

ANCHORAGE TEA PARTY

Alaska State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire 2012

Mia Costello State House District 20

1. *Give your opinion on a rotating legislative session to be held in each of the three largest cities in Alaska. What are your ideas for providing better access to the legislature?*

Access to the legislature is vitally important and I would encourage any proposal intended to make our state government more open and more accessible. If we were to change our rules to allow bills to pass out from committees during interim, we could have public hearings, public testimony, and committee votes during the summer and winter months, thereby both avoiding bills dying in the final days of session for lack of time and allowing for public hearings and in-person testimony in statewide locations.

I also believe the legislature should make better use of the tools we already have at our disposal, including videoconferencing capabilities at our legislative information offices, Alaska Legislature TV, email, and phone calls. My economic development bill that passed this session included a born-and-raised Alaskan witness who called in from overseas using Skype. It marked the first time Skype had been used in public testimony and I was proud to have been a part of making that possible.

I also believe I have a responsibility to come to you for your input – preferably in person. I personally reach out to my constituents during session with newsletters, e-newsletters, monthly constituent meetings, town-hall gatherings, and I call in to community council meetings. During

Interim, I make myself available to meet face-to-face with anyone who would like to meet with me. I need your input to do my job effectively, and I'm committed to making sure I've heard what you have to say.

2. *What must Alaska do to increase our oil related revenues?*

I feel that it's my job to grow our economy, to grow jobs for Alaskans, and to grow safe, healthy Alaskan communities – not to maximize state coffers for the sake of growing unsustainable government largess. I would like to see more of Alaska's oil revenues working for us in the private sector, not the public sector.

Some say that in order to increase our revenues, we should keep taxes on oil producers high. I could not disagree more with that position. I believe that Alaska needs to increase its oil production, but that won't happen unless we make Alaska more competitive for investment. Burdensome oil taxes including the progressivity feature that prevents investment must be addressed. The oil and gas sector makes up one third of our economy and funds ninety percent of government, but our current tax structure with its steep progressivity component gives oil producers very little incentive to invest in increasing production here in the state. Instead, they are in harvest mode. That needs to change. Our future economic health depends upon it.

3. *What is your position on "Loser Pays" tort reform legislation for Alaska?*

I would support such legislation. Alaska's judicial system and economy are often burdened by frivolous lawsuits solely intended to stall development projects. I believe a "loser pays" system

would limit cases to those that are genuine in nature rather than obstructionist. I co-sponsored legislation that would have allowed companies to recoup wage and benefit costs incurred when their project is wrongfully enjoined by frivolous litigation.

4. *What is the one most important thing we can do to improve education in Alaska and how will you facilitate that?*

Like so many other areas, we should look to “best practices” that are proven to garner results. Not all good ideas cost more money, and, especially in Alaska, where we are last in the nation for fourth grade reading and math, we need to look for ways to get results, not simply assume that more government investment means better results. School-business partnerships, hands-on learning, team-teaching – these are some of the best practices that get better results.

I am open to a wide variety of proposals to improve student achievement. I voted to allow a public vote on a constitutional amendment to allow parents to take their children to private schools – and take their state funding with them. I and my colleagues on the House Finance Committee formed an education working group to take an in-depth look at our education system and identify other possible solutions as well. Those meetings will take place this summer, with public input and opportunities for Alaskans to chime in on this critical issue.

5. *Give examples of capital budget projects you favor spending state monies on.*

I believe that the capital budget should be used to give one-time funding for projects that have long-term benefits for Alaska’s economy, infrastructure, and quality of life. These projects

sometimes have high up-front costs, but the benefits are immense and long-lasting. For example, I support spending capital budget money on projects that result in cheaper energy for Alaskans, like the Susitna/Watana hydroelectric dam project, energy transmission infrastructure, and a gas pipeline with take-off points to reduce energy costs in communities suffering from the high price of energy. I also support projects that improve Alaska's economy, like road projects and transportation and communication infrastructure projects. I also believe that we must take care to ensure that we fund projects that are legitimate functions of government and that our capital budget funds are put to the best possible uses.

6. *Do you believe this year's state operating budget is too high, too low or just right?*

It's too high and growing too fast. I'm glad that we were able to restrain operating budget growth this year to 3.8 percent – down from the 7.8 percent historical growth rate – but we need to do even more. Every dollar of state revenue is a dollar taken out of the private sector where it would have done more good. I co-sponsored a bill to sunset and audit all state agencies, which would force state government and government programs to justify their existence. This, along with result-based budgeting efforts begun by House Finance this year, is a smart way to budget.

7. *What is your interpretation of the Tenth Amendment of the US Constitution and how it relates to states' rights?*

Here in Alaska, we see outrageous examples of federal government overreach every day. The Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reserves to the states any powers not given to the federal government by the Constitution. I believe it means what it says. Sadly, the federal government has been allowed to ignore the Tenth Amendment as it wishes – and the result is a federal government that over-steps its constitutional authority constantly.

8. *Name four things Alaska can do to reduce health care costs.*

Alaskans are crippled with the costs of health care and I believe we should avoid being forced to accept federal health care mandates that will drive costs higher. I believe we can make headway by incentivizing partnering with the Indian Health Service to take advantage of federal dollars; I would like to see providers publicize health costs so customers can shop for cheaper services; I would like to encourage more physical fitness in schools to reduce childhood obesity and focus on prevention, and prohibit junk food and soda in schools. This past session, the House Finance committee tied funding for the school lunch program directly to Alaska-grown and locally-produced foods, encouraging our local farming communities and healthier food options for children.

Meaningful tort reform would also help greatly reduce health care costs.

9. *Do you support the current processes for Alaska judicial appointments and retentions?*

Let's let our governor choose judges freely. I support changes so that Alaska's governor can appoint judges in our state without hindrance. Under the current judicial appointment system, the governor can only appoint judges from among the names forwarded to him or her by the

Judicial Council. This binds the Governor's hands more than I think is appropriate. The Governor has been elected by the people of Alaska; the Judicial Council has not.

10. *List any restrictions you personally will have (or have) on contributions to your campaign such as dollar cap, accepting contributions from public sector or private unions, PAC's, etc.*

In 2010, individual contributors to my campaign outnumbered group donations by nearly ten to one. I focus on soliciting personal contributions over group contributions because I want the support of the people I represent.