

Grassroots Northshore Endorsement Questionnaire

Stephen Jansen, State Assembly District 16

1. What is your stance on voucher schools and public education?

I am opposed to voucher schools and efforts to privatize public education. There are several reasons why I hold this belief. First, what private schools do is drain money away from public schools who desperately need support. Second, there has been no legitimate proof that suggests that private schools are inherently better than public schools as a whole. Third, voucher schools are not held to the same quality standards of education that public schools are held to. Some teachers in voucher schools aren't even required to have certification to teach students. I work with at-risk youth as a non-profit professional. Many of these students have disabilities. I believe that students with disabilities will be negatively impacted by voucher schools because these schools are not required to have the state mandated resources that public schools provide for specialized education.

My vision for education as a whole is very simple: Support and Reform. First, we must restore over \$200 million in cuts to higher education, collective bargaining rights, and higher pay for college faculty. Higher paying opportunities should be given to adjunct faculty as well. These cuts should be tied to the cost of inflation over time. I also believe that students there has been a tremendous amount of university gentrification and the cost of tuition has inflated as a result. I believe that the solution to this is to empower students via state statute 36.09(5) and give students greater representation and voice to budget issues at universities. It is important to have a well-paid student faculty to recruit the best professors in the world to teach university students. Full funding of education to our technical colleges is also a critical component to higher education. These technical colleges provide specialized training in a variety of sectors imperative to a prosperous economy.

My vision of reform primarily consists with K12 education. I believe that we need to fully finance education and restore \$48 million in cuts to school districts. I oppose the MPS Take-over of schools. But to me, fully restoring education finances and allowing the Republicans to be the only party taking up the mantle of a vision of education reform will cost the Democratic Party the support of Independent voters in Milwaukee County and across the state. As stated above I believe in repealing Act 10 and allowing teachers to have full collective bargaining rights. But my vision of education reform makes me a unique candidate in this campaign. First, I want a high school diploma to actually mean something more than a piece of paper than it does today. To make a high school diploma or a GED "mean something", it must be relevant to the economy. By the time our students graduate from high school, they should have some type of certification or skill that will be directly transferrable to jobs in the economy. More investment must be made in STEM Schools and other specialized programs. Every single student must be tied to job certification programs, internships, and apprenticeships. I work with students to connect them with their first resume, their first interview, and their first job opportunity.

I also provide on the job coaching for people with disabilities in addition to business consulting. What I have found is that many people do not have the basic “soft skills” of appropriate conduct and communication for workforce development. Much of what is learned in education is superficial rather than skills that can be life changing and helpful for future consequences in life. Let’s include in our education system more education in financial literacy, basic home repair, and cooking skills. Let’s allow for teachers to have less standardized testing and more creativity and ingenuity in the classroom. In short, we must allow our teachers to be free to teach and reach students with individualized or specialized attention. Education reform to me means that we must look at the way that education is financed and fix the embedded inequalities from a property tax financed education system by providing more statewide equalized aid. Let’s connect students with business leaders, worksite tours, job shadows, networking, and other opportunities that allow for our pupils to explore with daring wonder their future possibilities. Let’s support the critical roles of art and music education because developing this side of the brain can be a gateway to improving other areas in learning as well. And let’s have a 21st Century industrial calendar of education rather than an agrarian calendar where students have education deficits simply by forgetting everything they have learned during the three months of the summer.

2. What are your suggested solutions for gun violence in the central city?

Gun violence and violence in general comes from something much deeper than the current debate. People typically don’t wake up in many parts of the city with killing another human being on their mind. Many gun violence crimes that are committed are situational based on either drugs, gun violence, or angry tempers. But the question that we must ask is where this emanates from. Where does gun violence come from? The answer to that question is the best way to reduce gun violence. I will get deeper into this but I think much of the violence and hate comes from years of neglect in communities, despair, and a lack of opportunity. I will get to this in depth in my answer to the economy. Let me outline however specifically what is important related to gun violence.

