

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 7B

QUESTION 1: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

Please provide a brief statement about who you are and why you are running for the office of State Representative.

I am a hard-working, outdoors-loving Minnesotan. I work as a certified flight instructor at Lake Superior college. I am running for state representative to bring about reform and move Minnesota in a positive direction. As father of a young child, I am always concerned about our state's future. My goal is to promote freedom. Freedom comes through honest, open politics. Freedom comes in the form of a healthy economy, common sense environmental regulations, and low taxes. Freedom means parents get a say in their children's education. Freedom comes when people of different belief systems coexisting without any one group accosting another. Freedom comes by honoring the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Freedom comes in the form of limited, responsible government and healthy family values. This is what I want for the future of our communities.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I'm Liz Olson and I'm running to represent District 7B in the Minnesota House of Representatives. I'm a mother, wife, avid trail runner and believer in strong communities. Both my parents were pastors and I grew up living in and understanding the needs of both rural and urban communities. I've called Duluth home since graduating from the University of Minnesota Duluth 12 years ago. Shortly after, my husband and I purchased a house in the Denfeld neighborhood. This fall we welcomed our first child into our home. In addition to attending school at UMD, I went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree in Congregational and Community Care from Luther Seminary in St. Paul.

I believe in a Minnesota that promises all of us a chance to live with dignity — a Minnesota that offers living wage jobs with good benefits, strong public schools, and expanded access to our democracy. I have spent my time in this city organizing people and advocating for access to health care, worker protections and an end to homelessness. My experience lies in engaging and mobilizing diverse groups of people, especially those often left out of the political process, to shape policy solutions at the state and local level. And now, I am ready to take another step forward in this work by running to represent district 7B in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

QUESTION 2: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?

The first way that our state government should stop contributing to the economic disparity between the classes is to get out of the game of picking winners and losers. Common sense government regulations should not favor any particular company or industry at the expense of others. Unfortunately, all too often, this is not what we see. I do not support politicians who are swayed by big donations from special interest groups. Rather, I believe that businesses and individuals should have a level playing field. Our economic policies, taxes and welfare programs should reflect this philosophy.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

Almost a quarter of the people in Duluth live in poverty. Too often, our neighbors, friends, and family are living paycheck to paycheck, facing foreclosure, or experiencing homelessness. People are working full-time and still can't support their families. Over half of the workforce in Duluth doesn't have access to a single paid day off. This poverty hurts our entire community, not only those struggling daily to make ends meet. I believe that we must build an economy that works for everyone, with living wage jobs that allow families to support themselves and live with dignity, and benefits like paid family leave and paid sick and safe time for all workers.

QUESTION 3: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What are the most important things that should be done to improve the region's economy?

The government plays an undeniable role in our region's economy. Regulatory environments can put a stranglehold on the economy or lead to a business friendly environment where prosperity flourishes. I will say it again: Government should not pick winners and losers. Subsidies should not cause certain businesses to profit while putting others at a competitive disadvantage. One evidence of our state government going astray is Minnesota's unconstitutional law which attempted to cut off our ability to purchase electricity from North Dakota. Oftentimes activists push for undue delays in the permitting of important economic projects, setting back our economic growth and costing us valuable jobs. Burdensome regulations will put our businesses at a disadvantage and as a result harm our economic prosperity. Let me also praise the excellent job that some of our cities have done in creating the attractive business environment and high standard of living that has led to an IT sector boom. Let's not implement policies that will drive out the very business that we have worked so hard to attract!

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

We need to equip the region's economic development mechanisms with the tools and resources needed to continue the growth of our local economy. In addition we need to ensure that our region's economy works for everyone. We need to support strong communities, from our public schools to our recreation hubs, in order to strengthen the whole of our community.

QUESTION 4: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What do you believe state government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?

I appreciate the effort of the Duluth League of Women Voters to provide unbiased analysis of candidates and the issues. I do, however, believe that the very premise of the question “What should our state government do to limit the impact of global climate change?” is politically charged. Policies at the state level purporting to “impact the global climate” are often used to push agendas that have no real impact on the global climate. Our state government should be much more concerned with the steps that we are taking to protect the environment within our own borders. We are all stewards of our environment. This means we should make the most of our natural resources, managing and benefiting from the prosperity they bring while protecting the natural environment.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I support the League of Women Voters efforts to target climate change through legislative solutions, including setting caps on greenhouse gas and carbon pollution, encouraging conservation and renewable energy and investing in a new clean energy economy.

QUESTION 5: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should the state government’s top three priorities be in setting a sound energy policy?

The government’s role in promoting a sound energy policy cannot be overstated. The only way to do so is to consistently abide by free market principles. Unfortunately, some Democrats have a history of doing great harm to not just traditional energy production such as lignite, but all forms of mining. Secretary Clinton and President Obama boasted of how they would wage war on the coal industry and then went on to do so, putting countless Americans out of work and causing increased energy costs for the rest of us. The very thought of our leaders using political means to drive certain parts of our energy sector out of business ought to be repulsive to us all. Combating this type of abuse of power is one of the primary reasons I am running for office.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

As a state we need to continue our work to reduce carbon pollution, invest in cleaner transportation, and invest in renewable power sources. In addition we need to continue to find ways to conserve energy. Above all we need to ensure that special interests and corporate profits do not jeopardize the future our water, land or residents.

