

Michigan Senate District 20

State Senator - Michigan

Michigan Senate District 20

Description:

Duties: The Michigan Senate shares responsibility with the Michigan House of Representatives to enact new laws and amend or repeal existing laws.

Qualifications: State Senators may serve a maximum of two full terms. They must be at least 21 years of age and a registered voter in their district. There are 38 State Senate districts which are re-apportioned after each census.

Term: 4 years

Vote in one political party's primary only.

Candidates (choose 1):

Margaret E O'Brien



Party: Rep
State Senator

Biographical Info:

Website: www.margaretobrien.com

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/margaretobrienforstatesenate>

Twitter: twitter.com/mobrien2027

Occupation / Current Position: State Senator/Licensed Real Estate Agent

Education: Bachelor of Arts, James Madison College at Michigan State University

Qualifications / Experience: State Senator, 2015-present State Representative, 2011-2014 Portage City Council. 2003-2010 Licensed Real Estate Agent, 2003-present Social Worker, 1995-2003

Questions:

Q: 1. PRIORITIES: *What are your top three state legislative priorities and how would you address them?*

A: My three priorities are roads, education and continued job growth. 1. Roads- We have invested billions of dollars the last couple years in to our roads, and are putting in over \$200 million more using unanticipated revenues. Each year since the Roads Package was passed, we have increased road funding- part through fees/taxes and part through increased general funds. 2. Education- We are investing a record \$14.7 billion into K-12 education. We must invest more in to the at risk population to improve proficiency in reading, math and science. 3. Job Growth- we must continue to attract high wage jobs and emerging sectors

Q: 2. EDUCATION: *What measures do you support/propose to achieve improved educational outcomes and accessibility for Michigan students from early childhood through post-secondary education?*

A: 1. Ensure reading proficiency by 3rd grade- this can be accomplished through investment in to children who start school behind which includes at risk children & ESL. 2. Advocate CTE & college prep- Career & Technical Education has been an area that was neglected in the 2000's. We must ensure our students can see the opportunities offered through CTE & college prep. Many industries with high wage jobs are understaffed. 3. Mental health services counseling- we need to address violence in neighborhoods and schools. Schools are a logical place for students to receive help if parents allow. 4. Pre-K-continued investment.

Q: 3. ECONOMY: *What policies do you support to increase jobs and help Michigan residents improve their economic positions?*

A: 1. Education is the best way for students to be able to have many options. 2. Re-training programs- many community colleges offer certificate programs with jobs waiting at the end of their program. Additionally, a local organization in my community focuses on hard to employ people- lack of HS diploma, criminal record, transportation barriers, single parent, poor work history. This program partners with employers to teach 3-6 week programs with a job at the end. The short class time allows for better chance of success.. 3. Ensuring MI has a competitive regulatory & tax climate. We have done that in the last 8 years,

Q: 4. ELECTIONS: *What state policies do you support regarding campaign funding and voting rights?*

A: 1. Transparency in campaign financing- I would support more frequent reporting. I voted for more frequent reporting requirements 2. Fair elections-

ensure every citizen has the opportunity. I have supported expanded use of absentee voting and cosponsored legislation to do this.

Q: 5. *ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY: What actions or policies do you support to protect Michigan's water, air and land for current and future generations, while meeting the state's energy needs? Explain how those actions or policies would affect the future of Enbridge Pipeline 5.*

A: Michigan has the benefit of amazing resources- water, land. We must ensure are policies are scientifically driven. Also, we must look to creative ideas. A group of Michigan Tech students recently analyzed all wires/pipes/lines that go under the straits & have offered some ways to improve safety. We must ensure that Pipeline 5 never leaks. I supported a bill that would have closed it down. If it is not closed down, we need to be vigilant in watching the line. As we look at energy resources, it is important to have affordable and sustainable energy options. Too often, the poorest pay the highest bills.

