneapolis districts as an example. So, in this situation, hearing both sides out and making sure I am taking all sides into account will be necessary as a legislator to effectively do my job and so that you trust when I make a decision I have consulted and taking your advice and worked toward a solution whether or not you 100% agree with my final decision.

If elected/re-elected, how will you balance competing priorities that might exist between Education Minnesota and other education groups?

To be perfectly honest, EdMN is the top educator advocacy organization and you'll always have an outsized influence compared to most, if not all, groups. However, hearing out other organizations to get their perspectives is important and they too should know my decisions are rooted in a deep and full understanding of both sides. I am immediately predisposed to trust or follow advice from charter or private school advocacy organizations and believe our state is best served with focus on our public education system. however, some charter schools fill a specific need for a specific reason and deserve to be listened to and worked with so long as it does not sacrifice our public schools.