

MNSCC Candidate Questionnaire



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House District 15B



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he/him/his | thiessenfor15b.com

Public Safety Issues

<p>Do you feel safe in the communities where you live, work, and play? Why or why not?</p>	<p>Yes, although I have some concerns as a candidate in these turbulent times.</p>
<p>What does the phrase “public safety” mean to you? What builds safety? What detracts from it?</p>	<p>Public safety to me means that we all subscribe to some sort of civil norms that allow us to live freely with our differences without attacking each other in destructive ways. Beyond that, it means that we are a nation of laws and that law enforcement should focus on carrying out there duties without fear or favor. Crime will never be eliminated but controlling it requires a focus on eliminating causes of endemic crime like poverty, inequality and injustice within law enforcement itself.</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 think that within my mostly rural district, law enforcement is generally respected. On the other hand, I think there is little understanding regarding long standing injustices affect the lives and attitudes of those who live in more diverse communities or those who end up in communities like mine.</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>Across the board, I think that simple measures like universal healthcare, income equity, rural broadband which would help in economic and educational development and a general emphasis on social justice would have a positive influence on lowering crime rates and improving economic and social health in rural communities</p>

Police Issues

<p>What are your thoughts on the general culture of the police departments in your district?</p>	<p>To a lesser extent, smaller police departments are affected by such things as militarized police training, lack of diversity training, and the dumping of social ills on police departments as a byproduct of lowering taxes and failing to fully fund social service, health and mental health agencies.</p>
<p>* What police reforms, if any, do you think would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I think that policing in general should be professionalized with licensure similar to other professional groups. The licensing board should be able to enforce practice standards and limit the practices of those who violate standards, whether or not their behavior rises to the level of criminality.</p>
<p>* What changes to police budgets, if any, would help your district or the state? Please elaborate.</p>	<p>I don't like the idea that incarceration is a funding resource for county law enforcement. I believe that police unions, especially in the large cities, operate outside of administrative channels and have become the quasi leadership team for those departments. I think they have been politicized and are an impediment to reform. If defunding and restructuring are the only way to break the choke-hold they have on police practice then so be it.</p>
<p>Are there any bills around policing that you would join or champion? What are they and why?</p>	<p>All of the bills I have seen to date don't go far enough. I think policing needs a new paradigm of non-militarized community policing and that many of the duties of police officers would be better handled by mental health professionals or social workers and by aggressive re-investment in social programs that have themselves been underfunded or de-funded over the last several decades</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>I lack sufficient knowledge on this issue but I would say that, in general, it is better not to introduce children in the criminal justice system. Criminality in children is a sign that we are failing them in some other way.</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>	<p>Again, no knowledge base on this although, as a citizen, I think that the bail system favors the wealthy, fines and fees should not be dedicated revenue streams, special prosecutors should be used if local prosecutors are likely to work with local law enforcement to avoid police accountability, sentencing and probation guidelines should be evenly applied and often aren't.</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>I think we fail society when focus on attacking crime without examining and holding ourselves accountable for alleviating the injustices that drive it. Incarceration for most crimes is for the purpose of rehabilitation but I do not think we do a good job of that. Violent criminals may need to be separated from society or even the prison population for as long as they pose a threat of violence. Prisons are poorly suited, from what is see, to handle non-violent offenders</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 think prisons are more likely to create violent criminals than to rehabilitate non-violent offenders. I would keep people out of jail to the greatest extent possible</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 see no value in treating anyone as less than human. We allow white collar corporate criminals to pay fines and walk the streets. We have a president who has lived a lifetime of skirting the law and using wealth to avoid consequences or take advantage of innocent people. I think we have some deep self-examination we to do before we worry too much about how to put more poor people in jail</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>Some incarcerated prisoners are itinerant. It seems to me that prisoners should request absentee ballots if they have a permanent address or vote from the prison in the district they are in if they don't</p>
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<p>Are there any bills around incarceration or probation that you would join or champion? Which ones and why?</p>	<p>I'm not certain but I would apply the reasoning I have used throughout the questionnaire.</p>
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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>We fail the general society on all of the issues mentioned. I think all of those need should be met for all citizens regardless of their incarceration history</p>
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<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>I would try to prevent pulling non-violent people into the incarceration system in the first place. Otherwise, reintegration should be managed like any other social service needs. Perhaps some additional community based transitional housing and ongoing support would be appropriate as well.</p>
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Public Health Issues

<p>What are your thoughts about how the Department of Corrections has responded to the coronavirus pandemic?</p>	<p>I'm not certain how they responded but racism is a public health crisis and incarcerating non-violent people in tight quarters during a respiratory pandemic is unconscionable</p>
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<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 think the inequities in social justice that result in systemic poverty is our number one health crisis. I would raise taxes on the wealthy individuals and corporations that are hoarding our wealth and buying influence in our political systems. I would use that money to provide universal healthcare, housing for all income levels, living wages and affordable education, among other things</p>
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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 watched with dismay as we have pursued a course of abandoning the middle class in this country over the last several decades. I have always been aware of racial inequities in the criminal justice system but I am sickened by what appears to me to be an accelerated attack on people of color to harden racial divisions and incite violence. We are at a turning point. We will not be able to go back to where we were and I am good with that part. Once we have weathered this backlash from the protectors of white supremacy, we will be better able to address the long festering injustice in our society.

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

Those who understand the need for reform are more than ready to dig in. Those who don't need to wake up.