

## **UNITE! CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2020**

*We want our questionnaire to help UNITE members understand why you are running for office, how you fit in to our movement, and where you stand on issues that concern us. Please feel free to add or elaborate. Email back to [info@uniteforpa.com](mailto:info@uniteforpa.com)*

### BACKGROUND

Name: Emily Kinkead

Office and district you are running for: State Representative, House District 20

Party Affiliation: Democrat

### POWER AND POLITICS

Tell us about yourself and why you are running for this office. We are interested in learning about your policy priorities and also about how you understand the role of elections and elected officials in movement-building. (250-500 words)

I was born on Pittsburgh's North Side, the daughter of Pittsburgh city paramedics. I learned from my father that leadership is all about service - that you should help others for no other reason than because you have the ability to do so. My father had the opportunity to attend medical school and achieve his version of the American Dream - to create a better life for his children than he had for himself. As a result, we lived many places around the country and traveled even further.

I was attending high school in North Dakota when, in 2004, Vermont legalized marriage equality. North Dakota, like Pennsylvania, quickly passed an amendment to its state constitution that marriage was "between one man and one woman." Given my dad's lessons of service and equality, I could not understand why it should or would matter to anyone else who someone else loved. My support of LGBTQIA+ equality spurred me into political activism.

For over a decade, I have fought for the political, economic, and social equality of all groups, races, sexes, genders, and classes. I have worked to pass campaign finance reform and gerrymandering reform. I have fought for disability rights, criminal justice reform, reproductive justice, and LGBTQIA+ equality. I have advocated for HIV+ individuals, immigrants seeking asylum, and low-income tenants.

As an elected official, these will continue to be my top policy priorities. But I will also prioritize the needs of my district, which has gone for too long with a representative who is silent. Moving back to the North Side, I looked around at the squandered potential of my area

and the over-taxed regions of Lawrenceville, the Strip, and Polish Hill and knew that something needed to be done.

Elected officials are uniquely qualified to build movements not only among and between constituents, but also between other electeds at every level of government. Coalition building between the municipal, county, and state level allows for decisions to be made holistically, with an understanding of how each layer will work together for the good of the people. When our elected leaders fail to show up and work in this way, it is necessary to replace them.

**Tell us about the communities you plan to engage during your campaign and how you will work with them during and after your campaign. (250-500 words)**

I intend to prioritize and engage the communities that are most neglected in my district. I am centering Northview Heights in this campaign as this area of the district was neglected long before any other area of the North Side suffered from the effects of being underrepresented.

More than that, I am intentionally building coalitions of supporters that are diverse and represent every group that I hope to champion in Harrisburg. I have engaged black-owned businesses to participate, whether by hosting, catering, or other services, in each of my campaign events and intend to continue to do so. I am seeking out small businesses to support throughout the district and plan meetings with supporters at these businesses often in order to support my district businesses.

As an elected official, I intend to hold “office hours” at various businesses around the district so that constituents do not have to go out of their way to find me, rather I will be available to them. This will also allow me to highlight great businesses around the district. It will also give me an opportunity to keep my finger on the pulse of my district and anticipate needs. I want to hear about the needs of my district because I am out in the community and people are comfortable to speak their minds to me and around me. I want to be in places that have felt ignored and make them feel included.

Representatives are elected to know the needs of the district. It should never be incumbent upon constituents to seek out an elected leader to alert them to an obvious need. As a state representative, I intend to be widely present in my district so that people know who I am and that even if their concern is “technically” outside my jurisdiction as a state representative, I will do everything that I can to help them find a solution.

**Tell us about why you are seeking the endorsement of UNITE and how you envision an ongoing working relationship with us - both on the campaign trail and once in office. (250-500 words)**

UNITE is the kind of organization that all endorsing organizations should aspire to be. UNITE endorses candidates not because they are politically expedient or convenient or popular but because they are the best candidate for the position they are seeking. UNITE candidates believe that every person should have meaningful work, adequate income, affordable healthcare, and clean air and water. UNITE candidates share a commitment to dismantling systems of oppression, making government work for working people, and that collectively we can accomplish reshaping our world into a more just and equal place. UNITE is rare in its unwavering commitment to leveling the playing field by attempting to counteract the corrupting influence of money in politics by replacing it with collective resources and power. I am seeking UNITE's endorsement because I share these values and a commitment to moving the ball forward on all of them. Moreover, I am seeking UNITE's endorsement because I believe that I am the best and most qualified candidate in the race for Pennsylvania House District 20.

I envision working with UNITE to not only get into office myself, but to help get the best progressive candidates into office moving forward. Because I believe that the least that we can expect from other progressives is a commitment to accountability and an openness to criticism, I expect that UNITE will hold me accountable for my future decisions and make me defend any actions that I take - whether UNITE's membership agrees with them or not. I intend to use my elected position to further progressive causes and to make sure that every group is included under UNITE's umbrella.

### ISSUE QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Healthcare**

1. Do you support a single-payer healthcare system?

Yes   X                        No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you support guaranteed access to abortion services as part of any present or future healthcare system?

