

Q9 What are your past political activities (Offices held, candidate, volunteer, etc)

I have held the Chairperson position for two separate county affiliates for the Libertarian Party of New Mexico (LPNM). I have also held the state level Vice-Chair position for the LPNM. I coordinated a grassroots effort to institute the Community Development Advisory Board in the County of Los Alamos, which provides citizen oversight in the activities of the Community Development Department within the Los Alamos County Government.

I have served on several committees within my career and academically.

Q10 Why are you seeking this office?

I am seeking to be the State Representative for my district, because even before the Covid-19 pandemic created personal and economic suffering in our state, I felt compelled to serve my community. Now in light of current events I believe that I have the character and skills necessary to provide a balanced perspective to the budgetary issues we will face as a state.

Q11 Have you or your business, if you are a business owner, ever been the subject of any state or federal tax liens? If yes, please explain.

No

Q12 Have you ever been involved in a personal or business bankruptcy proceeding? If yes, please explain.

Yes (please explain):
I filed for bankruptcy as part of a divorce agreement over twenty years ago.

Q13 Have you ever been arrested, charged, or convicted of a misdemeanor or felony crime in New Mexico or any other state? If yes, please explain.

No

Q14 State Budget: New Mexico's state budget provides for the state's recurring expenses such as general management, education, facility maintenance . . . etc. Other expenditures are not recurring, such as road construction, infrastructure expansion, ... etc. What do you think is most important for New Mexico to do when there is surplus revenue?

Other,
Please explain your answer:
In years when we are experiencing a surplus we need to do two things. First we need to take stock of our aging infrastructure and apply reasonable funding where it is lacking. Most of these expenses are funding out of non-permanent and thus non-recurring expenses in the state budget. Second, we need to balance the infrastructure need with the long term focus of providing stability in fluctuating budget conditions. Our current situation is a perfect example of why we need to strategically maintain a healthy reserve fund. Expanding existing recurring expenditures is the last option we should pursue. We need to resist the urge to splurge just because we are experiencing a boom. The upswing in revenue, may be part of a longer trend in the economy, but we need to have the long focus for our state's economic well being. If we expand recurring expenses due to a short term windfall, we are doing a massive disservice to our citizens. It will leave the state legislature scrambling to cut programs back or end them entirely. That is not just unfair, but irresponsible.

Q15 Legislator funds: Legislators are usually provided funds for specific projects within their districts. How do you think these funds should be distributed to legislators?

Briefly explain your answer :

Public service is not an ego job, but some do seem to see it that way. Distribution of state funds should not be by a system that is skewed by partiality and therefore by party affiliation or political agenda. Any funding of projects that are based on districts should be about the constituency needs and not about the function or preferential treatment of the individual legislator. Any legislator that truly lives a leadership role should make their specific projects reflect the needs of the county in which their district lies.

Q16 State Tax Code: On a scale of one (critical) to five (unimportant), how important is it that New Mexico completely restructure its tax code?

(no label)
Comment:

2

Restructuring the tax code for the State of New Mexico is needed, but it should be done with a mindset to clarify, simplify, and cut. The current tax code needs to clarify many places where it appears to contradict or leave vague certain requirements and restrictions. Where possible, the tax code must be word-smithed in a way to communicate in clear and simple language what it means. We need these two actions for personal and business related tax code. Having obscure and vague language in our tax code makes it harder to make tax cuts when it is necessary and burdens businesses and citizens alike with confusion and needless difficulty.

Q17 State Tax Code: Are you in favor of the current Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) system for NM or moving to a sales tax?

Gross Receipts Tax (GRT),

Explain your answer:

Gross Receipts Tax still gets distributed and applied to the end consumer, but it does so with less governmental touch points. While I am in favor of the GRT system over sales tax, I believe we need to lower the rates at which these taxes are determined. I believe the state should implement a lower GRT rate for small businesses to encourage a strong and diversified economy. I further believe we need to lower the business to business tax. This will reduce the compounding effect that GRT has on both the New Mexico business owner and the end consumer. All these tax cuts will require a careful strategy to lower spending by the state. This is going to be exceptionally challenging in this next legislative session. If elected I wish to serve in the Commerce and Economic Development Committee, the Consumer and Public Affairs Committee, or the Taxation and Revenue Committee. I feel we need strong reasoning and a balanced approach in the leadership in these committees.

Q18 Crime: Do you believe that the crime rate and the court's handling of existing laws (sentencing, catch & release protocols, etc.) in New Mexico negatively impacts our ability to attract new businesses and industries to our state?

