



MOBILIZE MISSOURI

State House of Representatives Candidate Survey 2018
Janet Kester – District 63

HEALTHCARE

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

I firmly believe that access to quality, affordable health care is a basic human right. However, access to health care in Missouri remains insufficient and unequal. Immediate priorities should be support of favorable legislation (protection from surprise medical bills, accurate provider directories, extending post-partum Medicaid coverage, increased access to the MO p prescription drug assistance program) and opposition to unfavorable legislation (cutting Medicaid funding through a block grant, imposing work requirements of Medicaid recipients), while research proceeds on developing a pathway to the ultimate goal of universal coverage.

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

The opioid crisis impacting MO is most shockingly manifested as a factor in the increase in age-adjusted death rates among whites in rural counties. These “deaths of despair” are a direct result of the lack of basic social safety-net benefits such as universal health care – and might well have been mitigated if Missouri had expanded Medicaid. Work on multiple fronts is critically needed to care for people currently addicted and to prevent others from becoming addicted. Programs addressing prevention, detection, and early treatment as well as chronic care for addicted patients should be developed and expanded.

It is also clear that we need to address the underlying conditions that foster addiction in the first place. While opioid addiction and fatal overdoses have garnered significant media attention, a study by the University of Pittsburgh Center on Society and Health entitled *Why Are Death Rates Rising Among Whites in Missouri?* stated, “...*the opioid crisis is the tip of an iceberg*: many people are dying from the use of other drugs, alcohol abuse, the injuries and diseases they cause, and suicides. The death toll will not stop by attending only to drug abuse. Focusing upstream is also a priority: the root causes that are driving people to their deaths must be addressed. Alleviating the social and economic hardships responsible for chronic stress may do more to ease desperation, and thus may save more lives, than focusing exclusively on symptoms.” As noted by the Missouri Foundation for Health, “These societal and economic factors were decades in the making; unfortunately widespread progress will likewise take decades, even with strong action starting now” (<https://mffh.org/news/the-evolution-of-the-epidemic-missouris-opioid-crisis/>).

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

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?

Because I am not presently well-versed on climate-related legislation in Missouri, or the viewpoints of relevant experts, I do not yet have an answer to this very important question. That effective policy must be informed by the best available science goes without saying. According to EPA's 2016 fact sheet "What Climate Change Means for Missouri" (EPA 430-F-16-027), Missouri has warmed one-half to one degree Fahrenheit in the last century, less than most of the U.S. Heavy precipitation and flooding are more frequent, and more extremely hot days adversely impact human and environmental health. According to EPA's database on greenhouse gas emissions from large facilities, power plants are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing over 80% of the total emissions in 2016. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, coal fueled 81% of Missouri's electricity generation in 2017, and more coal is consumed for electricity generation in Missouri than in all but two other states (<https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=MO#52>). Thus, increasing renewable energy use in Missouri, as intended by the 2008 Clean Energy Initiative, would seem to be an obvious legislative priority.

It is important to recognize the disparity between expert and public opinion with regard to the magnitude and imminence of the threats posed by global climate change, and how that disparity is exacerbated by Republican misinformation. We must develop strategies to effectively counteract this false messaging in order to build strong support for appropriate action.

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

I think that the scientific defensibility and appropriateness of a policy to its locale are more important than who comes up with it, and that economic benefits should not outweigh these primary considerations. As general principles, I don't believe that CAFOs should be encouraged or that waterways should be subjected to excessive contamination.



ECONOMIC & LABOR POLICY

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

The key to attracting and retaining good jobs is to give employers what they need: a healthy, well-educated workforce with ready access to good transportation.

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?

That sounds like a great idea. I don't presently know what kinds of incentives or legislation would support it.

Yes or no:

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

Yes No \$ Whatever value is determined to be a living wage

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 Don't know

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?

This is obviously a very important topic, but one I currently lack expertise in. Certainly a shift away from the approach in which force and mass incarceration are the only tactics is necessary. The National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice identified support for reconciliation (facilitating frank engagements between minority communities, police and other authorities that allow them to address historical tensions, grievances, and misconceptions, and reset relationships) and procedural justice (the way police and other legal authorities interact with the public, and how the characteristics of those interactions shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates) and combating implicit bias (the automatic association people make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups) as key steps in improving outcomes (<https://trustandjustice.org/>).

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

Ensuring that people's basic needs (health care, child care, nutrition, education, recreation, entertainment, transportation) are met and social and economic opportunities are available.

