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United Way IA Candidate Survey: District 93 Challenger Mike Vondran (R-Davenport)

United Way recently asked legislative candidates in Iowa and Illinois to complete a candidate survey so that we could share their stands on issues related to our priorities: education, income, health and equity.

While United Way does not participate in partisan or political activity, we are pleased to offer this information so that voters can assess each candidate's alignment with issues important to United Way as they prepare to cast their ballots.

All answers below are posted in their entirety, as submitted by the candidate. To see the full list of responses to candidate surveys ahead of the 2020 General Election, visit www.unitedwayqc.org/candidate-surveys.

1. What specific actions can the State of Iowa take to address the disparities in school achievement and graduation rates between African American students and their white peers?

Acceleration of creative solutions with regard to early childhood development needs to be within our vision and focus. The achievement gap does not begin at graduation, rather it begins as our youngest Iowans enter school. Sound investment in early childhood programs have proven ROI, we need to grow our opportunities and thinking. Resolve that each and every Iowa child will be prepared to enter school, ready to learn because they have been prepared to learn.

2. Would you support changes to the school-aid formula to provide additional support to districts with high rates of poverty, minority populations and English language learners to help stem the decline in academic success among these populations?

I am in support of an improved formula that will provide sustainable support to all districts. Effective formulas that address the challenges that are building barriers within these populations. Iowa children represent 25% of our current population but in reality are 100% of our Iowa future. Any attempt to ignore challenges, any unwillingness to work for success in service and delivery is unacceptable to me.

3. What role could the State of Iowa play in ensuring all K-12 students have access to broadband and technology to enable virtual learning?

To guarantee connectivity is within our reach but will require continued creative thinking in order to provide for solutions that cast a much broader net than the current house to house model. There are greater efficiencies with technology in the near term. Viewing the neighborhood as no more of a challenge to cover than the nearest coffee shop is our first step. Working together with cities, counties, State government and the service providers, we can and will build a 100% connected Iowa!

4. A network of quality, affordable childcare services – including wrap-around care for school-age children – is critical to parents remaining in the workforce and businesses retaining staff. Do you support additional state investment in childcare services and, if so, what ideas do you have for strengthening the childcare system in Iowa during the COVID crisis and post COVID?

This is not a new challenge, however Covid-19 has exposed a greater strain on the system in place. Childcare is both a private and public concern. Quality workforce challenges abound, and our talented workforce must have the comfort and peace of mind believing they can contribute every day and also make sure that our greatest resources, our children, are safe and supported. I believe this is an opportunity for Iowa to lead in terms of available, affordable childcare services. I am confident, upon review, we can find other State supported programs that are not returning the same level of ROI that an Iowa Childcare Assurance (ICA) could deliver in terms of quality of life and economic growth for working Iowa families.

5. Do you support state investment in the 211 system used for health and human service information and referral and disaster recovery? Why or why not?

A simplified citizen support tool such as the 2-1-1 system is a worthy consideration for State study and investment.

6. Do you support a state sales tax exemption for food banks and pantries to address food insecurity? Why or why not?

Yes I do support that measure.

7. Scott County has a high rate of poverty which dramatically impacts the health and stability of families and the community. What could the State of Iowa do to provide more opportunities for Iowans to achieve economic independence?

Economic development, job growth, educated and skilled workforce growth are paramount in creating a vibrant independence for all Iowans. We must examine our current program supports and qualify their success or need for further review and improvement. This is a bipartisan endeavor that will require strong advocacy from Scott County. The time for talk is past, action will be our rule.

8. Describe what you'd like to see the State of Iowa do – perhaps in partnership with city and county governments – to address systemic racism.

In my campaign I have learned that very seldom do State, County and City elected officials work jointly across governmental and party lines. This is a unique opportunity to change that. We can come together create an Inclusion Coalition Task Force to build a vision of what we believe our community could be, one based on a person's character with understanding of circumstance to assure life's best potential for all. Another opportunity for Iowa to lead in the nation.

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About United Way of the Quad Cities

United Way is a community-based social change organization that puts opportunity in the hands of all Quad Citizens. Working with our determined partners, volunteers, advocates and donors, we lead the charge to improve education, income and health – the building blocks of opportunity. The result is a mobilized community where every Quad Citizen is living their best possible life. unitedwayqc.org