

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



Jen McEwen
Running for MN
Senate District 7

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

she/her/hers | <https://www.votemcewen.com/>

Public Safety Issues

Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play?
Why or why not?

What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you?
What builds safety? What detracts from it?

What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?

<p>How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	
<p>What changes do you think would help prevent violence and other undesirable behavior in your district? How will you go about making those changes?</p>	
<p>Police Issues</p>	
<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>There are a number of reforms that should and can be pursued. In some communities, there is a broad coalition of support for moving away from policing and reallocating resources toward proactive crime prevention-- through investments in housing, mental health services, dispute resolution services, domestic abuse support, healthcare, substance use treatment, and other measures. In other communities, there is a recognition of the need for some reforms, but some reluctance to move too quickly. At the state level, the reform package that was just passed was a start, but it was not enough. The full package of basic reforms initially requested by the POCI caucus, long overdue, should have been a simple bipartisan vote of approval. The rest of the proposed reforms that were not in the final bill, including granting authority to the attorney general to prosecute officers for crimes, ending cash bail for most people charged with misdemeanors, altering use-of-force laws, giving the POST Board more power to strip officer licenses, and creating citizen oversight councils to watchdog police departments, should all be passed into law as soon as possible. At the root of the reforms we most need, is developing a fair taxation system, where the wealthiest individuals and corporations are appropriately taxed, so we can have what people in most other developed nations take for granted: healthcare as a right, housing as a right, and a robust safety net to ensure everyone's needs are met, regardless of employment status.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your</p>	<p>We should take a close look at our budgets and see how those resources are being allocated. In some areas, people</p>

<p>district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>may be ready for large-scale, sweeping changes. In others, we can look at our allocations with an eye toward making changes to how our communities approach crime-- for example, allocations made for social workers and mental health professionals, de-escalation and anti-racism training, restorative justice programming, and other initiatives to begin pre-emptively reducing conflict and police involvement.</p>
---	--

<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	
--	--

Criminal Court Issues

<p>Do you notice any inequities in the courts in your district? What do you see as the driving force in those inequities? How can we count on you to respond to any inequities?</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. Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	
--	--

Incarceration Issues

<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>What do you know about alternatives to incarceration and</p>	
---	--

<p>how they address violence and other undesirable or criminalized behavior? What incarceration alternatives do you support and why?</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>I was a public defender in my district for three years. My clients who were incarcerated are deeply traumatized by the experience itself. Ripping people from their friends, loved-ones, and their community is deeply scarring-- for the incarcerated person-- and for all those connected to them. Making our prisons and jails centers for rehabilitation is one humane and pragmatic answer-- as well as greatly reducing the number of people incarcerated in the first place. Very few of my clients who were incarcerated were actually a danger to themselves or others. They needed healing and guidance, but many of them did not need to be separated out from society.</p>
<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted 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>Incarcerated persons should be counted as part of the district where they had their last residential address. It is wrong to count a prison population into the count for a (typically majority white, often rural) community-- this provides disproportionate representation to that community and actually incentivizes incarceration.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	
<p>Reentry Issues</p>	
<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>I have assisted a number of clients with obtaining expungements of their criminal records, and have seen the ways they have been affected by ongoing punishment and prejudice through collateral consequences, including difficulty with housing, employment, and other supports. As a public defender, I also saw how people who did not have those supports could also quickly be swept back up into the system through technical probation/parole violations or over-policing. The support for incarcerated persons should be continuous--for those who are incarcerated, support should be there while incarcerated</p>

	<p>and then should follow them back into the community to help them build up their lives. Additionally, every effort should be made to engage people who are experiencing or returning from incarceration, to build connection with the community. Voting, volunteering, music, art, education, community activism, etc. are all ways that we should be engaging people and fostering connection.</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>	
--	--

Public Health Issues

<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</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>I have assisted a number of clients with obtaining expungements of their criminal records, and have seen the ways they have been affected by ongoing punishment and prejudice through collateral consequences, including difficulty with housing, employment, and other supports. As a public defender, I also saw how people who did not have those supports could also quickly be swept back up into the system through technical probation/parole violations or over-policing. The support for incarcerated persons should be continuous--for those who are incarcerated, support should be there while incarcerated and then should follow them back into the community to help them build up their lives. Additionally, every effort should be made to engage people who are experiencing or returning from incarceration, to build connection with the community. Voting, volunteering, music, art, education, community activism, etc. are all ways that we should be engaging people and fostering connection.</p>
--	---

I have assisted a number of clients with obtaining expungements of their criminal records, and have seen the ways they have been affected by ongoing punishment and prejudice through collateral consequences, including difficulty with housing, employment, and other supports. As a public defender, I also saw how people who did not have those supports could also quickly be swept back up into the system through technical probation/parole violations or over-policing. The support for incarcerated persons should be continuous--for those who are incarcerated, support should be there while incarcerated and then should follow them back into the community to help them build up their lives. Additionally, every effort should be made to engage people who are experiencing or returning from incarceration, to build connection with the community. Voting, volunteering, music, art, education, community activism, etc. are all ways that we should be engaging people and fostering connection.

Personal Connections

<p>* Are there any ways in which you feel personally connected to issues in policing, criminal</p>	<p>As I noted above, I served as a public defender for three years. I saw how my clients were vilified and dehumanized, repeatedly, with an entire system's gears</p>
--	---

As I noted above, I served as a public defender for three years. I saw how my clients were vilified and dehumanized, repeatedly, with an entire system's gears

<p>court, incarceration, and/or re-entry?</p> <p>What is personal about these issues for you, and how will that impact your priorities and/or stances?</p>	<p>churning against them. Some of their stories and situations still haunt me. They needed help and healing, but instead often experienced more loss and ongoing condemnations. As a state senator, I will do everything in my power to help those people experiencing incarceration, or recovering from it, and those communities traumatized by over-policing and mass incarceration.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	