



MOBILIZE MISSOURI

GARY WESTER

State House of Representatives Candidate Survey 2018



HEALTHCARE

1. How would you protect and/or expand health care access for Missourians?

Expand Medicaid. Missouri is one of 18 states not to expand Medicaid. We are leaving billions of dollars on the table while withholding healthcare for our underprivileged citizens, seniors and those with disabilities. Anyone without healthcare is one accident from bankruptcy and ruin. With the expansion, Missouri would have an influx of more than \$1 billion that would spur the economy and perhaps support more than 10,000 jobs.

Medical health care should be only one part of the health care needs. I support encouraging an active lifestyle and when needed alternative treatments such as acupuncture and massage therapy. These alternatives should be a part of a full health care system.

2. What can the Missouri legislature do to combat the opioid crisis?

Create a statewide prescription drug monitoring program; prescriptions take back program; enact legislation requiring a doctor-patient agreement to opioids; limit an initial opioid prescription to a five-day supply, with "appropriate exceptions"; require healthcare insurers to have offer alternative care (e.g., acupuncture, therapeutic massage); adding recovery specialists to emergency rooms and supplying naltrexone to the public when a need arises.

Yes or no:

3. Do you support using state funds for addiction and recovery resources?

Yes No

4. Would you support a bill to apply for an Affordable Care Act Reinsurance waiver?

Yes No

This is a difficult question. I believe that once the criteria is established for loss of job or other life situations, there must not be any more excuses

5. Do you support Medicare for All legislation (public health insurance)?

Yes No



ENVIRONMENT

6. What type of legislation do you believe the Missouri legislature could pass to have a significant impact on combating climate change?

I want to enter a resolution to set a goal to have at least 25% of Missouri Power arises from renewable energy (wind, solar, hydro) by 2025. Rockport, MO is now the first city in Missouri to produce more power by renewable energy than the city needs annually. 25% is a possible goal.

Incentives from the power companies for residential homeowner improvements are including the installation of solar.

There are many other sources of renewable energy that can be offered including: biofuels, electric/hybrid car rebates, energy audits for homes, among other ways to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

It is discouraging to here over the past year that our state legislature was proposing to add additional license fees to high mileage automobiles in an effort to rebuild highways and bridges. It is my opinion that we should be rewarding those owners not penalizing them for being aware of their carbon imprint.

Bicycle paths and routes, mass transit system in urban and surrounding rural communities. There is a plethora of options but all have a cost for construction. A mass transit system not matter how affordable and convenient will not be incentive enough if it not safe.

Yes or no:

7. Do you support states tax credits and or/exemptions for businesses and private citizens investing in renewable energy?

Yes No

8. Do you support a state buyout for residents near the West Lake Landfill?

Yes No

9. Do you support selling state park land to private entities for economic development?

Yes No

10. Do you believe local municipalities should have more say over regulating Concentration Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and agriculture growing near state waterways than the EPA?

Yes No

ECONOMIC & LABOR POLICY

11. In your view, what role can the state legislature play in attracting and retaining jobs in Missouri?

Fund our public school system to adequate levels. If employees do not have access for their families to attend a good school, they will not stay in the area.

Rebuild our infrastructure; water system, wastewater system, roads, bridges, and provide high-speed internet service.

Safe communities

Use tax incentives wisely. Using a tax incentive to bring business to the area is not necessary when a business wants to locate there. I have found that when there is an educated work force, it is easier for a business to locate there rather than move all that talent. As I look over the centers of excellence in the United States there are technical businesses in Silicon Valley, internet services like the Pacific Northwest, and Boston leads engineering with MIT. Where you find universities and graduates of a certain ilk, you find businesses that take advantage of the talent base.

Finally, have the kind of occupancy rate that is amenable for the business to survive. The St. Louis area has one of the most competitive occupancy rates in the nation.

12. Would you support the development of worker-owned businesses and cooperatives, where business decisions and distribution of profits can be democratically decided by their employees? If so, what kinds of incentives and/or legislation would ideally aid these businesses?

Yes. Worker-owned businesses are one of the most stable forms of employment that we have. When everyone has a stake in the business, employees (co-owners) work hard to keep the business from failing. I am not suggesting that those in the corporate world work any less hard, but the difference in success or failure of a small business relies on each of the employees nearly equally.

Yes or no:

13. Do you support an increase to the state minimum wage? If so, what dollar amount?

Yes No

\$15.00 minimum with cost of living adjustments built into the formula.

14. Do you support right to work legislation?

Yes No

15. Will you vote for the state to commit to using union businesses to fulfill state contracts?

Yes No

16. Would you vote to consolidate the current state tax brackets into 2 brackets?

Yes No

17. Do you support low income housing credits?

Yes No

POLICING/JUSTICE

18. What can the state legislature do to improve law enforcement relationships with disenfranchised communities?

Municipal court reform – limit the percentage of a city’s budget that can be collected through court fines or awards.