Q: 6. *JUSTICE: What policies will you pursue to promote social and racial justice in our state?*

A: 1. I sponsored bi-partisan legislation with Senators Gregory & Knollenberg to educate young people about traffic stops & to ensure officers give their name and how to file complaint information to anyone they stop. We need to reduce the risk of violence in what is already a tense interaction. 2. More attention to education- African American students are more likely to struggle than others. We need to ensure we have support services available that will work for them. 3. We need to ensure that our sentencing policies are fair. Over the last 8 years, we have opened more alternative courts which is a win for everyone.

Sean McCann



Party: Dem
Small Business Owner

Biographical Info:**Website:** <http://seanamccann.com/>**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/McCannForStateSenate/>**Twitter:** twitter.com/SeanAMcCann**Occupation / Current Position:** Small Business Owner**Education:** Western Michigan University, Bachelors of Political Science, Class of 1993**Qualifications / Experience:** Kalamazoo City Commissioner - 1999-2009
State Representative (60th District) 2010-2014**Questions:****Q: 1. PRIORITIES:** *What are your top three state legislative priorities and how would you address them?***A:** A. Protect and expand healthcare for Michigan's citizens. We need to expand the Healthy MI program, and undo the recently enacted punitive and misguided work requirements to remain eligible for healthcare in this program. B. Investing in our roads and infrastructure. The state needs to make a much greater investment in our roads and infrastructure than it has in the last seven and a half years, and I will advocate for this as state senator. C. Investing in education. Michigan needs to make a much greater investment in our traditional K-12 public schools, as well as our institutions of higher education.**Q: 2. EDUCATION:** *What measures do you support/propose to achieve improved educational outcomes and accessibility for Michigan students from early childhood through post-secondary education?***A:** Michigan's children will not have higher outcomes or greater accessibility to higher education until our teachers and classrooms are truly high-performing and cutting edge. This takes a serious financial investment by the State of Michigan. I will pursue this doggedly as your state senator. Furthermore, it makes all the sense in the world to invest valuable taxpayer resources into the "front end" for children, thereby saving us much more money on the "back end" where we are left to fix the problems. Thus, investing in early childhood is the smartest policy we can pursue.**Q: 3. ECONOMY:** *What policies do you support to increase jobs and help Michigan residents improve their economic positions?***A:** I strongly believe the basis of a strong economy is a well-educated and well-trained workforce. To this end, I support ensuring that we have strong public schools accessible to all people, as well as increasing support for trade schools and community colleges. We need to ensure that we are ready for the 21st century economy, and that Michigan's workers can take on new fields in technology, renewable energy, and other new and emerging fields. We have harmed working people and their ability to organize to improve their economic positions by adopting misdirected policies like so-called Right-to-Work.**Q: 4. ELECTIONS:** *What state policies do you support regarding campaign funding and voting rights?***A:** We need to bring serious reform to how our elections operate and how district maps are drawn in Michigan. As a state representative, I introduced legislation to create an Independent Kalamazoo Legislative Redistricting Commission. I

strongly support the current Voters Not Politicians ballot proposal. I support all the measures called for in the Promote the Vote ballot initiative, such as no excuse absentee voting. We must also bring an end to unaccountable outside political spending, commonly referred to as “dark money”, and ensure transparency in all political communication.

Q: 5. *ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY: What actions or policies do you support to protect Michigan’s water, air and land for current and future generations, while meeting the state’s energy needs? Explain how those actions or policies would affect the future of Enbridge Pipeline 5.*

A: I oppose the bills that would create a panel of corporations that oversee the rule-making of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. I support the immediate decommissioning of Line 5. The current situation represents a ticking time-bomb of potential environmental disaster for the Great Lakes. I support the conversion of power plants from coal to natural gas, as well as establishing standards that continue to move Michigan to using ever increasing sources of clean and renewable energy, like solar and wind.

Q: 6. *JUSTICE: What policies will you pursue to promote social and racial justice in our state?*

A: I strongly support the enactment of Ellison-Larsen civil rights protections for LGBTQ citizens of Michigan to ensure that all citizens share in the same civil rights protections. We must put these protections in state statute to ensure they are immune to staffing changes in government agencies.

