



2020 FLORIDA HOUSE DISTRICT 11 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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1. **About You:** What qualifications in terms of education, experience, and prior community service do you bring to your candidacy for public office? Please explain what motivates you to run for office at this time?

I'm a native North Floridian, raised by a single mother who worked multiple jobs to provide for my two brothers and me. Because of her example, I've always understood the meaning of a hard day's work. I went to public schools, graduating in 2007 from Florida State University.

After graduating, I've dedicated my career to giving back by working in the nonprofit sector. I currently work for the Colorectal Cancer Alliance, raising awareness and funds to end colorectal cancer in our lifetimes. I've also served on the Pride Fund to End Gun Violence's Young Professionals Board and am a member of the Florida LGBTQ+ Democratic Caucus. I've also interned for State Representative Loranne Ausley, gaining valuable knowledge about the legislative process, and have been involved in North Florida politics since I was 17 years old.

Through my life experiences, I know the power of a good public education and why we need to do more to support working Floridians and their families here on the First Coast. I believe we need to expand healthcare access, protect our environment and coastal communities, ensure equality for all, and keep our communities safe from gun violence.

I believe our community's voices aren't being heard in Tallahassee by the current incumbent and that's why I decided to run. Our community deserves better jobs with higher wages, expanded healthcare, a refocus on our public education system, and continued commitment to our pristine beaches, coastal waterways, and local parks. We need a state representative who will listen, learn and respond to the needs of our residents. A leader who will seek common ground, place people first, and make sure every person in District 11 is represented. Together, we'll build up our community and take on those who seek to divide us. Together, we can refocus our attention on the needs of our community and place the people over politics in Tallahassee.

2. **Priorities:** If elected, what will be the top three priorities for District 11 you plan to address?

Expand healthcare. I believe healthcare is a right, not a privilege. Here in Florida, with nearly 3 million Floridians uninsured, we must expand Medicaid, accept the \$1.6 billion in federal funding which would cover more than 800,000 low income Floridians and get us closer to every Floridian being covered. A healthier, more insured Florida means lower healthcare costs for everyone across the state.

Invest in public education. Florida ranks near the bottom of the country in teacher salaries and near the bottom of the list when it comes to school funding. We need to invest in a quality public education system, which includes better pay for our educators, additional funding for infrastructure improvements at our schools, smaller class sizes, and a renewed focus in whole child education and in arts education programs for our children.

Grow our economy. Our community needs jobs with better pay and benefits. That starts with a living wage and paid sick leave for those currently without it. Small businesses are the backbone of our community and they've been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. I'll ensure they get the support they need to recover by lowering the rent sales tax, providing additional revenue to local governments to support small business owners, and establishing state loan and grant programs specifically for small businesses, not politically connected corporations.

3. **Beaches Priorities:** If elected, what issues do you intend to address that will benefit our beaches communities?

Climate change is real and we need to act to protect our coastal community and state from the changing climate. That means acting on rising sea levels today, to protect the coastline, while also protecting the region's Naval base at Mayport. Residents who live along the beaches have made an investment and we must work to ensure we can protect their property and livelihoods. But we also must work to address stormwater runoff and old sewer pipe issues in the local communities to better handle the changing climate. And we should make it our mission to build up our dune system and protect the local wildlife around our beach communities. As State Representative, I'll be sure to get funding for our local community to address climate change so we can act today, not tomorrow, on this environmental emergency.

I also believe we must keep our beaches open and public, for all to enjoy. My opponent voted for the controversial HB631 in the panhandle, which limits some use of public beaches in Walton County, in the name of private property. I'm concerned that if the right buyer (\$\$\$) comes along, he would do the same right here in Atlantic, Neptune and Jacksonville beaches. I will always support keeping our beaches clean, open and public.

In addition, I believe Florida can and should lead the nation in clean energy, which will bring good-paying jobs and curb our carbon emissions. I'll work with environmental leaders to

protect our beaches, coastal waterways, and state and local parks from over development and fight against any attempt at reducing environmental regulations in our district. Development will happen but it can be done smartly, with our local environment, in mind.

4. **St. Johns River:** If elected, what will you do to protect the St. Johns River? What would you support to address any impacts to the St. Johns River caused by the dredging?