Anti-bias training and limit the use of force

Police must live in district and encourage minority hiring

Hire a communication officer that can be the point person for dissemination of information

Citizen participation on the police board

Independent investigator for police shooting

Allocate budget for police body cameras and dash cameras

19. What do you see as the most effective way to reduce crime?

We must encourage quality public school education and jobs creation. By having an educated workforce we can attract businesses to this area

20. Do you support marijuana legalization? If so, what level of access would you propose?

Yes, full legalization including recreational use. With legalization tax, revenue will increase and our state desperately needs additional revenues.

Yes or no:

21. Are you in favor of involving state troopers in crime prevention/hot spot policing beyond traffic violations ?

Yes ___ No X ___

22. Do you support appointing a special prosecutor for officer involved shootings?

Yes X ___ No ___

23. Do you support “Blue Lives Matter” legislation proposing an increase in penalties for crimes against police officers?

Yes ___ No X ___

24. Do you support ending the death penalty?

Yes X ___ No ___

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS & GENDER ISSUES

25. How would you explain your views on reproductive issues? How do you explain these views to groups with differing opinions in Missouri?

The decision of if, when, and how to have a child is a personal decision best left to a woman and her family. Politicians must not interfere with a woman's decision about her own health care.

The issue of when life begins is personal. For some it is based on faith and for others it is based on science. My belief is that I will never interfere in a woman's personal decision.

26. What measures will you take to ensure that perpetrators of sexual harassment, including those in elected positions, are held accountable for their actions? What will you do to ensure women feel safe reporting these?

If there is not already a process for reporting sexual harassment; then, one must be established. All reported harassment claims must be recorded and investigated. The person reporting the claim must be protected from retribution from the accused. When necessary, the incident should be referred to the proper authority for further investigation and corrective actions.

Yes or no:

27. Will you protect access to contraception and support mandated insurance coverage, state or private?

Yes No

28. Do you support repealing restrictions against abortion providers and hospitals, including doctor/hospital privileges and the 72 hour waiting period?

Yes No

29. Will you support removing state tax credits for crisis pregnancy centers?

Yes No

30. Do you support mandating that medically accurate sex education be taught in every public school district?

Yes No

31. Will you support legislation that specifically protects the rights and safety of transgender individuals?

Yes No

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

32. Outline your top three priorities for infrastructure expansion or improvement in the state. (Expanding public transportation in cities or rural areas, maintaining state highways and bridges, etc)

First, we have to pay our state employees a decent wage. We are losing engineers every year with recruiting and replacing those employees a hidden cost.

Second, build mass transit from urban and surrounding areas with high-speed rail across the state. Missouri has the 7th most lane miles of roads to maintain with the 47th lowest gas tax. We have to stop building more lanes that encourages single occupant commuters.

Third, rebuilding Missouri will create good paying jobs that will support an expanding economy. More jobs means more revenue and more revenue means more taxes to spend on infrastructure such as drinking water systems, wastewater systems, airports, bridges, roads and other infrastructure projects.

33. Do you support electrical grid modernization? If yes, do you believe funding for these projects should be partially funded through an increase in utility billing rates?

Absolutely. Without grid modernization, we cannot take advantage of renewable energy sources. When individual customers are generating electricity from renewable sources the excess electricity will be available for other customers and the electric company to distribute elsewhere. This can only happen with upgrades.

Net metering is going to be an issue for years to come. As more people install solar and wind the use of the transmitted electricity dwindles and customers are buying less electricity from the electric company. I believe that there is common ground where everyone must pay to upgrade the grid whether through retail charge or selling excess electricity back to the utility. Power is a vital component in attracting business to the area.



Yes or no:

34. Do you support transferring funding, upkeep, and control from the state to counties on secondary state highways? Should any funding or responsibility for state highways be shifted from the state to the county level?

Yes___ No_X__

35. Do you support an increase in the fuel tax in order to enable more infrastructure investment?

Yes_X__ No___

36. Do you support the addition of tolls to increase infrastructure spending?

Yes___ No_X__

GOVERNANCE

37. Would you support HB 1301, which bans certain lobbyist expenditures to state public officials and removes reporting requirements? Why or why not?

Yes, we need to get the influence out of the state house the same way it is in business. Gifts should be considered bribes and they have no place in our government.

We may not have to worry about the state government passing their own restriction since The Clean Missouri Initiative petition has collected enough votes to be on the ballot this November.

38. What should the state do to help enable legally registered voters to participate in elections?

I support a Second Voting Rights Act with automatic voter registration, repeal of voter ID laws, non-partisan redistricting commissions, and making Election Day a national holiday.



