

News Journal Questionnaire:

On wind power, emergency preparedness, health care, finances, education, gambling, government transparency....

1 – What should the state do to make people feel safer in their homes, businesses and communities?

Delaware Residents need to be safer, not only feel safer, throughout our state. Accelerated response times and a more visible police presence will help – especially in those areas where people are most vulnerable. The state should work to integrate the various police entities to, in effect, ease some of the jurisdictional delineation that may impede quick response. Resources and funding should be increased to address higher crime rates in densely populated developments and urban areas. We should maintain a high commitment of funding for the volunteer fire-fighting community and cultivate community watch programs and community policing and enhance training in catastrophic emergency response. Police and the courts also need a broader awareness of sexual assault and domestic violence issues.

2 – What steps should the state government take to improve the health of its citizens, and make health-care more affordable?

A good first step, that was taken, is the identification of cancer-clusters in the state. We should follow up with exploring causality and eventually remediation. Prenatal programs should be expanded and early detection initiatives should be offered and funded. The General Assembly should implement Universal Health Care coverage for all Delawareans. This would provide for preemptive and preventative medical practices that would allow earlier intervention and treatment. Health is also impacted by air and water quality, so stricter environmental controls are essential. Expansion of SCHIP and recruiting more qualified children to the roles would be a step forward. I support a single-payer system that is akin to a Medicare plan for all from cradle to grave.

3 – The state faced a \$217 million shortfall for the 2009 fiscal year and likely will have little to no increase in revenues for next year. Several attempts to raise taxes were defeated in the 2008 session. How do you assess the current level of state spending and taxation, as well as the priorities reflected in the budget? What, if any, changes would you make in spending, taxes or state services?

The state faced a shortfall for the 2009 fiscal year and revenue projections have worsened since then according to the latest DEFAC. We will have to revisit all aspects of the budget immediately in January. Priorities have to be reexamined while keeping in mind that further cuts in education and social services would disaffect the state economy even more, leaving the more vulnerable at risk and risking utility shut-offs, bankruptcies and foreclosures that will have widespread ramifications. I have suggested to my colleagues and will again suggest that we consider a “manufacturing tax” on refined petroleum products exported from Delaware. Other proposals that were defeated will have to be seriously reconsidered. We must balance every budget cut with a like revenue growth proposal even considering sunseting some proposals to ease anxieties and enable passage.

4 - What should the state government’s role be in public education, how well is this being carried out and what should be done to better fulfill that mission?

The states role in education should be to adequately fund public education, set standards and reasonable achievement goals and leave the mechanics of accomplishing them to the professional educators and administrators. We have to revisit the the “unit-count” formula with an eye on changing the funding ratio for children in poverty to a system similar to the “special-needs” formulation. We have to start adequately funding support positions such as “paras”, secretaries and tech-support to bring more efficiency of resource allocation. We should look in areas where we can take advantage of bulk purchasing opportunities. We have to get a responsible control on the expense of “testing” while still keeping our qualification standards for the NCLB funding. We also have to become more creative in acquiring available matching federal funds. Alliances with the private sector and business communities have to be more vigorously pursued.

5 – How do you assess the state’s record in environmental protection, sprawl control and open space preservation? What, if any, adjustments need to be made?

The state has a lot more work to do in the area of environmental protection and sprawl control, (although the latter is often a predominantly county issue). The cancer cluster identification is a positive step and the rejection of a coal-fired generating capacity such as the NRG proposal while embracing off-shore wind is certainly a major step in the right direction. I proposed legislation to force cleanups at some major sites and will have to resubmit that piece of legislation and have a serious and responsible discussion with DNREC and the affected parties to discuss economic impact. We can relieve the environmental impact of our landfill system with a statewide curbside recycling program. We will have to look responsibly at impact fees to control/support sprawl control and open-space preservation. Public access to all dialogue must be guaranteed and public input has to be considered more seriously.