Yes   X                        No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you support LGBTQ specific healthcare as part of any present or future healthcare system?

Yes   X                        No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you support legally mandated paid family leave/paid sick days?

Yes   X                        No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you support initiatives to limit the costs of prescription drug prices, such as Ohio's Drug Price Standards Initiative?

Yes  \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Housing and Public Services**

6. What policies, if any, would you support to protect existing residents against rising housing costs?

Comments: *I support a multi-faceted approach to maintaining and expanding affordable housing. First I believe there should be an expansion to programs that allow individuals to receive grants to fix structural issues on their homes. I would fund these programs by targeting developers and those who flip houses by increasing fees on sellers who own properties for a year or less without proof of job transfer or other life change. I support the expansion of inclusionary zoning which requires affordable units be built in all new construction and I support neighborhood land trusts and public-private partnerships that would help keep down the cost of purchasing a home while still allowing those living in the neighborhoods to build wealth through equity. Solving our affordable housing crisis is by no means simple and I am constantly educating myself on new and innovative ways to approach the problem.*

7. Do you support measures to improve accessible, affordable, integrated housing options so that people with disabilities can live in the communities where they work or are seeking work?

Yes  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: *The topography of the Plttsburgh area presents significant challenges to ensuring that persons with disabilities, particularly physical disabilities, are able to live in the communities where they work or are seeking work. One solution I would readily support is providing grants to homeowners in order to make their homes ADA compliant. Ready and thorough sidewalk maintenance, robust public transportation, and well staffed social services are a few others. Admittedly, this is an area of disability advocacy that I am less familiar with but always willing to learn.*

8. Do you support legislation that would allocate additional funds to maintain and repair our public infrastructure, including lead line replacement?

Yes  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you support public banking initiatives?

Yes  \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for public transportation?

Comments: *Given the fact that access to public transportation is the single biggest factor in the ability to escape poverty, not to mention the convenience of being able to be transported to one's destination without being able to drive, public transportation needs*

to be more frequent with a larger service area and more rapid transit options. Pittsburgh should have a robust metro/subway system akin to every other major metropolitan area of it's size and our elected officials need to prioritize funding one.

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11. Would you support legislation banning the privatization of our water and sewage systems?

Yes X \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Work**

12. Do you support policies and legislation that make it easier for workers to organize unions?

Yes X \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you support legislation enshrining the right to strike, including sympathy strikes?

Yes X \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

14. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr or higher?

Yes X \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you support legislation to increase employment opportunities for adults living with disabilities?

Yes X \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: Having spent time both living and working with adult persons with developmental disabilities I know intimately the ways in which we keep persons with disabilities in poverty and dependent upon others. It is unacceptable that companies can pay anyone with a disability less than minimum wage regardless of their personal capabilities or contribution to the profits of their employer. There exists a cottage industry around employing persons with disabilities where employers reap the benefits of the work provided and goodwill of the public while effectively maintaining indentured servants. No person regardless of disability should be paid less than a living wage.

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### **Education**

16. Do you support providing universal pre-K and/or childcare programs through our public school systems?

Yes  No

Comments: *I believe in providing childcare and universal pre-K. No one should have to pay more for child care than for college, particularly as more families are required to have two incomes just to get by. Whether that program comes through our public schools or some other public program I would want to look at the options presented in more detail so as not to overtax our public school system but to ensure quality, free childcare for all.*

17. What is your position on charter schools?

Comments: *I think charter schools pull funding away from our public schools at a time when we cannot afford to have money pulled away. They have very problematic and inconsistent results in educating our children and their oversight is spotty at best. If charter schools want to exist they should not qualify for public funds and they certainly should not pull funds away from public schools.*

18. What is your stance on free tuition for university students?

Comments: *Given that more and more jobs require at least a bachelor's degree if not a masters degree college should be as accessible as K-12 education.*

## **Environment**

19. Do you support the build-out of new petrochemical infrastructure in Pennsylvania?

Yes  No

Comments: *The oil and gas industry is the textbook definition of how large special interests have bought and paid for our democracy. Both Democrats and Republicans are equally guilty of allowing this undue influence. In addition to campaign donations, the oil and gas industry uses the promise of jobs to justify the special treatment that they demand. Pennsylvania is one of the last states with a strong union workforce, but the oil and gas industry does not hire our hardworking union men and women. Instead, they bring in out-of-state workers in order to avoid paying a living wage and because our SWPA unions demand adherence with regulations, best practices, environmental protections, and high standards of workplace safety. While we cannot go back in time to undo the mistakes that led to the entrenchment of this industry in our region, the task before us is to do everything in our power to make sure that **we, the People**, are able to serve as the necessary and critical check on an industry that has gone without oversight for far too long. I will be a leader that stands up to oil and gas on issues like jobs, environmental protection, transparency, and accountability. I will hold the DEP accountable to enforce our regulations and I will fight against legislation that is written by*

oil and gas industry insiders to give them unfair advantages and special treatment in SWPA and across our state.