First, we need to recognize that the river is changing. The salinity of the river is changing, as more seawater is entering the river, due to the deepening of the river, because of dredging. This is having an impact on the ecosystems and wildlife of the river but it's also having an impact on our intracoastal community. As the river deepens, coastal flooding and erosion is becoming a greater issue for many communities. In addition, nutrient overloads, from nitrogen and phosphorus, are causing toxic algae blooms, which can impact wildlife, ecosystems and those who swim in the river.

We must address these actions immediately. I will oppose continuing the dredging until environmental regulations are in place to address the impact on our coastal communities and the salinity of the river and how it interacts with the ecosystems. Furthermore, we should address the nutrient overloads by addressing wastewater plants, stormwater runoff, industrial waste and other items that run into the water. We need a leader who will prioritize this issue; not give it a passing look.

5. **Home Rule:** In 1968, the people of Florida approved a new state constitution which expressly conferred "home rule" powers upon all Florida municipalities. With home rule powers, Florida's 411 municipalities do not need to wait for legislative authorization to address local needs. Instead, municipalities can exercise any power for municipal purposes, except for local taxing authority and when expressly prohibited by state law.

- a. Do you support continuation of broad Home Rule municipal powers to ensure that municipalities are responsive to the unique needs and preferences of their citizens?

Absolutely, yes. I believe local municipalities are elected to represent the people. The state legislature meets once a year for two months. Local municipalities meet weekly and monthly and are able to address local issues like beach access, stormwater runoff, environmental regulations, etc. immediately. I strongly support local home rule authority because our local leaders are elected to represent our local communities and they deserve the respect they've earned as elected leaders.

- b. If elected, would you oppose efforts to preempt municipal Home Rule powers or otherwise limit the power of local citizens to govern themselves?

Yes I would. My opponent has supported gutting local home rule because he likes to have the

power in Tallahassee with his buddies. I prefer, as long as the local laws aren't violating state law, for local municipalities to have authority over addressing local issues quickly and clearly.

- c. What have you done (or will you do) to either support and expand Home Rule or limit Home Rule?

I haven't held elective office so I haven't been able to do much, other than speaking out. But that's why I'm running - to return District 11 back to the people and to increase all of our voices in our community. I support home rule and I support local municipalities in Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach and Jacksonville Beach to make the first judgments when it comes to what's best for our communities here in the First Coast. And as State Representative, I will work with the local municipalities on the state level to ensure I'm doing whatever is needed to help our community, not stand in it's way of process.

6. **Vacation Rentals:** For several years, vacations rental lobbyists have been trying to pass a bill that would pre-empt all regulation of vacation rentals to the state. What is your position on the state taking away the ability for local governments to regulate vacation rentals?

As with local home rule, I would support our local community regulating some of these rentals, if they believe state law doesn't go far enough to keep our community safe. These properties are locally owned and maintained, and the local municipalities should have first say in how they are regulated, to limit the potential abuse of power or favoritism that might be applied on the state level.

7. **COVID-19:** What would you do (or have you done) to support beaches businesses and residents who have been impacted by COVID-19?

I've made it a mission to shop local and order out, as much as I can, from local businesses during the COVID-19 crisis. It's important in times like these, that we support our local establishments, not the large restaurant chains and department stores that will be just fine.

I applaud our local leaders here at the beaches for being upfront about the seriousness of the virus. I also wish my opponent would have taken this virus seriously, instead of running around without a mask and asking why the state was closed. It is a public leader's responsibility to be honest with their constituents and to always side on the side of public health and safety. Floridians demanded the truth when the virus first started, and I wish the leadership by the Governor and the Mayor of Jacksonville would have been more truthful in the early parts of this health and economic crisis.

As your state representative, I'll get to work on November 4th to look for ways the state can provide relief to small businesses around the region and get to work drafting legislation to do

just that. We must act quickly to reimburse businesses for loss revenue, while fixing the \$3 billion state budget deficit we now face.

8. **Unfunded Mandates:** Unfunded mandates have a major impact on our city budgets. What will you do to make sure our local governments will not be saddled with the cost and burdens of unfunded mandates from the state legislature?

I do not support unfunded mandates. Local governments are facing tough budget decisions because of the current pandemic and the state must lead by offering solutions. Passing the buck doesn't show leadership; I would work to promote our local communities by having the state provide funding for any mandates in our local community. This is especially important as our local and state economies improve after the COVID-19 pandemic and we are able to get our economy and budget back on track.