Lorence Wenke



Party: Lib
Greenhouse Business Owner

Biographical Info:

Website: Lorencewenkeforstatesenate

Facebook: <http://LorenceWenkeforStateSenate>

Twitter: twitter.com/Lorence4Liberty

Occupation / Current Position: Greenhouse Business Owner - retired, part owner

Education: Kalamazoo Christian Graduate Calvin College 1965 WMU 1967

Qualifications / Experience: I was a Kalamazoo County Commissioner for 8 years - 3 as Chairman 1995-2002 I was a Michigan State Representative for 6 years - 2003-2008 I have a unique combination of government experience and small business ownership experience that is a good basis for elected office to the State Senate

Questions:

Q: 1. PRIORITIES: *What are your top three state legislative priorities and how would you address them?*

A: Education - Parents, schools, the state's students and teachers must require more hours of schoolwork with higher standards for good grades. Family Issues - We must not reward irresponsible family planning decisions with generous tax dollars for many years. The state should supply free long-term reversible birth control and eliminate taxpayer dollars from irresponsible parents. Reduce alcohol costs to the taxpayer - We should tax producers of alcohol like we tax tobacco producers and use the taxes to offset the cost to society of alcoholism.

Q: 2. EDUCATION: *What measures do you support/propose to achieve improved educational outcomes and accessibility for Michigan students from early childhood through post-secondary education?*

A: We need more required hours in school. We need parents, teachers, administrators and state education officials to work harder at education and make it more difficult to get a 4.0. We must find a way to motivate parents to get involved in their children's education and to have a financial cost to their family if they choose not to get involved in their children's education. We must not let the serious students be held back by students who do not care. The state needs to encourage and provide financial support for skilled jobs training similar to what we provide college students.

Q: 3. ECONOMY: *What policies do you support to increase jobs and help Michigan residents improve their economic positions?*

A: I support reasonable minimum wage increases adjusted for inflation. I support tax payer subsidies for private business development when the project is not profitable but performs a public service such as Dan Gilbert is doing in Detroit. The state needs to encourage and provide financial support for skilled jobs training similar to what we provide college students. We need to stop paying people who will not work and make those dollars available to people who will work. Schools providing childcare at school after regular school hours at a cost to working parents would be helpful.

Q: 4. ELECTIONS: *What state policies do you support regarding campaign funding and voting rights?*

A: I support the constitutional amendment which will change how and who draws the lines for voting districts. I support the transparent public accounting

of all dollars used to influence elections in support of issues or people. I do not think corporations should be able to contribute money towards elections. I support no reason absentee voting if we can implement safeguards against fraud.

Q: 5. *ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY: What actions or policies do you support to protect Michigan's water, air and land for current and future generations, while meeting the state's energy needs? Explain how those actions or policies would affect the future of Enbridge Pipeline 5.*

A: We must reduce the amount of chemicals that move from farmland, housing and manufacturing into our ground water, rivers and lakes. I voted in support of the first renewable energy bill in Lansing that required energy producers to produce 10% renewable energy. The Enbridge Pipeline needs to be replaced with a more secure pipeline. All lead water pipes used in Michigan for municipal water systems should be replaced. Vehicle emissions need to be reduced and the use of driverless electric vehicles encouraged.

Q: 6. *JUSTICE: What policies will you pursue to promote social and racial justice in our state?*

A: I am very active in supporting LGBTQ issues and have been an activist for 15 years. I am a member of a church which recognizes women equal to men. I want my daughter and granddaughters protected at all costs from sex predators, and I want predators locked up and treated for a long time. I have long been a member of the NAACP and support its goals with contributions. I vote for people who agree with me that the way most churches treat women, people of color and LGBTQ people is wrong. The gap between rich and poor in our state is growing in favor of the rich and adjustments must be made.