QUESTION 6: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

What should be done to ensure that every citizen has the ability to vote and have their vote counted without undue barriers?

I have learned something from my political opponents over the years: A reliable way to deceive voters is to change the language we use. My opponent is all too anxious to slap the label “voter restriction” on what has really been the sincere efforts of many of our congressmen and women to protect the sanctity of our democracy by preventing voter fraud. She ought to be ashamed of herself. The idea that we should not be required to show proof of our identity when we go to vote is unbecoming to a democracy. I laud the sincere efforts of our leaders to prevent voter fraud and challenge my opponent to lay out specifics on why asking voters to confirm their identity is somehow “restricting,” even though the state would provide free identities.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I worked hard to defeat the Voter Restriction amendment in 2012 and believe we need to expand access to our democracy, not shrink it. I believe that full and robust participation in all parts of politics — from the way campaigns are run, to the voting booth, to how policies are shaped and passed — makes for a stronger democracy. Minnesota, and Duluth in particular, has historically high voter turnout. This is something to be proud of. However, there are still laws that keep people from participating in our democracy. Tens of thousands of Minnesotans who have left prison and returned to their families and communities cannot cast a ballot because they are still on probation or parole. I support efforts to restore voting rights to those 47,000 Minnesotans. It’s time for the voices of these community members to be heard at the ballot box.

QUESTION 7: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

Please explain why you do or do not think it is important to reduce the role of money in American elections.

I think that elections should be about principles. Sound leadership and wisdom are crucial in our government. Unfortunately, money in politics is ubiquitous and often takes the attention away from what is important. We need to elect principled leaders. We need to see beyond politics and partisanship. As your representative, I pledge to make decisions based on what is best for Minnesotans, and our communities. If only all our politicians felt the same way.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

We need to reduce money in politics. At the root of money in politics is corporate power, structural racism, and structural sexism. Our democracy needs to engage and represent the people it is intended to serve, not the corporations. We need to challenge the way in which these three structural barriers to equity show up in our political process, as well as the policies we shape and pass at the State Capitol. We need more people engaging in our democracy to challenge these interests that jeopardize the health and wellbeing of our state and nation.

QUESTION 8:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12?

CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

The single most important factors in our children’s education are parental involvement and parental control. As a representative, I will seek out the input of parents, teachers and students. Our education system must be adequately funded, but just like other things in life, throwing money at something doesn’t necessarily make it better. We need to be smart about our spending. Our leaders must look to the needs of both teachers and students to make this happen.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I believe that one of the most impactful changes the state legislature could make to support the Duluth Public Schools, and district's around the state, would be to provide an increase to the general education funding formula with an ongoing adjustment based on inflation. By providing a consistent and inflation-adjusted investment in education our districts will be able to budget and plan more effectively. Other good steps related to funding: Increase integration funding that goes towards reducing the achievement gap, fully fund special education services mandated in state statute, remove the requirement that ISD 709 must pay special education and transportation costs for charter schools.

QUESTION 9: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

How can state government, in collaboration with other levels of government; help address racial and cultural divides in public safety?

Before answering any question about public safety, let me first give my genuine thanks to the many public servants who make daily sacrifices for our communities. They deserve much respect and appreciation. The great majority of public servants are sincerely trying to do their jobs to the best of their ability and do not treat people differently with regards to race and culture. The best way we can go about addressing these divides is to enlist their help.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

I support efforts to challenge the ways structural racism shows up in our state's public safety. In particular I support ending broken windows policing, ending for profit policing and prisons, better training all our public safety officials, independently investigating and prosecuting in cases of police violence, more community voices and representation within the structures of public safety, accountability through measures such as body cameras, and I ultimately support the solutions and efforts of those groups such as Campaign Zero.

QUESTION 10: CANDIDATE CODY BARRINGER:

In your opinion, what are the most important challenges facing our region and how do you propose to address these challenges?

Our values as Minnesotans and the health of our economy are of utmost importance to our way of living. We cannot afford to allow overbearing regulations to stifle our businesses and economy. We must not drive businesses away. We must provide quality education to the next generation. We need to listen to the input of our healthcare professionals and address their needs as they work hard to provide top quality care. We must use free market principles to create a level playing field and we must protect our beautiful natural environment.

CANDIDATE LIZ OLSON:

Over my time in Duluth I have watched our community grow and flourish thanks to the creative leadership of our elected officials and citizens. We need to continue on the path we are on as a community. However, there are many that still have not benefited from the progress our region has seen. As a legislator, I believe we can shape and pass policies that will have a positive impact on those who often are not included and do not benefit from the growth our region has seen. In particular, nearly 50% of Duluth's workforce does not have access to a single paid day off to care for themselves or a family member when sick or fleeing abuse. We need to change that so everyone in our city, region and state can have a good paying job with benefits that support their family. By working with those often left out of the political process, we can implement policies that benefit the entire community.