Yes or no:

39. Do you support state intervention to make a decision on the possible merger of St. Louis City and St. Louis County?

Yes No

40. Do you support repealing Missouri’s voter ID law?

Yes No

EDUCATION

Survey:

41. What do you believe would improve Missouri public schools, to make them a better option than private schools?

I take offense to think that Missouri public schools are not the better option when it comes to educating our children. Depending on the school, private schools may not have to meet the same standards as public schools.

Fully fund the foundation formula so that we can reduce class-size and student to teacher ratios. Restore funding for transportation and get the kids to school.

I attended 12 years of Catholic school and after I saw the curriculum taught in the Hazelwood district, I felt that my education lacked resources that the public school provided.

Yes or no:

42. Do you support public funding for school vouchers for private and charter schools?

Yes No

43. Do you support the election of school boards by voters of the local school district?

Yes No

44. Do you approve of the process Governor Greitens used to appoint state education board members?

Yes No

45. Should teachers be allowed to carry firearms in public schools?

Yes No



GENERAL

46. Why are you seeking the endorsement of Mobilize Missouri?

I am seeking endorsement from Mobilize Missouri because I feel that this group best exemplifies the future of the Democratic Party. We want change in the politics and the movements that I see today are reminiscent of the 60's and 70's. I was part of that movement when we believed we could change the world and we did. My generation protested to end the Vietnam War and fought to lower the voting age to 18.

Today we need that passion, endurance, and perseverance again. There is much to address. The old issues are under attack (Medicare, Medicaid, women's rights, gay rights, and civil rights) and we have new issues to tackle (gun violence and judicial prudence).

Mobilize Missouri is an important and integral part of the future for the Democratic Party and our nation as a whole. We must energize our constituents and encourage them to vote in the upcoming election. Without a large turnout, I am afraid it will be the same old politics of the past.

47. What are your top three legislative goals when elected?

Missouri must support, fund and invest in public education, pre-school to postsecondary, because an investment in our children is an investment in our future.

As an environmentalist, I am deeply concerned about the changes in the EPA at a federal level. Therefore, it is imperative for those in Missouri to keep a watchful eye on what is happening at the state level. The state of Missouri is blessed with a multitude of waterways. This will ultimately be a curse if we do not protect our natural resources. Renewable energy is a proven clean energy source that will not pollute water, land or air and will lower health risks.

An increase in good-paying employment opportunities such as green jobs and infrastructure will help give the Missouri economy the boost it needs to attract others to live and work in our state. I also defend our labor unions and must defeat the Right to Work laws that were recently passed by the Missouri legislature.

48. If elected, how would you foster inclusivity of viewpoints based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation in the state legislature?

The 2015 Supreme Court ruling gave gay and lesbian couples the right to get married. But under Missouri law, a person can still be fired, denied housing or not served in a restaurant based on the color of their skin, or for being perceived as a LGBTQ.

I will work hard to pass the Missouri Nondiscrimination Law

49. Where do you stand on “clean bills” – one bill, one subject?

I am in favor of this process. Too many of our resolutions start as a great idea but in order to gain the votes they become diluted and include everything but the kitchen sink.

We could end the practice of politicians sneaking legislation into bills.

Yes or no/fill in the blank:

50. Do you have a committee formed?

Yes No

51. Do you have a fundraising plan?

Yes No

52. Have you raised money/gotten commitments already?

Yes No

53. Do you have a campaign manager?

Yes No

54. What amount of time per week do you envision dedicating to campaigning and call time?

10+ HOURS

55. Do you have access to or plan to access VAN or some other voter information/address list?

Yes No

56. Do you know the size of your universe?

57. What is your goal number of votes needed to win?

7261

58. Do you have someone organizing volunteers for your campaign?

Yes No



59. List any relevant networks are you a part of or targeting in order to broaden your reach.

I am actively pursuing endorsements from Planned Parenthood, labor groups, UAW, etc.

60. Please use this last opportunity to discuss anything else about your issues, principles, or differentiating factors from opponents that you want your constituents to know:

I was raised in South St. Louis; an Eagle Scout; earned a bachelor degree in wildlife management from the University of Missouri; and as a non-traditional student, I earned two additional degrees a bachelors and master's in chemistry. Most of my working career has been in private industry as a chemist. My wife and I have been living in O'Fallon, Missouri for the past eleven years, and in May, we will celebrate 44 years of marriage. We have two children and two grandchildren.

I have been actively learning campaign strategy starting with the Women's Candidate Training April 2017 at St. Louis University; candidate training in Jefferson City with the Missouri Democratic Party; and recently candidate training with 314 Action; reaching out to current representatives and senators; I am a member of the Missouri Democratic Party and the NAACP; and I have had three fund raisers to meet like-minded people.

I believe that I am a person who can talk with just about anyone on both sides of the aisle, and will do all that I can to start changing the direction so that we are on our to make this state a better place to live, work and play.