

On agriculture and the environment

Our part of the state is changing all the time. As more and more of our area becomes suburban, we're faced with a huge challenge: how to balance this development with our desire to preserve the land, either as farms or as woodlands and wetlands.

As a county commissioner, I deal with these challenges every day. I'm proud of my success in finding ways to manage growth and maintain our community's way of life at the same time. We all want our rivers and lakes to be fishable and swimmable. We want forests and prairies, whether for hunting, hiking, or just enjoying their beauty. It's part of our Minnesota heritage, and it's the State's responsibility to use good science and fair regulation to improve and protect our waters and our lands.

There's much the legislature can do, too, to make sure that Minnesota families can keep farming, and that they can make a living doing it. We need agriculture; it's one of the most important parts of our economy. And by paying attention to agriculture, we have chance to truly improve the environment. Environmental sustainability and economic sustainability are not opposing goals. They're pieces of the same puzzle, and if we can get everybody working together we can build economic and environmental policies that work together too.

On education

Education is the best public investment we can make. Investing in early childhood programs means our children are prepared to get the most out of their elementary education. Investing in elementary and secondary education has been proven to reduce costs in social services, corrections, and the justice system. Investing in higher education is one of the best kinds of economic development because it builds a stronger workforce and a more dynamic economy.

Smaller class sizes, fair compensation for teachers, and programs like special education and gifted and talented programs are not luxuries, they ensure that all Minnesota children get what they need and deserve. It's our responsibility to find sustainable ways to fund education and authentic ways to measure our success.

On fiscal responsibility

I'm a county commissioner. Every day I see what state-level pledges of "no new taxes" mean: they really mean, "We're not going to pay for these essential services anymore, so you're gonna have to." And so all our property taxes go up to cover the gap. Clearly, this is the wrong track to be on. We all would like to pay less in taxes. But Minnesota is a great state, a strong state, the envy of most others, because we take our quality of life seriously. Our state government has a long tradition of helping its citizens—all its citizens—live the best lives they can.

As a senator, I'll abide by this legacy. I'll always work for transparent, straightforward, and progressive funding strategies, and I'll never sacrifice the public good in order to give tax cuts to the wealthy, or favors to big business. We all work hard, and we expect something for the money we spend, including the money we spend on taxes. I want you to value your investment in government, and I'll be a conscientious steward of that investment.

On healthcare

I believe that healthcare is a basic human right. It's no secret that our healthcare delivery system is in critical condition. Every family I know, from every walk of life, is struggling to cover their medical expenses. Businesses are being forced to make tough decisions to avoid being put in the red by insurance costs. Meanwhile, the health of Minnesotans is suffering.

We have a great tradition of broad access and availability of healthcare in this state. MinnesotaCare is a great program, and it should be made available to small businesses and all children. Although we may not get there right away, we should be working toward a single-payer system; it's the only way to make healthcare affordable and sustainable. I think should be a priority, and I will make it one when I'm your senator. We need to put aside partisanship and focus on real wellness for Minnesota families at a price we can afford.

On jobs and the economy

What role should government play in economic development and job creation?

First and foremost, it's our job as lawmakers to work for our constituents. Many of us work in union jobs; we must protect collective bargaining rights as one of the cornerstones of a healthy and fair economy. Government shouldn't be in the business of doing big favors for big business. But it should play a major role in facilitating commerce, as long as it's actually being helpful. Anybody who's run a business knows that you can't sustain that business without treating your workers well, and any sustainable economic plan must subscribe to these same values.

I often look at government from a business perspective, but I don't expect every activity of our government to make a profit, any more than a business expects its research or marketing efforts to bring home dollars right away, or a family expects little children to earn their keep. I believe that business plays a critical role in our quality of life, and that the State can play an essential role by helping guarantee the long-term health of our economy while building healthy, dynamic, thriving communities.

On reproductive health rights and same-sex marriage

These are wedge issues. Period. That should be clear by now. Conservatives want these issues front and center because it helps them rally their base. Many other issues impact far more Minnesotans.

I'm adamantly against the state building any kind of discrimination into its laws. I'm pro-choice, and have a long history of supporting women's rights.

What I think is appalling is that conservatives care so desperately about children before they're born, but then totally drop the ball afterward. I think government shouldn't get to say what marriage is. I'm pro-family, and that means leaving government out of the picture when it comes to deciding who your family is going to be.



A senator for all of us.

This is where
I stand.

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