

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



Renee Cardarelle
Running for MN
House District 29A

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Public Safety Issues

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

Mostly I feel safe. As a single woman living in an isolated country house I sometimes worry about someone breaking into my home at night. This is especially true since I am running for office in an area that has many people who are angry at the party I am endorsed by. However, those fears are small and somewhat irrational. I never hesitate to go outside, I am not worried about being out at night, etc.

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

That is a wonderful question. Public safety can be very broad. For instance, food insecurity and health care deserts contribute to unsafe environments. However, mostly the term public safety is about feeling secure in your community and free from the worry of attack. I have seen in our communities right now a

	<p>rising level of fear from individuals about expressing their beliefs. I know there are people in our community who are threatened because of the color of their skin. The answer to creating safety for all isn't simple. It requires addressing the other insecurities - livable wages, access to the resources needed to thrive, etc. I believe security increases as people feel secure in their futures. When people face economic insecurity, they are more likely to become angry and to be fearful of others. I also believe we absolutely must guard against hate groups who prey on the fears of others and use those fears to divide us. Without a unified community we can't have public safety.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>I believe most people in my community would believe a strong police presence builds public safety. I agree that the police are an important part of the puzzle. I know that many in the community want to believe that if they just have enough guns, enough police officers, than they will be safe. I think this is an illusion, but I do understand its appeal. In my campaign I focus on ways for us to build thriving communities that support our residents so they are able to lead productive lives. This includes those with mental illness, drug addictions and other concerns. I think most constituents understand that these aspects are also important parts of a healthy, safe community. I sometimes hear comments about the metro area being unsafe and scary. I like to point out I hear more gun fire from my country home in a month than I ever have heard in the times I have stayed at my brother's home in the metro. It is important to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and to frame healthy social behavior.</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>We need to address the mental health crisis in our country. So many people who experience violent episodes have mental illness and drug addiction. These areas should be elevated so that they are treated with the same level of concern that we treat physical health issues. To do this, we need health care for all. In our schools we need more counselors, currently there are more police officers in many US schools than school counselors. This should change. As I've noted, it is also important to have a healthy police force. One that uses de-escalation techniques as the base for its police culture. Encouraging a culture of de-escalation and building police cultures that seek to uphold peace is important to me. There will always be the few who commit violent crime. In my community those numbers are very small, and we need to ensure we are able to respond when they happen. However, with proper prevention I believe these numbers would decrease even more.</p>

Police Issues

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>I have had a number of conversations with the Wright County Sheriff since he was elected two years ago and I have heard from members of the community, especially our communities of color. I believe there is a lot of room for growth within the police department, especially as polarization has impacted our public servants. Right now I would say that the general culture of the Sheriff's department (3rd largest in the state) is on the idea of protectionism, the warrior who is here to take care of the bad people. The Sheriff speaks of the hours of de-escalation training the staff goes through, and I believe there is a desire for this to be a part of the norm, but I'm not certain the practice has fully flowed through the department nor has been fully embraced by the leadership. I believe this because I also hear comments to citizens that their guns will not be taken and no push back when individual's threaten to use their guns inappropriately, and a lack of awareness of concerns of our BIPOC communities.</p>
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I would fight for increased sensitization training within the various departments, Sheriff's and 3 city police departments. More connection with the community in a way that is not just enforcement focused and especially diversity training. I also think there is a need to address the "warrior" culture and to really explore ways to create a deescalated police force.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>At this time I do not have enough information on budgets in Wright County to provide clear guidelines on this issue. Are police in positions that would be better served by a counselor or other professional? These are questions I would ask.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I would champion a bill that addresses the education of police officers. I have heard repetitively from woman that the atmosphere inside of the training programs is oppressive and discriminatory and that challenges to the norms are met with a reluctance to work with that person, freezing them out of the system. I know two woman personally who have ended their training and decided on other careers because of this. I also know all the police departments in the area lack female officers as well as officers of color. The change in our police forces must begin in our educational institutions.</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>Obviously nationwide our court systems have racist policies. The rates of incarceration for people of color are exaggerated and in fact the rates of incarceration in this country is too high. We are supposedly a land of freedom, but we have some of the highest rates of incarceration anywhere! That needs to change. I also question the use of private institutions to incarcerate undocumented immigrants to the financial detriment of the</p>
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	<p>community. I am concerned that our criminal justice system is being used to institutionalize a form of legalized slavery. It is highly alarming to see the profit motive behind this imprisonment of our communities of color.</p>
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<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>	<p>I am not able to speak to specific bills at this time. In general regarding your list, I believe we need to provide better services for crime survivors, especially female crime survivors, I believe that court fees and bail must not create an unfair class system by which those with money are able to buy their freedom, and there should be strict reviews of sentencing guidelines by outside controllers that aggregate data to watch for abusive discriminatory practices. For example, woman victims of domestic violence who fight back are more likely to go to jail than their abusers. This is a failure of the system.</p>
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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>I don't believe incarceration should be about punishment. It should be about keep the individual and the public safe. There are those who are a threat to others, often because of mental illness, and they should receive the proper restrictions on their freedoms that best keeps them and others safe. This may be a prison like system or it may be a mental health institution. Because our system is so flawed, because we fail to do prevention in so many ways, many of those who are in the system are there because we have failed them. Prevention should be the cornerstone of our system.</p>
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<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 definitely support better solutions for those suffering from mental health issues. This may be group homes or other institutions. I am not expert in this area. As I said above, I believe in prevention. Youth should not be criminalized. They should be given environments in which they are socialized to live in our communities peacefully. I am aware that there are programs that work immensely better than prison systems by using preventative and rehabilitative techniques and I do support these.</p>
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<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</p>	<p>COVID has highlighted how our prison systems do not provide healthy environments. I sometimes hear my constituents complain that those in prison receive better healthcare access than they do. My response is that means we need better health care access to all, not less health care access to those in our institutions. My ex-husband was incarcerated for a drug conviction many years ago. At that time I had no negative experiences with the other items mentioned above. However,</p>
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programming while incarcerated affect your constituents?	again this was a small county facility, not a major prison. I would want to learn more about the concerns of incarcerated community members and their families.
* 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?	Our institutions should have a unified approach to elections. All individuals who are in institutions, whether it be college or prison, should be counted in the same way. The system should be set up to count the individual in the community in which they vote, even if at that time they are not voting (felony restrictions, age, etc.) On that note I believe that individuals should have the right to vote regardless of their status. They are still citizens of this country.
Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?	I am not familiar with the specific bills but I would support bills that allow felons to vote, in particular at this time once they are out of prison in living in the community. I would support improved mental health care and alternative solutions for those with mental illness. I would support decriminalization of juveniles, especially life without parole measures for youth. I would support release of inmates being held for immigration issues.