6 – Do you support a law that would ban discrimination based on a personal sexual preference?

I am and always have been a staunch supporter of any initiative that bans discrimination or deprivation of an individual’s rights. I have been an outspoken and consistent supporter of the various bills that have been offered to that effect. It is imperative that

my colleagues and I hold ourselves accountable to the people by insisting that legislation of such importance is sent to the floor for a vote. Leadership is not an option; it is an obligation.

7- Are current state laws governing land development adequate and appropriate? What changes, if any, would you propose?

There has been some progress made regarding land development, farmland preservation and sprawl control. "Adequate" is not quite the level of intensity that I feel is sufficient in this matter. I think it would be beneficial for the state and counties to combine their efforts in a more active partnership to address land development issues and planning. Particular attention should be paid to Storm Water Utilities issues and proper infrastructure requirements before development is allowed to proceed. Ecological and environmental concerns should also be part of the equation. One of the state's responsibilities in this predominantly county based issue is to be more attentive in scrutinizing traffic ramifications such as necessary road improvements or accessibility of alternative transportation means. The state should be actively engaged in discussions with the county, public and developers when plans and code qualifications are being developed.

8 --- Do you support any expansion of gambling in the state, such as the effort to legalize sports betting? Are there other steps the state should take to meet gambling competition from states like Maryland, which has a referendum to add slot machines on this fall's ballot?

I am not totally convinced of the amount of revenue to be captured with the planned sport's betting program as currently proposed. I think that competing with surrounding states will dictate that we explore the allure of table games such as a variety of card games, roulette, dice etc. to capture the attention of "high-rollers" and generate a customer base willing to travel, with Delaware and its hotels as their destination. This would generate additional revenue while offering a competitive advantage to Delaware. Another idea would be to make these existing sites more appealing. (eg. Resort type amenities, hotel/entertainment facility expansion etc.)

9 — Do you support any changes in Senate rules governing the power of committee chairpersons over the status of bills, or in General Assembly regulations governing public access to deliberations by the Joint Finance Committee and Bond Bill Committee?

I support an openness and accountability in government that is at odds with the current system of rules regarding the power of committee chairs over the status of bills and public access to deliberations by the aforementioned committees. I believe that openness and accountability must be established at all levels of our legislative proceedings. The public should be given enhanced access to deliberations by the Joint Finance and Bond Bill Committees. Records and verbatim transcripts of all committee hearings should be kept and made available to the public and the media. I feel very strongly that most legislation should be brought to the floor for a vote of the entire general assembly and this opportunity cannot be constricted by individual chairs or majority party manipulations with the agenda that preclude this from occurring.

10 — The state's Transportation Trust Fund faces a \$2.7 billion gap between revenues and spending needed to complete needed projects by 2012. How should the state address this problem? What, if any, new – or higher – fees, taxes or charges would you support to increase revenues? What specific projects or DeIDOT activities should be eliminated to reduce spending?

It is very difficult in this economic climate to do all that is necessary to reform the state's Transportation Trust Fund. Consideration to deploy operating expenses more diligently is one item to address but we have some much larger issues of project prioritization and inefficiencies in the department that have to be addressed. I would hope that we look very cautiously at roundabout proposals before we proceed with anymore of them. We need a more diligent inspection and oversight of projects to eliminate premature failure of the roads and guard against starting projects that are outdated before completion. Long-range planning is key and some projects should be canceled even at the risk of losing matching federal funds if we don't have the state match money available. Some responsibility for funding expenses in projects relating to new and/or expanded development should be borne by the developers via impact fees.

11 – The federal Justice Department is now investigating the adequacy of state-provided health care for prison inmates, following revelations of poor care in recent years. What changes – if any – do you think are necessary to address shortcomings in health care afforded to state prison inmates?

