

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



Liz Reyer
Running for MN
House District 51B

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

she/her/hers | <https://lizreyer.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>	

Police Issues

<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>The reforms in HF 93, passed by the House on June 19, 2020, are a starting point to ending tragedies like the murder of George Floyd and so many others. Across the board, police officers need significantly more screening and training than they get, especially in proper de-escalation tactics, and we need to ban “warrior training.” Moreover, enhancing public safety approaches that include more use of social workers, domestic violence advocates, and mental health practitioners will help defuse more situations. We also need to reduce the power of police unions and abolish qualified immunity.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Budgets are moral documents that reflect an organization’s priorities, and budget changes should help deliver needed police reforms. Because of differences among communities and their police departments, budget decisions will be best approached on a district-by-district basis. Communities with problematic departments should have the flexibility and support to move money in or out of police budgets and into other services that support public safety. In Eagan, I would like the City of Eagan and its Police Department to explore ways to achieve positive outcomes while reducing racial disparities and deploying funds for a broad range of public safety initiatives.</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?</p>	
---	--

<p>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.</p> <p>Are there any bills around criminal court practices that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</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>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>* 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 am aware that conditions for prisoners are deplorable in all these ways, and I think that it must affect them just as it would any human being put at extraordinary risk. Particularly in this time of COVID, we should consider how we would feel if we did not have adequate health care or ways to connect with others, spend time in nature, or engage in interests and activities to inform the mind. These conditions are demoralizing, depressing, and surely invite anger and resentment. I'm hopeful that these issues are gaining additional visibility and will be addressed.</p>
<p>* For purposes of drawing legislative districts, should incarcerated persons be counted</p>	<p>Incarcerated people should have a choice of being counted in the district of the prison, a district where they have lived, or the district of a supportive family member or friend. Residency in</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>the prison district is beyond their control and they likely have little or no connection to the local community or government. Counting all prisoners as residents of the prison's district can affect district boundaries or the amount of state or federal aid they receive for such things as schools, roads, or first responders. And because prisoners do not vote, this essentially gives non-prisoner residents of the district an inflated voice, which may actually be to the detriment of the prisoners. We should let each prisoner select their home district of choice, where they may have caring advocates or a former home, and where they may have a greater connection to their community.</p>
--	---

<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</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 extremely important, both for the former prisoners and for public safety, that communities are able to meet the basic needs of those returning from incarceration, including for their recovery and mental health support. Affordable housing, for one, continues to be a barrier for many people in our district, including former prisoners. And though we may wish former prisoners would pay for housing, go to school and/or seek employment immediately, this is unrealistic and counterproductive. It is especially true because there is so much prejudice and so many barriers to an ex-prisoner renting an apartment and getting a job, even more so if they are a person of color. With the situations that people returning from prison find themselves in, the high rate of recidivism is no mystery at all. Finally, exercising the right to vote not only strengthens the sense of belonging to a community, but has the potential to fix ongoing systemic problems that plague so many underrepresented people and communities. Additionally, those who need representation the most -- Black, brown and indigenous communities -- are the ones disproportionately denied the right to vote due to over incarceration in response to federal offenses.</p>
--	---

It is extremely important, both for the former prisoners and for public safety, that communities are able to meet the basic needs of those returning from incarceration, including for their recovery and mental health support. Affordable housing, for one, continues to be a barrier for many people in our district, including former prisoners. And though we may wish former prisoners would pay for housing, go to school and/or seek employment immediately, this is unrealistic and counterproductive. It is especially true because there is so much prejudice and so many barriers to an ex-prisoner renting an apartment and getting a job, even more so if they are a person of color. With the situations that people returning from prison find themselves in, the high rate of recidivism is no mystery at all. Finally, exercising the right to vote not only strengthens the sense of belonging to a community, but has the potential to fix ongoing systemic problems that plague so many underrepresented people and communities. Additionally, those who need representation the most -- Black, brown and indigenous communities -- are the ones disproportionately denied the right to vote due to over incarceration in response to federal offenses.

<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

What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?

* 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?

COVID-19 inordinately affects people involved in the criminal legal system, as does the unequal access to healthcare and disparities in health outcomes. I will advocate for a comprehensive approach that provides stable housing, SNAP benefits, and health insurance/health care for released prisoners who need the help. In addition, I also would work to place this effort within a broader reentry plan, including support tailored with and for each individual for their education, employment, recovery and mental health, counseling, and community engagement. To the greatest extent possible, I would take people out of prison and put the money that is currently spent on keeping them there into reentry resources, both because it is the humane thing to do and because it would contribute more to the health of our communities and public safety.

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 little direct personal experience in my own life, though gun violence was a factor in my childhood, which has made me a strong advocate for gun control. As a citizen, I've been an advocate for constructive and humane approaches to addressing crime. This is, in part, due to my understanding that addressing root causes of criminal behavior, particularly related to social disparities, is a more cost-effective approach for society at large and more beneficial for the individuals involved.

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