Reentry Issues

* 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?	Not only do we lock up large portions of our populations rather than provide preventative services, we restrict their ability to reintegrate. This harms us all. Large portions of our population are not able to secure productive lives even after "serving their time". I worked with residential service contractors who were afraid to hire those who had criminal records because they worried about potential law suits, even though there are huge shortages of labor in these areas. We can do better.
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?	Some of the ways in which we can provide for reentry are the same as we can provide for our general population, affordable, accessible health care, including mental health care, affordable house - we have such a shortage!, living wages and for those who have been incarcerated, the ability to pursue employment without being judged for having served a criminal sentence.

Public Health Issues

What are your thoughts about how the Department of	Like most of our country, there was a decided lack of leadership. There should have been immediate moves to release non-violent offenders, either through home monitoring or reduction of
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<p>Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>sentences. There should be alternative solutions for undocumented immigrants and those who are mentally ill. Again it feels as though the goal was not to provide the best for our society, but to allow the private prison system to continue to take in tax dollars by filling their beds. This is a failure of our system.</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>Lack of mental health care is a particular issue that highly impacts our criminal system. We should be providing for preventative care for those who face mental health issues, not leaving them to struggle on their own until they reach crisis. My daughter has mental health concerns and is unable to receive consistent treatment. This should not be happening in the wealthiest country in the world. COVID obviously impacted the system as mentioned above. We must also look at our health crisis round drug addiction, especially the opioid epidemic. There must be ways to create preventative systems to help reduce drug abuse and prevent incarceration. Past public policy around the war on drugs which was used to criminalize large numbers of people of color was another failure of our system. Also important is our public health crisis around trafficking and abuse of women, especially women of color. Right now too many times it is the victim who is harmed while the system is left untouched to harm new victims.</p>
<p>Personal Connections</p>	
<p>* 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?</p>	<p>I've already stated that my ex-husband was convicted of a drug offense. I was not privy to the details, but incarceration was a poor solution that didn't help him or his family. He was also later seized by Immigration and deported (he is a New Zealand citizen). My daughter has mental health concerns but I do not currently fear she will end up in the system as her issues are more focused on self-harm. As a youth I was on my own at a very young age and homeless (couching surfing) part of that time. I believe we do not provide enough services for our youth, nor do we go after those who abuse youth and woman with enough effort. I was in a domestic abuse situation when I was young and called the police, who than arrested both of us. I learned to never call the police. I understand the fear of young woman who are being trafficked and why they do not feel safe seeking help. Trafficking in our community, especially of Indigenous woman is and area I believe needs to be better funded.</p>
<p>How can your constituents support you in accomplishing any changes you've outlined here?</p>	<p>The best thing my constituents could do is education themselves. So many do not understand the system we currently have and do not take the time to learn about it. Their excuses are that they can't learn about everything. However, in a democracy we must</p>

understand our basic institutions. Instead of listening to polarizing conversations that play on individual fears, actually gaining knowledge, the good and the bad, of our current system is something they should take the time to learn about. Leaning into experts such as your program is one way people can learn more without having to spend time doing the research.