This is another example of the failure to provide openness and accountability in our state government. Hearings should be held with input and participation of the public, specifically those employees (guards, prison workers etc.) who witness the day-to-day shortcomings of the system that is in place now. Oversight should be established and an independent entity created to ensure the legitimacy of that oversight. The current system of awarding a multi-million dollar contract to an out of state provider whose failures are well documented has to be revisited. In fact lawsuits lodged against the state will probably amount to a figure that will dwarf that contract amount. We owe all our citizens the right to health care access and the problem has not been addressed in spite of the publicity surrounding it. I believe that the leadership has to come from the administration and am looking forward to working with the new Governor on this matter.

12 – How do you assess the state of Delaware’s preparedness to meet emergencies caused by violence, natural disaster or public health crises?

I would assess it as a work in progress but with much more planning and communications to be accomplished. It seems that there needs to be a greater public awareness of Delaware’s preparedness plans and a communication system that would rapidly alert the public. If there are specific plans in place or procedures to follow the public has not been sufficiently informed or educated in that regard and we should address that situation with better communicated evacuation plans and disaster response models.

13 – How do you assess the rate of job growth and economic development in Delaware? How do you assess the state’s performance in recruiting new jobs and in attracting, retaining or growing existing businesses?

I believe that the rate of job growth and economic development in Delaware is precariously close to stagnation and the state must engage in proactive long-range planning to address this issue. This state has been dependent on franchise and banking tax revenues and providing a comfortable atmosphere for corporations to establish headquarters here. The free-market effect will negatively impact that revenue source as more and more states establish similar friendly structures and compete for that out of state tax money. My proposal to create an Interstate Job Task Force (HCR 26) to take advantage of the job opportunities at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland and the satellite businesses that could result should have been moved forward more rapidly (it languished for a year and a half) and could have been an effective economic development tool now. I am reluctant to fully embrace the current method of job recruitment, retention and business attraction via subsidies that are paid for with taxpayer money and do not fulfill expectations. The Department of Economic Development needs to embrace a new direction with new ideas and focus.

14 – What would be the one most-important thing you hope to accomplish if elected?

The most important thing I hope to accomplish when I am reelected is to create a truly “affordable” Delaware. Affordable Health Care, affordable Utilities, affordable Housing and affordable Business Opportunities will accomplish that.

15 – How do you assess the performance of the state and Legislature in handling the Delmarva Power, Bluewater Wind contract for offshore wind electricity? Should the state follow New Jersey's example and use only subsidies and mandatory "clean power" goals to support private development of wind, solar and other alternative energy projects, or should Delaware intervene more directly and force utilities to sign more contracts with selected companies for alternative energy?

I am thrilled with the accomplishment of having a contract signed between Bluewater Wind and Delmarva that will enable the ratepayers of Delaware to secure a stable, guaranteed, long-term price for a portion of their electricity. I worked long and hard to move that forward writing and sponsoring HCR 38 which was instrumental in bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion. I am not overjoyed that some members of the G.A. interfered in the process and delayed the final Power Purchase Agreement after a very diligent and responsible year and a half of open and transparent public hearings that was as well vetted as anything in the history of Delaware. I am concerned that the size of the project was reduced so dramatically but I am optimistic that BWW may find willing participants in neighboring states (Gov. O’Malley in Maryland) that will allow an expansion of the project. The New Jersey example has not resulted in a contract and encouraging private investment in such a large project of significant cost is dependent on showing potential investors that there is a responsible cost/risk analysis. This leads me to conclude that the current Delaware Model (BWW/Delmarva PPA) will be emulated and used as the model for future sites. It’s not a fair assessment of the existing contract to say that Delaware has forced a utility to sign a contract with a selected company. Delmarva is, in fact, a regulated (by the Public Service Commission) distributor of electricity and is allowed a percentage profit on sales after the cost of the electricity (generation costs etc.) has been recouped from the ratepayers. DEMEC saw the legitimacy of the rate and environmental stabilities inherent in the BWW proposal and voluntarily signed on as any responsible organization would.