

2016 Minnesota State House and Senate Candidate Questionnaire Section #1: About Yourself

Your Name: Jeanne Poppe

District you are running in: House 27B

Question #1: Please provide a short background about yourself.

I grew up on a farm near Houston in southeastern Minnesota. My dad was a farmer and my mom was a Certified Nursing Assistant. Both instilled in me the importance of civic engagement and public service. They also made sure I went to college and earned a degree. I have a BA from the University of WI – River Falls and an MS from Winona State University. I am serving my sixth term in the MN House. My husband and I have three grown children. In addition to my work in the Legislature, I work as a college counselor at Riverland Community College.

Question #2: What do you hope to accomplish by running for office? What will your main priorities be at the Capitol if you are elected?

I have had many accomplishments to date serving in the MN House. I represent the people of my district and have been able to secure funding and policy changes. I have secured funding for flood mitigation, the Hormel Institute, and Riverland Community College. I have supported people centered initiatives from creating a felony for parents who harm their children to college students who have mounting debt due to high tuition costs. I will continue to do what is best for our district and region.

Question #3: What experience or connections, if any, do you have to the disability community?

I have attended many fundraisers for the Mower County ARC and am a financial supporter. I consider many of the people I have met as friends.

Section #2: Our Workforce Crisis

Question #1: Our industry is facing a workforce crisis. There are simply not enough people to provide the direct care needed for people with disabilities to lead independent lives. Given that the overwhelming majority of funding for disability services comes from the government, and low wages are a driving force behind high rates of staff turnover, what ideas would you offer for helping to create a livable wage for our direct support professionals and caregivers?

There is no doubt wages for direct care should be increased to encourage people to go into this work and to sustain employees. I supported increasing the minimum wage and have always supported the 5%+ initiative. I believe you need to put your vote where your mouth is. I have never shied away from supporting this cause and have voted to change our tax structure to MAKE SURE this is a priority. It is disingenuous to state one's support and then not vote to make it happen. I will never do that.

Question #2: As technology continues to become a bigger part of everyone's lives, there are numerous products that can be used by individuals with disabilities which offer them increased independence, including things as simple as apps on cell phones and tablets. Some technology can supplement staff while others can substitute for staff. Would you support the use of public dollars to increase the availability and use of technology?

That is a great idea. Every option should be considered and when there is a new

and better way of providing service and assistance we should support that effort.

Section #3: The Sustainability of our System

Question #1: Minnesota's Olmstead Plan includes a broad series of key activities our state must accomplish to ensure people with disabilities are living, learning, working and enjoying life in the most integrated setting appropriate for their needs. In 2015, a set of very ambitious goals and benchmarks were finalized and approved by the Minnesota courts to help ensure that the intent of the Olmstead Plan is realized. What is your role as a legislator to oversee and ensure that those goals are met?

Whenever there is a new law in place it is our responsibility to follow through and make sure things are done to support or advance that legislation. If and when there are things not being done, it is my responsibility to follow up on that. This highlights the importance of having good relationships with people who work in support of people with disabilities. I am proud to say I am a person people can call and discuss concerns with. I respond to my own email and tell people what my cell phone number is so they can reach me.

Question #2: Affordable housing is an issue for many people in Minnesota. A cornerstone of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan is the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to live as independently as they choose. As a legislator how would you strategically expand availability of affordable housing with accessibility features for Minnesotans with disabilities?

We have a need for affordable housing which is clean and sound. I believe we can provide tax incentives for private businesses to build and maintain adequate housing. I also support using tax dollars to support individuals who are moving into more independent living situations. Well paid staff persons can help to support independence and assist with creating options.

Question #3: Our industry has seen an influx of "unfunded mandates" - items that cost providers additional money without subsequent compensation, such as the increase in minimum wage, the Affordable Care Act, increased regulatory fees and the new Department of Labor Overtime Rule to name a few. When the government adds a new mandate what is its responsibility in supporting government funded businesses to pay for those mandates?

I believe government should not make it impossible for government-funded organizations to thrive. When the costs go up we should be cognizant of what that does to the big picture. I support having a higher minimum wage because I believe by growing people's wages you grow their options regarding housing, health, security and safety. But that shouldn't restrict the business in other ways. I believe it is our responsibility to provide care and support for those who are the most vulnerable in our society – the sick and disabled, the youngest and the oldest.