

# MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



**Rita Albrecht**  
Running for MN  
Senate District 5

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she/her/hers | [ritaforsenate.com](http://ritaforsenate.com)

## Public Safety Issues

<p>Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play? Why or why not?</p>	<p>I feel safe, but many don't. Minorities distrust Law Enforcement (LE).</p>
<p>What does the phrase "public safety" mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>Public safety means that everyone, no matter where they live or what they look like, feels safe in their community. Community policing and LE engagement with residents builds community. Also neighborhood groups - when you know your neighbor, you don't fear your neighbor.</p>
<p>What is your understanding of the diversity of opinions around public safety in your district?</p>	<p>Most people feel safe in our communities, but minorities often don't. There is plenty of "law and order" sentiment in this district. And if people "would just get a job and work harder"</p>

<p>How do your constituents think about what builds safety and what detracts from it in your district?</p>	<p>thinking that prevails. On the other hand, some people recognize that our criminal justice system is not equitable - especially for people in poverty and minorities.</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>What we are doing now is not very effective. I am interested in learning new and innovative ways to address crime, alcohol and drug abuse that lead to domestic violence, homelessness, child abuse, and the unraveling of our community fabric. I wish I had answers. It makes sense to me to "go upstream" and start with early childhood education, fully fund schools, prenatal support, parenting skills, job training, youth mental health services, housing support, etc. . . . It will require a community response and generations of work.</p>

**Police Issues**

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>People in my district generally support our police and county LE. Our minority population trust the LE less. Racism is a problem. The system does not serve minorities well.</p>
<p>What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Additional training on cultural competency, police advisory commission in some communities.</p>
<p>What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>Additional funding for training, mental health professionals, and community policing.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>I am interested in the current slate of police reform bills.</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>We have higher rates of minorities in the court and criminal justice system. I blame poverty for this inequity. I'll work to improve opportunity for education and job training, safe housing, and wages that pay enough to sustain a family.</p>
<p>Diving into topics like bail, services for crime survivors, court fines and fees, special prosecutors, and sentencing and probation guidelines can</p>	<p>I'm not sure. I'm not familiar enough with this issue to have a good idea of what would improve it.</p>

<p>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?</p> <p>What are they and why?</p>	
<p><b>Incarceration Issues</b></p>	
<p>In your opinion, what is the purpose of incarceration?</p> <p>Do you believe that incarceration accomplishes those purposes well?</p> <p>If not, why not, and what would you do about it?</p>	<p>I think incarceration is held up as both a punishment and a deterrent. I'm not sure it is effective for either purpose. It is also used for safety to keep violent and dangerous people from others. I'm not familiar enough with best practices for correctional control to give an opinion on how to improve or change it.</p>
<p>What do you know about alternatives to incarceration and how they address violence and other undesirable or criminalized behavior?</p> <p>What incarceration alternatives do you support and why?</p>	<p>I am somewhat familiar with restorative justice and community service as alternatives to incarceration. I support programs like the challenge incarceration program at Togo in SD5. It focuses on pro-social skill building and is a step down or transition approach to reentry. I am also familiar with drug court and DWI court that has a good record of reducing recidivism.</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>Being away from family, lack of communication, interruption of education and work negatively affect the incarcerated person and their family and workplace.</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>It makes sense that they would be counted at their last residence, but it might cause challenges for voting in the correct district.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that</p>	<p>I would pass the supplemental budget bill to fund MCF-Togo and Willow River.</p>

<p>you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	
<p><b>Reentry Issues</b></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>There seems to be a lack of services for people coming out of incarceration. One complaint that I have heard is that former felons cannot find rental housing and are barred from renting in a HUD facility. All of the areas you mention are concerns for those returning to community.</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>Returning offenders would benefit from transition programs that provide a step down process for community reentry. Recent budget cuts resulted in the closure of MCF-Togo and Willow River. Their programs provided an excellent transition back to community and I would reinstate them.</p>
<p><b>Public Health Issues</b></p>	
<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>I am not familiar with how DOC has responded to the coronavirus.</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>Issues of diabetes, drug use, alcoholism all affect people involved in the legal system. Gun violence is a public health crisis too and I will work for responsible gun ownership laws, criminal background checks, and extreme risk laws. Of course the corona virus is affecting incarcerated populations too. Racism has inequitable impacts on people in the criminal legal system in this district.</p>
<p><b>Personal Connections</b></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 do not have many personal connections to issues of court, incarceration, etc. As mayor, I am somewhat familiar with the issues that our police officers deal with daily. I do recognize that systems don't serve everyone equally and I am committed to addressing inequities.</p>

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

Communicate with me on a regular basis.