

## NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2024



### Mary Ann Folchert – LD 31

1. **Local Control** - With so many decisions from the legislature impacting local boards, NASB is interested in your view of local control. Regarding education, what decisions do you feel are best made at the school board level vs. the State level?

Locally elected school boards are in the best position to make decisions for local school districts, including but not limited to curriculum, programming, staffing, security, building and financial decisions. The state should focus on consistent, equitable funding revenue for schools as well as licensure requirements, interstate compacts and license reciprocity, incentivizing teacher recruitment, ensuring strong teacher preparation at state programs, and maintaining a financially secure Nebraska public employees retirement system.

2. **School Funding** - Every year the legislature makes decisions about the way schools are funded, making predictability of funding a challenge. What changes and/or adjustments, if any, do you think the Legislature should address?

First and foremost, the Legislature should avoid unfunded or underfunded mandates, which place a financial burden on local school districts and property owners. Secondly, the Legislature should establish consistent, equitable funding for its school districts, using state funds in combination with local property taxes. Lastly, the Legislature should protect public funding for public schools and reject privatization efforts. Private schools do not provide transparency or accountability to the taxpayer and therefore, should rely on private not public funding.

3. **Role of Education in the State** - What role do you think PK-12 Education plays in the future success of the State and your community?

PK-12 education is critical to the future success of Nebraska and all of our communities. Strong public schools help all children develop the skills, attitudes, and talents needed to thrive as adults, not just in the workplace but also in social and familial roles. If we want young people to remain in Nebraska, work and raise their families here, we need to ensure that we continue to maintain strong public schools.

4. **Educational Workforce** - Educational workforce continues to be a challenge across the State from teachers to bus drivers. What would be your plan to address this challenge?

To address educational workforce issues, lawmakers should consider licensure requirements and ways to make it easier for qualified staff to move to and work in Nebraska without unnecessary red tape. The state needs to get creative in attracting teachers by looking beyond salary to other incentives like workforce housing, retention bonuses, paying student teachers, and earned loan forgiveness.

5. **Mandates** - School districts continue to be challenged by the increasing unfunded mandates put upon them by the State and Federal government. What is your response to mandates and the State's role in them?

Mandates are often well intentioned - for example, reducing class sizes to increase teacher-student interaction or prohibiting young children from being expelled. However well intentioned, if the state fails to fund these mandates, they burden both the school district and the local taxpayer. The state should avoid underfunded and unfunded mandates.

#### **Final Thoughts**

I am a strong supporter of public education in Nebraska. I am a product of the Nebraska public school system and I've been on all sides: student, teacher, parent. I returned to Nebraska after college to work in the same school district where I grew up because I wanted to be part of that strong tradition. I met my husband while we were both teaching for that same public school district. We bought our first house in that district, and when we outgrew it, we moved to a neighborhood we knew offered strong public schools for our kids. Our children have always attended public schools and our oldest is now at UNL. Great public schools anchor our communities and if we want to continue to grow the good life for future generations of Nebraska, we must continue to prioritize and support public education. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts and ideas.

#### **How can voters contact you?**

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