

MainPAC Candidate Survey

2021 Kansas Elections

Q1-5.

Candidate Name: Benjamin Blankley
Candidate Email: ben.blankley@gmail.com
Candidate Phone: 3166802108
Office Sought: School Board Member
Office County: Sedgwick
Office City: Wichita
Office District: 1

Candidate Rating:88%

Q6. Political discourse in Kansas could be characterized as siloed and divisive. How do you intend to engage citizens and colleagues in potentially difficult conversations? (Available points: 1)

- A. If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided. (1)
- B. If elected I will be loyal to the ideology associated with my party affiliation.

Candidate Answer: If elected I will seek to find compromises when it is clear my constituents are divided.

Candidate Comment: I understand that I am not only in a non-partisan position, but that I serve a wide variety of people with political affiliations, including many who cannot and do not vote in partisan elections.

Q7. Which of the following statements best aligns with your stance on local elected officials making decisions for their communities, particularly local tax and revenue decisions? For information about Home Rule please see https://www.lkm.org/page/Home_Rule. (Available points: 2)

- A. Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule. (2)
- B. Local elected officials should have limited authority in decision making for their communities. (1)
- C. Local elected officials should not have authority in decision making for their communities. Decisions should be made by the state.

Candidate Answer: Local elected officials should have ultimate authority in decision making for their communities, consistent with Home Rule.

Candidate Comment: Frequently in Wichita Public Schools, we run into capital funding limitations unique to our size of district, age of buildings, and complexity of operations. Additionally, the state restrictions on local tax revenue by school districts is difficult to explain to the average voter.

Q8. Do you support allocating additional resources specifically for implementing/expanding mental health programs?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Yes (1)
- B. No

Candidate Answer: Yes

Candidate Comment: Schools are the one place where kids can consistently receive services of all kinds, including mental health. Our counselors and social workers do great things but staffing does limit their impact for all kids.

Q9. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about transparency in local government?

(Available points: 1)

- A. Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances. (1)
- B. Transparency is important, but should be secondary to efficiency.
- C. There are some times when transparency is important, but there are other issues the public doesn't have the capacity to understand and transparency becomes less important.

- D. The people vote for a candidate because they trust them, so transparency is not as important for elected officials as for other public leaders.

Candidate Answer: Local government should be as transparent as is legally possible in all circumstances.

Candidate Comment: I think the average citizen should have the same information that elected bodies have, so they can have better knowledge of how their representatives are acting on their behalf.

Q10. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about access to health care? (Available points: 2)

- A. Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care. (2)
- B. Local government in my area is currently meeting the community's access needs. (1)
- C. Local government has no role in health care.

Candidate Answer: Local government has a responsibility to support access to health care.

Candidate Comment: I believe local government, because of its focus on the unique aspects, cultures, and challenges of a community, can serve as a crucial link between the community and health care resources.

Q11. To what degree do you believe that diversity in representation at all levels of government is critical to effective governing? (Available points: 1)

- A. Extremely Important (1)
- B. Neutral
- C. Not important

Candidate Answer: Extremely Important

Candidate Comment: For example, it is exceptionally challenging for a working class parent to serve on municipal boards, school boards, city councils, library boards, and similar essential functions of local government without it severely impacting their employment. I think the decisions local elected bodies make can unintentionally overlook the unique challenges of subsets of the community if those members are not adequately represented on these boards.

Q12. Professional public entity staff are expected to bring expertise, research, and accuracy to assist elected officials in their work. These may include health professionals, legal experts, research librarians, school administrators and the like. Regarding these professionals, which of the following is generally most true? (Available points: 1)

- A. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **support** the professionals who work in public service (1)
- B. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **scrutinize** the professionals who work in public service
- C. It is the role of locally elected leaders to **stay distant** from the professionals who work in public spaces
- D. It is the role of elected leaders to **closely manage** the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Answer: It is the role of locally elected leaders to support the professionals who work in public service

Candidate Comment: My job as a school board member is to break down barriers and make the work of the school district as smooth as possible. While I do review and question recommendations made by the professional staff, I understand that it is their job to be the experts, and it is my job to weigh their recommendations with the needs and wants of the community.

Q13. Which of the following most closely aligns with your view of the role of local government in each of these policy issues? (Available points: 6)

- A. Very Relevant (2)
- B. Somewhat Relevant (1)
- C. Irrelevant
- D. Not Applicable

Issue: Climate Change

Candidate Answer: Somewhat Relevant

Candidate Comment: We in local government can make intentional decisions that more judiciously use our natural resources.

Issue: Gun Safety

Candidate Answer: Somewhat Relevant

Candidate Comment:

Issue: Voting Access

Candidate Answer: Very Relevant

Candidate Comment: As a school district, we can partner with advocacy groups to register new voters and build an involved citizenry through student advisory committees and community advocacy.

Q14. Which of the following statements best aligns with your opinion about K - 12 schools? (Available points: 1)

- A. Public money should only be used to support public schools. (1)
- B. Public money should be used to support all schools, regardless of their public or private status.

Candidate Answer: Public money should only be used to support public schools.

Candidate Comment:

Q15. In light of the current political landscape, what is your stance on the role your personal religious beliefs should play in policy decisions? (Available points: 1)

- A. If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes. (1)
- B. My personal religious beliefs are important to me therefore my religious beliefs will be the driving factor in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Answer: If I have personal religious beliefs that are important to me, I know they might differ from other's beliefs; therefore I will strive to respect the separation of church and state in policy decisions and my votes.

Candidate Comment:

Q16. How do you understand the role (the duties, responsibilities, and scope) of the position you are seeking?

Candidate Answer: I have served in this position since January of 2018, and if anyone anticipated how hard the 2020-21 school year would have been as a school board member, they certainly didn't let any of us serving know. I understand the budget of the Wichita Public Schools is a tenth of the entire public school funding for the State of Kansas. We impact over 47,000 students and families and over 6,000 professional staff with our decisions. I have not and will not take any decision I made lightly or capriciously.

Q17. You will have to publicly account for your political contributions. To date, how much money have you collected or has been pledged to your campaign?

Candidate Answer: I have \$858.82 in my campaign account still from my last campaign.

Q18. How many donors does your answer above reflect?

Candidate Answer: This was around 20-30 donors.

Q19. From which other organizations have you received endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: In this cycle, I have not received any endorsements yet.

Q20. From which other organizations are you seeking endorsements? (Enter "n/a" if none).

Candidate Answer: I'll fill out the Equality Kansas survey when they send it out. My labor union at work, SPEEA, does not endorse candidates.

Q21. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this survey? Please do that here.

Candidate Answer:

END SURVEY