I support background checks, the banning of certain types of assault rifles, restrictions on the sale of guns, the ending of the “gun show loophole”, waiting periods, keeping guns out of the hands of those on the terror watch list, and allowing people to sue gun manufacturers that use illicit selling methods for non-hunting purposes. I support neighborhood watch programs and efforts at the local community to reduce gun violence. I support nonprofit organizations and local programming for our youth so that young adults have fun activities to do rather than engage in drug trafficking and criminal behavior. It would be helpful if there were more swimming pools for youth over the summer. What this takes is more coordination with local governments and local government initiatives in their vision planning.

I also think that there should be some revisions in the state statutes for accountability of offices who have broken the law. There should be an independent investigation for killings of unarmed citizens per the law signed recently by Governor Walker. Municipal Managers should be given more authority and tools for discipline officers for misconduct.

3. What are your ideas for improving the economy of the central city?

It is my belief that the system has been rigged politically, economically, and structural. Political corruption propped up by a corrupt money system begets economic inequality. Economic inequality begets structural inequality. This precedes generation after generation of lives destroyed despair, apathy, and lack of opportunity.

Rather than \$250 million dollars on a stadium for corporate billionaires who seek to raise public debt in order to finance their personal fortunes off of the backs of the taxpayers of our state. And rather than finance \$128 million for a trolley in the central part of downtown for tourist attraction. Let's not forget that there is a structural crisis in our city that needs attention and can foster thousands of job opportunities. We must refocus our priorities.

First, the City of Milwaukee is only investing about \$12 million out of a \$1.5 billion budget on a home renovation nonprofit corporation program at a time when we have a crisis of about 1/3rd of homes in foreclosure. Home values in the city have fallen on average by 32% since before the economic crash of 2008. We can employ people who have been to prison in neighborhood beautification. We can create hundreds of construction jobs to rebuild the run down and boarded up houses in our community. Many of these homes have bred a tremendous amount of drug related crime in the areas. Home values are the most important component of a healthy and thriving community. A strong property tax base is critical to education funding and other important funding programs. Let us start by a community revitalization program at the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

The home revitalization program can also be used to house 6,000 people who are homeless on our streets on a permanent basis. After housing the homeless job training and other programs can make many of our homeless workforce ready.

We must support job support programs that focus on specialized needs and individuals.

We must rebuild our infrastructure. There are 1,200 bridges literally falling apart, 888 dams that need repair, and massive repair of our drinking water infrastructure.

Currently, the federal government has a Work Opportunity Tax Credit of up to \$2,400 for the hiring of minorities or disadvantaged populations. I think the state needs to match this federal support by having local tax breaks of our own for the hiring of minorities. I also support tax break to small businesses rather than large institutions who may not need it.

4. Where do you stand on payday lenders?

I am opposed to payday lenders and I believe there should be more restrictions on them. There needs to be more community owned bank opportunities with lower fees in distressed neighborhoods. As a member of the Riverwest Co-Op Board I pushed for and voted for \$80,000 in funds for a community owned break for the area.

5. How would you reduce incarcerations, i.e. non-violent offenders, marijuana arrests, bench warrants and parole violations.

I believe that what we need is to reduce sentencing for non-violence offenses and there are ways that we can do this while at the same time saving taxpayers millions of dollars each year. For example, it costs about \$32,000 per year to house someone in jail for first time drug offenses but only \$9,000 for rehabilitation. By focusing more on rehabilitation we can save millions for taxpayers. I also believe in legalizing marijuana, continued voting rights in Wisconsin for felons, the ban the box movement. Parole violations should be handled delicately due to the unique survival nature of prison life.

6. As a potential leader in your district, what are your ideas for reducing street crime?

I do not believe in “broken window policing” but I do believe in community oriented policing. Police officers should come from the community and be a part of the community. Many of my ideas about reducing crime on the streets stem from fixing our broken communities economically and structurally. Crime does not happen in a vacuum. It happens in response to poverty and desperation. I would focus on some of the earlier questions above for ideas of reducing violence.