Yes,

Please explain your answer:

It is a simple equation of optics. If we look like a dangerous place for citizens we are a dangerous economy for business to invest in. If we can begin to show that we as a state take violent crime, property crime, and recidivism rates seriously then we not only become a safer state to live in, but we become a more stable economy to invest business interests in. Legislature has an important role in proposing and passing bills that address crimes, fines, and sentencing. What we as legislators do guides the Judicial branch of government to help reduce the high recidivism rate we have in our state. I will work to implement a hazard analysis process which can help Judges differentiate crimes and criminals from the potential outcomes with regard to sentencing. Stronger sentencing tools should be available to judges when the crime indicates a higher hazard to the public. Shorter sentences should be reserved for crimes that have a lesser hazard impact on the public. Criminal justice reform in the legislature is about making sure the judicial branch has the tools available to do the best job possible.

Q19 Energy: What is your position on government mandates for renewable energy like the Energy Transition Act?

Other,

Please explain your position:

I believe there is a place to grow our renewable energy when policy is kept in line with technological advances instead of over projections about capabilities. While the ETA is a noble effort it is currently being contested on its constitutionality. It failed to incorporate several serious considerations as well as consumer protections. I believe the ETA as well as any other renewable energy initiative needs to have stronger vetting through committee debate and communication. We as legislators need to incorporate expert advice from scientists and professionals in the field, both for technology aspects as well as legal. It is sadly a detriment to the cause when initiatives such as the ETA are improperly implemented, either due to rushing a proposal, or because of lack of proper input.

Q20 Energy: NM's oil and gas producers were largely responsible for the dramatic increase in state tax revenue for 2019. Do you support effective land and resource management that allows these extractive industries to maximize production and budgetary support for NM?

Yes,

Please briefly explain your answer:

My answer is yes, but with a caveat. I believe that any fiscally responsible action with regard to effective land and resource management must wisely balance the need for extractive activities with the need to leave our land resource in an environmentally conscientious state. We have two goals in the Oil and Gas industry. One, get the product out of the ground, and two, leave the land as unharmed as possible. These goals seem at odds according to some policy makers. However, any good business knows that a responsible gain in revenue is a lasting gain in revenue. All of this must be viewed in light of the recent drop in Oil and Gas as a commodity. I believe soundly that these will rebound, but it will take time. That will require a calm and rational approach to budgeting in light of the current shortfall. We can't lose our short term focus over the long term gain. Oil and Gas businesses have a lot to contribute to New Mexico and we must maintain our perspective on business stability as a means to obtain a solid growth in revenue for the state.

Q21 Regulation: On a scale of one (critical) to five (unimportant), how important is environmental regulation to protect New Mexico's land, air, and water?

(no label)

Briefly explain your answer:

1 (Critical)

Any individual or business must recognize that we have to be responsible stewards of our environment. That is a measure at all levels, from global to local. Short term financial gain that leaves a lasting detriment to the environment needs to be reconciled with the long term costs. As I stated above, any good business knows that a responsible gain in revenue is a lasting gain in revenue. By being cognizant of our impact on the environment, and balancing that with our business and personal actions we protect New Mexico as well as the economy.

Q22 Regulation: On a scale of one (critical) to five (unimportant), how important is it that New Mexico thoroughly review regulations to determine use and usefulness in regards to protecting citizens without unnecessarily overburdening business?

(no label)

Please explain your answer:

1 (critical)

I would say that this one question is probably the most important one addressed thus far in the questionnaire. The reason we need rational and fair public servants in legislative offices is to provide thorough review of the regulations that are proposed. We need impartial and yet concerned individuals to devote their time and energy to making sure that each proposal is clear in its intent as well as determining all of the unintended consequences the passage of those regulations could result in. This requires communication, outreach to experts, and foresight to anticipate outcomes. Individuals that engage in political bargaining jeopardize their ability to honestly scrutinize proposed legislation. This harms businesses as well as the individual citizens they represent.

Q23 Land Grant Permanent Fund: Do you support or oppose increased distributions (above the current 5%) from the Land Grant Permanent Fund?

Oppose,

Please explain your answer:

The current governor's plan to increase the distributions in order to provide funding for Early Childhood Education initiatives is a noble idea and the need is acute. However, provisions in the proposal make several restrictions on the usage and direction of that money. Furthermore, in light of the most recent news it is perhaps a good thing that this proposal stalled. The Governor is considering using the LGPF to aid in emergency funding measures that are facing the state in the Covid-19 crisis. This is a good example of not over-burdening fiscal surplus into ongoing programs. It makes swift action by government less available in financially turbulent times that will inevitably happen eventually. The LGPF usage in the proposed emergency funding should be reviewed and that will require a legislative body to convene and take action. It will be less cumbersome to temporarily increase distributions to address an emergency, than it would be to redact and reduce the expenditure from one cause and redistribute it to another.

