

Anchorage Tea Party

Alaska State Legislature Candidate Questionnaire 2012

You may use as much space as you like for your responses, including additional pages. Your responses will be posted on our website, and hard copies will be made available to attendees at our June 25, 2012 candidate forum.

Candidate Name: Kevin Meyer Senate District L

- 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 Alaska citizens' better access to the legislature?** I support making the Legislature and legislative hearings more accessible to the citizens of Alaska. While serving in the State House of Representatives, I did sponsor legislation that would move the proceedings of the Legislature closer to the population centers of Alaska, which would provide increased and more affordable access via rail, road, and air for citizens to attend sessions and committee hearings of the Legislature. A cost analysis of rotating legislative sessions between major population centers should be conducted, in order to prevent a gross increase in operating costs for the Legislature. This analysis should include an inventory of facility and meeting space, available (and affordable) housing during the session for staff and legislators who may not live in the immediate area where the session is being held, and the support system that is required (IT, House and Senate Floor Staff, Legislative Legal Services, etc...). The Legislative Affairs Agency has put forth a tremendous effort to open up the proceedings of the legislature by installing cameras in every committee room so that all committee hearings can be viewed over the internet, in real time. This function did not exist two years ago. However, I believe that citizens have a right to have access to lawmakers and proceedings, and we should seriously consider what we can do to ensure this occurs.
- 2. What must Alaska do to increase our oil-related revenues?** Increase production - it is the only sound measure to secure the economic future for our state. Step 1: Reduce taxes in order to make Alaska a more competitive environment and to attract the necessary level of investment to increase production.
- 3. What is your position on "Loser Pays" tort reform legislation for Alaska?** I support this necessary tort reform and have co-sponsored legislation to accomplish this measure. I believe that it is a necessary tool to

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combat frivolous lawsuits, especially lawsuits aimed at delaying and stopping the development of our vast resources.

4. What is the one most important thing we can do to improve education in Alaska and how will you facilitate that? We must take a step back and look at what how we are doing education in Alaska. If you look at the amount of money that we spend and compare it with test results, it is apparent that we are spending a tremendous amount of financial resources and not all of our students are achieving success. This problem is even more apparent in rural school districts. I believe that competition needs to exist in education, just as it needs to exist in business. Utilizing and promoting charter and alternative school programs to allow parents the choice in the education of their child; establishing rural hub schools in areas where it makes sense – in order to consolidate resources and provide a strengthened education network for students; providing more vocational-technical education opportunities to students in middle and secondary schools – college is not for everyone and our model of education needs to reflect the varied skill and academic potential of all learners; and move towards a compensation system that rewards teachers for doing a good job. I don't believe that there is just one silver bullet for addressing the challenges that our education system faces, however, it will require the input of education professionals, policy makers, and citizens of our state. The one-size-fits-all model that we have now, does not do service to our children.

5. Give examples of capital budget projects you favor spending state monies on. Public Safety, Highway and Critical Infrastructure that assists with the moving of goods and people through the state. Critical infrastructure projects – roads, bridges, harbor improvements, airport improvements – these are the lifeline of our economy and local communities; School construction projects – many communities have benefited from the 70/30 and 60/40 debt reimbursement program, which takes the pressure off of local communities to fund essential school improvements and construction.

6. Do you believe this year's state operating budget is too high, just right, or too low? If too high, name three programs in which you would make cuts. If too low, list the areas which need more spending.

The state operating budget is too high and unsustainable, given that the primary source of general fund revenue is derived from oil production. We need to seriously look at the formulary programs that are driving

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the increase in the year-to-year operating budget. The two areas that drive the overall growth are health care (Medicaid) and education. Both are based on formularies established by the Legislature. If we, as a State, are going to continue down this path and not do anything meaningful in regards to making Alaska a more competitive place to do business, we have to take a serious look at these programs. We are at a point, where the argument that “these programs are based on formulas and we can’t do anything to control the growth,” are unacceptable. It is also unacceptable for the federal government to continue to require increases in state contributions to federal match programs – the federal government share gets less, and the State has to pick up more. Or, new programs, created by the federal government are foisted upon state’s with limited financial resources.

- 7. What is your interpretation of the Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and how it relates to states’ rights? Give specific examples relating to Alaska.** My interpretation of the 10th Amendment is pretty straight forward – powers not granted to the federal government by the Constitution, or prohibited by it, belong to the State. In particular to Alaska, I believe that this means that federal intervention in the development and production of our resources is wrong, especially as it pertains to State lands. Recently, the federal EPA issued a draft watershed assessment for a mining prospect that occurs on State land. This assessment was driven by opponents of the proposed project in order to stop the development of our state resource. I have concern about the usurp of power in this instance, primarily because the project development team has not finalized environmental studies, nor have they even hit a benchmark to absolutely define the project parameters or even apply for one permit (state or federal, which both jurisdictions are involved). Alaska has a well established and stringent permitting process. It concerns me greatly, as it should every Alaskan, that a federal agency may be able to come into our state, with no defined authority, and kill a development prospect that has not even been defined by the project sponsor. This sets a dangerous precedent in a resource rich state like Alaska, where we rely, and our statehood was based on the development of our vast resources.

- 8. Name four things Alaska can and should do to reduce health care costs.** The first premise that we should rely on is that government doesn’t do anything better, more efficiently, or cost effectively than the

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private sector. Government control of our health care system will mean less efficiency and higher costs. I think that there are some things that can be done to control costs: 1. Allow people to buy health care insurance from anywhere in the United States – increases competition, which will preserve quality and reduce costs. Basic standards can be established and then let insurers compete for business. 2. Further Tort Reform: Malpractice insurance costs are passed on to consumers, it is a cost of doing business. 3. Reform Medicare: Medicare underpays for the people that it covers, which has led to doctors refusing to take on new Medicare patients. The Anchorage Medicare Clinic is a great example of the private sector stepping up to address the shortage in physicians that will accept Medicare patients. 4. Invest in education: Investing in health related education, and starting early and continuously promoting healthy lifestyles in a person's life, will assist in deterring unhealthy life style choices (smoking, alcohol and drug use, bad eating habits). We live in Alaska – there is no greater benefit that eating healthy Alaska game and seafood and getting out and enjoying the tremendous amount of outdoor activities that our state provides year-round.

- 9. Do you support the current processes for Alaska judicial appointments and retentions? Why or why not?** I do not support the current process for judicial appointments and retentions. I believe that the Governor is too limited in who can be chosen for appointment and when it comes to retention, it becomes the duty of independent organizations or groups to educate voters on a judge's record.
- 10. List any restrictions you personally will have (or have) on contributions to your campaign such as a dollar cap, accepting contributions from public-sector or private unions, PACs, etc. Please provide details and justification.** I personally do not have restrictions on contributions to my campaign. Candidates for public office will receive various surveys, like this one, in order to flush out a candidate's views on issues that are important to the constituency of a group. I think that is important. It is an education opportunity to really find out the values and the leadership philosophy of a candidate. I will not, and have never, committed to vote a particular way on an issue in order to receive financial support for my candidacy. First and foremost, I represent the constituents of my district.

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