

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



Jerry Newton
Running for MN
Senate District 37



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Public Safety Issues

<p>Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>Feeling safe in your home, in the neighborhood and workplace. Building safety comes through building relationships. Detraction comes from not knowing and fearing others without justification.</p>
<p>What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?</p>	<p>Generally, residents in my district do understand the diversity of opinions around public safety, but there are some who think that what happens elsewhere is what happens here. Point being that bad police in Minneapolis</p>

<p>How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	<p>generally are not the case in my district. Some distrust all people of color or of other religions and some others automatically distrust police and public officials. We try with outreach to mollify these feelings.</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 and other public safety officials outreach to schools and the community have helped. Generally, the public is very supportive of all public safety personnel in our area. I reach out through my legislative updates to constituent about all issues, including my support for local police, but my disapproval of any police officer who violates the public trust.</p>

Police Issues

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>This is a suburban district with a relatively low minority population. Within the police departments, as is true throughout Minnesota, there are racists and members who seem to enjoy dominating others unnecessarily. They are rare, but they are here. The police chiefs in my area are good about screening these people out if they cannot be reoriented through training. The abolition of police is foolish. We saw what happened in Florida with self-appointed neighborhood watch people.</p>
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>We need to bring more officers of color and of the Muslim faith into all of our emergency responder jobs (police, fire, EMS). They are under-represented and seemingly either not encouraged to seek those jobs as professions or they are simply not sought-out.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Our local budgets are adequate: 1 officer per 1,000 residents on average.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I have a bill to stop the issuing and use of military style equipment to police departments. As a former US Army Sergeant Major, I find it sad that we are militarizing our police departments. I feel strongly about this, having lived for years in the Middle East where there is essentially no separation between the military and the police.</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</p>	<p>For years I have either authored or co-authored bills to provide for state wide Restorative Justice Courts for Veterans. I have personally seen them work and have also watched local drug/alcohol court programs work. For non-violent offenses, I do not think incarceration is wise.</p>
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<p>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.</p> <p>Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>As I mentioned above, the Veterans Restorative Justice Act. I have been working on this since 2008 and we have established successful (from all points of view) vets courts in Hennepin, Dakota, Anoka and several other counties. Offenders, judges, prosecutors and defenders all agree that these courts work with recidivism rates of less than 20%.</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 should be used to remedy bad behavior, not to punish. Our system in Minnesota does not do that. I would push for releasing non-violent offenders from prison/jail settings and put them in remediation programs and have them pay fines or perform real public service for having offended.</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 see the Scandinavian model as being the preferred approach. Rehabilitation if emphasized and prisoners are treated with respect not placed in overcrowded cells. There are some genuinely bad individuals who pose a danger to the public and they should be confined (with dignity), but the overwhelming majority of people going to prison/jail can and should be rehabilitated.</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>It affects them dramatically. They should be treated more humanely.</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</p>	<p>Where their last home was. Because prison/jail is a temporary address and they most likely return to their prior area of residence once they are released.</p>

<p>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 will support efforts to reduce the number of persons in prison for non-violent offenses. I also think that for those who offend before they are 25 years of age, the non-violent offense should be removed from their records. I also believe that anyone who has served their sentence should be permitted to vote even if they are still on paper.</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 difficult to find jobs, housing and get back to a normal life.</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>As mentioned before, records should be cleared for all individuals who violated the law before the age of 25, once they have served their sentence. Studies show that the brain is not fully mature until around the age of 25. Committing offenses often is a sign of immaturity or lack of education. One shouldn't have to live with a record forever.</p>

Public Health Issues

<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>I think DOC has tried to respond correctly, but our jails are too overcrowded and more people should be released.</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>Often they lose their jobs and with that their (and their family's) health insurance. I support universal medical care and will vote for it if given the opportunity</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?

I have lived in Europe and the Middle East for many years and have been exposed to various policing and court systems, some good and some really bad. I see the Scandinavian model and think it is the best for those who are incarcerated. I also know that nowhere other than the US are so many people are unnecessarily incarcerated. I have sat in court rooms and watched young people with inadequate public defense being sentenced because they don't know the system or don't have the money for a good lawyer. I have also sat in on the Anoka Court Veterans Restorative Justice Program and have seen how a system can work well and prevent individuals from being unnecessarily incarcerated.

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

They can support me by voting for me in November and donating to my campaign.