Q24 Employment Laws: What is your position on government mandated employee benefits like sick leave, PTO,... etc?

Other,

Comments:

In general I support government requirements for a minimum level of benefits to be provided by employers. I believe that minimum requirements should be set at a federal level in order to provide a standard of protection universally recognized. However, I believe strongly in the carrot versus the stick approach. I believe that individual states should find ways to incentivize businesses to provide expanded benefits. Larger businesses currently have mandated requirements that ensure their larger mass of employees have more guarantees in benefits than small businesses can accommodate. Rather than creating a mandate that penalizes non-compliance, the state government should find ways to reward responsible businesses for innovative provisions that expand benefit levels for employees. This approach will be beneficial for both businesses as well as employees. Job satisfaction should increase and workforce turnover will decrease. This would be one way the government could help diversify the state economy.

Q25 Employment Laws: In recent years, legislation is proposed each session concerning the state's minimum wage. Please state how you feel wages should be determined and explain your answer.

Please explain your answer:

In a perfect society we could abolish the minimum wage and let the free market set the wages, trusting that all people would be treated fairly. We still need a base minimum, but continually increasing it has proven counter productive to improving the living wage for citizens and reducing the cost of living.

Q26 Workforce Development: On a scale of 1 (critical) to 5 (unimportant), how important do you feel is it that New Mexico's higher learning institutions offer technical and trade related degrees and certifications?

(no label)

Explain your reasoning:

1 (Critical)

This is a personal issue for me and an area in which I wish to champion. I live in a working class, middle income area of New Mexico and returned later in my life to college in order to pursue a technical career. I also have two daughters. One is pursuing a traditional college education and one who is gaining her education in a trade skill. The path to being a successful and contributing member of society is not a one-size fits all recipe. We have hobbled our manufacturing trades by overly focusing on only the collegiate path. We are doing a disservice to all our state's citizens with this mindset.

Q27 Economic Incentives: On a scale of one (critical) to five (unimportant), how important is it that state incentives for businesses, such as LEDA, JTIP and tax abatement include mandatory achievement requirements for use of the money as well as enforceable claw back parameters, if those requirements are not met?

(no label)

Please explain your answer:

1 (critical)

The Local Economic Development Act, Job Training Incentive Program, and tax abatement measures are critical factors that the state government uses to diversify and strengthen the economy. These programs are examples where the taxpayer dollar is being invested wisely and can be measured in the returns gained. However, in order to be a good steward of those tax dollars it is government responsibility to ensure that these funds, when utilized, are accountable to the taxpayer in tangible ways. The mandatory achievement requirements need to be set with loose enough parameters to allow businesses to assess their circumstances and have control and flexibility to use the monies how they need. The claw back parameters ensure that the beneficiaries of these programs keep from leaving the state without being accountable to the New Mexico citizens.

Q28 Do you support an Article V, Convention of States to address proposals that would limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, impose fiscal restraints (balanced budget amendment), and place term limits on federal officials?

Yes,

Please explain your answer:

First and foremost, term limits are a necessary restraint in government to limit the coalescing of political power to one person, or one party. While candidates may be re-elected for a set number of terms, holding political office should not be a career in and of itself. Term limits set a boundary that allows the voting citizen to have a say in the performance and efficiency of a government official. Secondly, the federal government has a necessary role to play as the governing body allocating military protection, regulation of interstate and foreign commerce, and setting our national budget. The federal government is and should be the higher level of governance, but as such it should not be involved in the minutia of state business. State and federal governments should cooperate and respect each other's role in conducting business for the citizens. Too much involvement by federal level government into state level business skews perspective and can lead to poor decisions that are out of touch with the circumstances they are supposed to regulate. And lastly, a balanced budget should be a goal that every level of government strives to achieve. It is irresponsible to future generations to continue growing our spending levels with little regard to the size of loan we are taking on. Government money is our money as citizens. Government officials should recognize their role as steward for the public money. It is not produced by the government, but allocated for the benefit of all the people in the most responsible way possible. Legislators should hold that fact close to heart and mind when reviewing any proposal. Intended purpose, and unintended consequences, add up and can swiftly become more debt. Politicians make a budget and sign the loan, but the citizens must pay it.

Q29 Is there anything else you would like to share about your candidacy or your desire to serve the people of your district?

I consider myself fiscally conservative, but socially liberal. If I am elected I intend to serve my term with this mindset. I believe that right now we need public servants that are solidly established in that middle ground. As a newcomer I have more flexibility and balance than if I was entrenched in an extended political career.

I am Helen Milenski and I am asking for your endorsement as a candidate for State Representative, District 45.

I am a different voice, a better choice.

Thank you for your time.
