

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



Jason Ruffalo
Running for MN
House District 35B



This questionnaire is for educational purposes only. MNSCC does not endorse any specific candidate for the Minnesota House or Senate.

he/him/his | jasonruffalo.com

Public Safety Issues

Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play? Why or why not?	Yes. I live in suburban Andover. It is a quiet neighborhood with a low population density.
What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?	Public safety means freedom and security within our communities. Safety is built from trust and mutual respect among all members of a community. Mistrust, prejudice, and racism all detract from safety.
What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?	

How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?	
What changes do you think would help prevent violence and other undesirable behavior in your district? How will you go about making those changes?	Better and more accessible education for all, access to healthcare and other fundamental rights.

Police Issues

What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?	
* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.	I would like to see programs like CHAHOOTS in Eugene, OR in which police are not tasked with things for which they have not been trained like drug abuse, mental health issues and more. Further, police need to be better trained in de-escalation. Finally, we have to take patterns of behavior more seriously in the police force. Many cases of brutality are not first-time offenses for these cops. And when they commit a crime, they need to be prosecuted and not moved to other precincts.
* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.	I would increase police budget to accommodate more training for police as well as screening for them. I would also look to increase police pay. Like teachers and many other Service jobs, better pay can draw higher-quality workers by increasing the demand for the position.
Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?	I support making (systemic) racism a public health crisis in Minnesota. I would support restructuring the police department to better reflect their community racially. I would also support removing responsibilities police are not meant to handle to other organizations.

Criminal Court Issues

Do you notice any inequities in the courts in your district? What do you see as the driving force in those inequities? How	I would advocate to juries to be selected more fairly. In court, the defendant should be judged by a jury of his/her/their peers. And this is not always the case. An all-white jury is 16% more likely to find a defendant of color guilty than if there is a single person of color on the jury.
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<p>can we count on you to respond to any inequities?</p>	<p>We also need to decriminalize non-violent drug crimes and get rid of mandatory minimums.</p>
<p>Diving into topics like bail, services for crime survivors, court fines and fees, special prosecutors, and sentencing and probation guidelines can illustrate how public policy has immense and diverse impacts on Minnesotans.</p> <p>Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>The concept of bail needs to be revisited. The amount of money one possesses should not determine if they sit in jail awaiting trial. It turns jails into debtors prisons, which were outlawed over a century ago. Beyond that, if people are "innocent until proven guilty," locking them up before trial is unlawful. Bail and fees put many people already financially disadvantaged in a deeper whole. Locking them up before trial may cause them to lose their jobs. There are better ways to do this without putting individuals and families at financial bankruptcy.</p>
<p>Incarceration Issues</p>	
<p>In your opinion, what is the purpose of incarceration? Do you believe that incarceration accomplishes those purposes well? If not, why not, and what would you do about it?</p>	<p>Incarceration is becoming an antiquated concept. I cannot help but feel that people 200 years from now will look at prisons as barbaric the same way we look at burning at the stake and other 200 year-old methods the same. We need to heavily decriminalize on-violent crimes, reduce probation times. For instance, marijuana should not be a schedule 1 drug.</p>
<p>What do you know about alternatives to incarceration and how they address violence and other undesirable or criminalized behavior? What incarceration alternatives do you support and why?</p>	<p>I feel we need to move from punishment to rehabilitation. This could mean drug counseling, anger management, and other ways to improve the individual instead of locking them up.</p>
<p>* Every district in Minnesota is home to people who have experienced incarceration. How do you think issues like access to health care, visits/phone calls/emails, education, and other programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?</p>	<p>Even the guilty have basic human rights. As we move toward rehabilitation instead of punishment, giving individual access to healthcare and basic human needs is very important</p>
<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted</p>	<p>I would count them as being at their last residential address.</p>

<p>as part of the district where they are incarcerated, or should incarcerated persons be counted as part of the district where they had their last residential address? Or something else? Why?</p>	
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>I would reduce the maximum probation time to 1-2 years. I would legalize marijuana or at least remove its Schedule 1 status which would reduce the number of and length of incarcerations by 40%.</p>

Reentry Issues

<p>* People return from incarceration to every district in Minnesota. How do you think issues like access to housing, employment, health care, recovery resources, mental health supports, basic needs, and voting or civic engagement affect your constituents?</p>	<p>It is important to remember that as many as 20% of people incarcerated are innocent. That needs to change, first and foremost. Once released, especially is exonerated, individuals should be given every opportunity to become a productive member of society. This include access to housing, work, healthcare and education. It means reestablishing their right to vote. It means they have paid their due to society. There should be no more roadblocks to their future based on their past.</p>
<p>What, if any, changes would you make to re-entry policies? And what investments, if any, would you make to re-entry supports in your district? Why?</p>	<p>I would endorse programs to reintegrate individuals back into society. I would move to give them access to affordable or free education and healthcare.</p>

Public Health Issues

<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>I feel the testing has been adequate, but think releasing low-level crime to house arrest would help prevent the spread.</p>
<p>* What, if any, public health crises do you think have inequitable impacts on people who are involved in the criminal legal system, and how can we count on you to respond to these public health crises?</p>	<p>Become more proactive regarding response to these crises. Be prepared ahead of time, instead of reacting to a crisis.</p>

Personal Connections

* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal court, incarceration, and/or re-entry?

What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?

Through research and discussions with my constituents. Talking with people to understand their concerns and experiences.

How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?

Please, get involved in community. Understand the situation from the perspective of others.