9. **Right to Vote for Ex-Felons:** In 2018, Florida voters approved Amendment 4 that restored ex-felons with the right to vote. In 2019, Governor DeSantis signed a law restricting that right. Do you support the law the Governor signed? Why or why not?

No, I do not. My opponent does though - he voted for the law restricting that right. The voters knew what they were doing and voting for when they passed Amendment 4 in 2018. Anyone who has served their time should be able to have their voting rights restored. The right to vote is guaranteed in the Constitution and I believe ex-felons should have the right to vote. A modern day "poll tax" was simply the wrong thing to do and was done because it would restrict Floridian's ability to vote. I'll always stand on the side of democracy and encouraging voter participation - not restricting it by playing "got ya" politics with people's lives and voting rights.

10. **Charter Amendments:** What is your position on the following proposed Constitutional amendments that will be on the General Election ballot? Please explain why you support or oppose each amendment.
- a. AMENDMENT 1: Citizenship Requirement to Vote in Florida Elections
 - b. AMENDMENT 2: Raising Florida's Minimum Wage
 - c. AMENDMENT 3: All Voters Vote in Primary Elections for State Legislature, Governor, and Cabinet
 - d. AMENDMENT 4: Voter Approval of Constitutional Amendments
 - e. AMENDMENT 5: Limitation on Homestead Assessments
 - f. AMENDMENT 6: Ad Valorem Tax Discount for Spouses of Certain Deceased Veterans Who Had Permanent, Combat-Related Disabilities

I voted YES on Amendments 2, 5, and 6. These are amendments that will help our workers, our military families and homeowners. Amendment 2 will raise wages and the state legislature should, if the Amendment passes, immediately get to work to implement the amendment and

ensure small businesses have the resources to cover the additional costs that will come with gradually raising wages. But we should be lifting up our workers, and that means paying them a little more so they can have a living wage here in the First Coast.

I voted NO on Amendments 1, 3, and 4. Amendment 1 is simply not needed - you already have to be a citizen to vote. Amendment 3 could lead to minority voters being hurt and underrepresented in the state legislature and in state politics. If this was an open primary amendment, I would likely be willing to support it but it's not. The devil is in the details. Amendment 4 makes it harder for voters to have their voices heard through the constitutional amendment process by requiring them to pass the same amendment twice. While my opponent might not want to hear from our community and from the people the first time (he voted to place this amendment on the ballot), I do. I trust the voters to get it right the first time, through the Democratic process, and I wish my opponent would do the same.

11. Communication with Your Constituents: It is important that citizens are kept informed about State issues that impact our quality of life. In the past, it has been our experience that once elected, we never see or hear from our Tallahassee officials again. How will you change that precedent? Will you commit to regularly scheduled office hours at the beaches?

I have plans to open district offices, one here at the beaches in Duval and one in Nassau county. The hours will be Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm, and I'll work out of the Duval office when I'm in town and not tending to legislative business in Tallahassee. It's important to have leaders that are seen and accessible. My opponent ignores his constituents - and does what's best for him and his political ambitions, not our community. I'll work out of the office to ensure that any constituent - Republican, Democrat or NPA - who comes through that door, has a state representative there who is willing to listen, learn and act on their behalf and on behalf of our community.

I'll also work to hold monthly town halls, whether in person or by zoom, and my cell phone will always be available in case anyone needs to reach me directly. After all, I will be a public servant - someone who represents and works for you.

12. Other Issues: Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain.

I come from North Florida. My aunts, uncles and family live in Bradford County. Most of them are Republicans and I'm a Democrat. But we are able to have respectful and thoughtful conversations about politics. Sometimes we agree and sometimes we don't - but we can listen and learn from each other and we must place our local communities first again. That's my mission and that's my promise to you, if I win your vote and this election. My commitment to you: I will always listen to everyone in District 11, no matter what their political affiliation is. I

will be accessible, present, and transparent. I will represent you, and only you, in Tallahassee and work to make all of our lives better.

We need a leader who will champion equality for everyone - socially and economically. Stop dividing us into political parties or segments, and start being a leader for everyone. I'll stop the name calling, stop the division, and be your representative - the people's representative in District 11. I need your vote on November 3rd and I would appreciate your support - no matter which political persuasion you belong to. We are all in this together - let's speak as one.