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1474**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Apple Valley office

Candidate name

Liz Reyer

Election district

52A

Party endorsement

DFL

Email

lizreyer52a@gmail.com

Phone

6513984765

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 know that, despite steps taken in the past session, there are still concerns about teacher pensions. I'm committed to advocating for fair options that provide a dignified retirement for teachers, and will work with educators, their representatives, and legislative

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colleagues on appropriate solutions.

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

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.

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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

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

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Looking back on my experiences as a college student compared to current times, I'm deeply concerned about the impact of unsustainably high costs on the students. I am committed to challenging the higher education system to address their cost structures and supporting legislative colleagues in developing solutions to rising costs. More specifically, I'd consider:

- Building on the North Star Promise and protecting funding for youth coming out of foster care.
- Returning to having a tuition freeze for public higher education
- Broadening tuition forgiveness programs, especially for high demand professions like education, healthcare, and human services
- Assessing the structure of the state higher education systems to ensure efficiency in operations between and within the two systems.

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?

The North Star Promise program is incredibly valuable as a way to help students afford college. However, it leaves challenging gaps in covering other costs. Eligible students will not have the privilege of families who have the financial means to help with cover living expenses, and it's difficult to pursue higher education while working enough to pay for food and housing. Because of this, the state should ensure that there are financial resources available for these students as a special eligibility category. Other categories of daily expense, such as transportation, should also be supported.

In addition, adapting to college campus culture requires support, especially for students without a family history of higher education. Mental health, mentoring, and other support services will be needed and should be funded to ensure student success.

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?

We were able to take many steps during the 2023-24 biennium, which we need to maintain and build upon. These include:

- Increase Teachers of Color Act, with 2024 additional funding for Aspiring Teachers of Color scholarship program
- American Indian Education Funding, including the Minnesota Indian teacher training program
- Establishing a Special Education Pipeline grant program
- Funding paid training for paraprofessionals
- Providing a competitive grant program for a Statewide Teacher Mentoring program
- Modifications of teacher licensure requirements
- Funding for Black Men Teach
- 2024 Paid student teaching pilot and special ed teacher apprenticeship program

I also appreciate the working group on teacher/paraprofessionals compensation because it taps directly into the experiences of professionals in the field. I will continue to advocate for teachers, paraprofessionals, and all school staff to help ensure that solutions are based on grassroots experience.

Standardized testing

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

As a mom of four adult kids, all of whom were educated in public schools, I see little value in standardized tests and am hard-pressed to see any important decisions that should be made based on these test results. In fact, they seem to provide

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disincentives to quality education. However, as a non-educator, I would defer to educators to provide guidance on how to best use these and other inputs to guide the education of our children.

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?

To start, book banning must not be allowed, and we need to ensure that we have protections for teachers to use materials that reflect the diversity of Minnesota families. Also, we must continue to ensure that materials in our schools' curricula allow all students to see themselves and ensure that harmful biases are not perpetuated through classroom materials and books.

This includes all forms of diversity, including race, faith tradition, gender identity and expression, people with disabilities, and neurodiversity, among others. Exposure to the lived experience of others through books is a vital way to help all of us overcome our implicit biases and should be encouraged.

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

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

Yes

Union Rights

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?

I've been a steadfast union supporter throughout my four years in office. I believe in the value of collective bargaining and union solidarity and demonstrate this through my votes, my public and provide speech, and my regular participation in union actions on behalf of members. I will also continue to work on behalf of unions through creation of good paying jobs, protection of policies such as prevailing wage, and advocacy for family-supporting policies such as universal healthcare and affordable childcare. I'm proud of the work I have done on behalf of workers and families, and consider the impact of potential policies on workers as an important lens when I'm weighing the value of any policy.

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 have not visited a school in the past year during a regular school day, although I have had the opportunity to talk with students outside of school hours. I will look forward to visiting a school next school year and would be interested in assistance in arranging the visit to ensure that it is the most enlightening experience possible.

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

I've gained information about public education issues from a variety of sources. My professional background includes time working at a curriculum development company. As part of this role, I was responsible for grant-funded research and program evaluations. Through this position I was onsite at many schools and in conversation with districts across the country about their needs. I also learned a great deal working on a campaign for a school board race in St. Paul in 2019. As a legislator, I have gotten to know colleagues who are educators and/or who have worked intensively on education policy issues, reaching out to them to get informed about issues on votes I'd be taking or to respond appropriately to constituents.

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?

I will continue to look to Education Minnesota to be a partner and source of information on education-related issues. I hope you would bring me legislative proposals and other suggestions on what I could do to make schools better for students and teaching better for teachers. I would hope to meet with and talk with representatives from Education Minnesota regularly to help me assess how proposed legislation on any topic would affect education and educators. I have seen how much good work gets done through partnership and am committed to collaborative action.

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

I will always want to hear from Education Minnesota and will always work to find solutions that include your needs and priorities. Balancing them with the priorities of others may sometimes come down to my judgment as to what is most in the interests of my district and the state. If other groups are advocating positions that I think take us in the wrong direction, my stance would be clear. However, in a case where the goal is shared but there are different ideas on how to achieve it, I'd search for the most beneficial ways to get there, looking for creative and pragmatic solutions that everyone can live with and using equity as a key lens for resolving differences. The key will be communication to understand not just "what" a group wants, but "why" in order to find common ground, where possible. In general, I believe that teachers know best what works for schools and what works for teaching, so Education Minnesota's perspective will always inform my choices.