20. Do you support legislation to counteract rising emission rates and resultant climate change?

Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Is it possible to both protect the environment while also creating and maintaining good union jobs in Allegheny County? If so, how?

Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: As I outlined above, many of our area's worst polluters are able to get away with their bad behavior because they promise good union jobs and then fail to deliver. Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and the United States, as a whole, have an opportunity to be at the cutting edge of technological advancement when it comes to energy and production, but that future lies in green jobs. If we are not, we risk being left behind while other states and countries take the lead and reap the benefits. Allegheny County is particularly well-positioned to leading this charge given its unique pairing of both world-class universities and a history of strong union production. SWPA's re-emergence as an economy based in "Eds & Meds" can grow even further if we include our union brothers and sisters in making it the capital of the new green economy.

### **Criminal Justice and Police Reform**

22. Do you support any police accountability or oversight measures, such as citizen review boards?

Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: The origin of police departments was in service of the community. Unarmed police officers would stand on corners in order to deter crime. In recent decades police have developed a wartime mentality where they maintain that merely by going out into the community they are risking their lives and that it is civilians that are the risk. No one doubts that being a police officer can be dangerous but being a police officer has only gotten safer over time. As such, police should be held to the same standards of conduct as every other person in the community to treat those that they interact with respect, to comport themselves with the utmost reverence for the preservation of life and a dedication to the idea that justice is to be served by a judge and jury. Officers who fail to comply with these basic tenets of community service should be subject to the harshest of punishments and if internal police procedures cannot deliver that then external citizen review board must be empowered to fill that role.

23. Do you support the full legalization of cannabis?

Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: Yes, but only if it comes with the automatic expungement of non-violent marijuana-related offenses and the prioritization of minority owned dispensaries in

communities most impacted by the War on  
Drugs.

24. Do you support the decriminalization of other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and/or methamphetamines?

Yes  X  No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: I support the decriminalization insofar as criminalization of addiction does nothing to treat addiction. However, drugs like methamphetamines have no useful place in our society and their production and consumption can quite literally blow apart families. Therefore, I do not support the legal consumerization of drugs like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamines but I believe the focus of any laws criminalizing these drugs should focus on mass production and mass sale but I would be willing to consider civil penalties for these acts as well.

25. Do you support the abolition of ICE?

Yes  X  No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: While I support the enforcement of humane immigrations laws ICE as it exists and operates now fails to adhere to the spirit and intended purpose of our immigration laws. Our immigration laws our intended to encourage immigration and ensure that all immigrants feel welcome and safe entering our borders. Any enforcement of immigration laws should not include the arrest of immigrants in the act of their daily living or include inhumane detention of immigrants or asylum seekers. Enforcement should only be against those immigrants deemed an actual threat to others living in the United States and the action of crossing the border undocumented should be decriminalized.

### **Strengthening Our Democracy and Public Finance**

26. Do you support the expansion of mail balloting, early voting, and other access-increasing measures?

Yes  X  No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

27. Do you support automatic voter registration?

Yes  X  No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: I used to live in North Dakota which in addition to being a bright red state also had automatic voter registration. At no point in time was voter fraud a concern in the state or an actual issue. Automatic voter registration increases voter turnout and democratic participation. It does not increase instances of voter fraud or endanger our democracy.

28. Do you support voter ID laws?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  X

Comments: *Voter ID laws disenfranchise voters who are already historically disenfranchised, young people, people of color, people with disabilities and others who's voices are critical in a representative democracy. Voter ID laws are a solution in search of a problem*

29. Do you support campaign finance reform legislation that would limit the amount and frequency by which rich individuals and corporations can influence individual campaigns?

Yes  No

Comments: *In addition to supporting campaign contribution limits I support enacting a system of publicly financed elections whereby voters in the district when signing petitions would donate small dollar contributions. When candidates receive sufficient qualifying contributions they would automatically trigger the receipt of funds which they can use to run their campaign without needing to take any further contributions. This would allow a greater diversity of candidates to run for office, limit the influence of wealthy special interests, and have the benefit of shortening campaign cycles.*

30. Do you support the continued existence of "tax loopholes" that allow corporate entities to pay a lesser tax burden than they would otherwise be mandated by state or federal law?

Yes  No

Comments: *Corporations by failing to pay their fair share in taxes are hoarding opportunities from the rest of America and refusing to pay for the opportunities that they receive by being able to operate within the borders of the United States.*

31. What is your stance on UPMC's standing as a non profit? Should their non profit status be challenged?

Yes  No

Comments: *When hospitals first started they were founded to serve those who could not pay for care on their own. Hospitals like UPMC continue to exist as nonprofits by pretending that they still serve in this capacity where corporations are taxed on the money that they make as profit in order to give back to the communities that support them. However UPMC gets to keep it's profit and pretend that any money they give back to the community is a gift from the generosity of it's administration. Accordingly, UPMC gets away with underpaying it's employees, underserving it's community, overpricing it's services, and cutting off access to care to those who don't play along. For as long as UPMC behaves as a for-profit corporation it should be treated as such.*