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

Yes. I would support substantive decriminalization and regulated recreational use as well as medicinal use. Here's the conclusion of a recent review of adverse health effects of marijuana published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*¹:

"Marijuana use has been associated with substantial adverse effects, some of which have been determined with a high level of confidence. Marijuana, like other drugs of abuse, can result in addiction. During intoxication, marijuana can interfere with cognitive function (e.g., memory and perception of time) and motor function (e.g., coordination), and these effects can have detrimental consequences (e.g., motor-vehicle accidents). Repeated marijuana use during adolescence may result in long-lasting changes in brain function that can jeopardize educational, professional, and social achievements. However, the effects of a drug (legal or illegal) on individual health are determined not only by its pharmacologic properties but also by its availability and social acceptability. In this respect, legal drugs (alcohol and tobacco) offer a sobering perspective, accounting for the greatest burden of disease associated with drugs not because they are more dangerous than illegal drugs but because their legal status allows for more widespread exposure. As policy shifts toward legalization of marijuana, it is reasonable and probably prudent to hypothesize that its use will increase and that, by extension, so will the number of persons for whom there will be negative health consequences."

¹ Volkow, N.D., Baler, R.D., Compton, W.M., and Weiss, S.R.B. (2014). Adverse health effects of marijuana use. *New Engl J Med* 370:2219-2227.



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?

To me, this highly fraught topic comes down to individual autonomy. Women seeking abortions are not labels, they are people making decisions that are best for them and their families under their specific circumstances. Contraception should be part of all health plans so that people can control this most important biological attribute. It is critical that abortion remain a safe and legal medical procedure for women to choose without interference from grandstanding politicians.

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?

Provide workplace rules and training, if necessary, to clearly set standards for acceptable behavior. Encourage employees to support one another and be alert for signs of abuse. Develop procedures for reporting offenses that guarantee objective investigation and protection of both parties. Establish clear consequences for infractions, including counseling, suspension, termination, and referral to law enforcement.

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)

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has given Missouri infrastructure an overall grade of C-. Their top 3 recommendations are (1) increase transportation investment (gaining matching federal funds), (2) develop a more systematic approach to flood prevention, and (3) eliminate regulation exemptions for high-hazard and significant-hazard dams (68% of which are currently exempt from inspection).

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?

Yes and yes

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__X__ No___



GOVERNANCE

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

I'm not familiar with this bill.

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

This is another important issue I'll have to learn more about. At a minimum, the state should ensure that polling places are conveniently located, accessible, and adequately staffed.

Yes or no:

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

Yes___ No___ Don't know

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

Yes__X__ No___

EDUCATION

Survey:

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

Increased and equitable per pupil funding, increased teacher pay, benefits, and professional stature, decreased student:teacher ratios, reduced reliance on standardized testing, and greater emphasis on practical, critical, and creative thinking and doing.

Yes or no:

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

Yes___ No__X__

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

Yes__X__ No___

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

Yes___ No__X__

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

Yes___ No__XXXXXXXX__



GENERAL

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

I'm a true and dedicated progressive candidate with no political ambitions but a strong desire to use the skills and experience conferred by a lifetime of opportunity to help my community in this frankly desperate hour.

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

Moving as quickly as possible toward universal health care, fully funding public education, and ensuring employees' rights to earn a living wage and negotiate for fair pay and safe working conditions. I am also very interested in environmental protection, agriculture (support for family farms), and animal welfare.

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

By advocating for diverse representation in groups I work with and requesting discussion of the potential consequences for decision-making quality when lack of diverse viewpoints and experiences are lacking.

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

Pro

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?

20 to 40+ hours per week

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?

___ Working on it

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

___ Working on it

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

Yes___No__X__

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

Unions, women's groups, scientific professional groups I'm part of, animal welfare organizations

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 have always loved science and nature. I earned a B.S. in Biology and a Ph.D. in toxicology (the study of poisons) with the intention of dedicating my career to understanding and mitigating the impact of environmental chemicals on human and ecological health. I became an environmental consultant in order to apply my knowledge in the real world. In the course of my nearly 30-year career, I have always advocated for solutions based on the best available science. I have developed and taught graduate courses in toxicology, presented short courses and seminars on toxicology and health risk assessment in the U.S. and abroad, published papers and book chapters, performed detailed reviews of the toxicology of organic and inorganic chemicals, metals, mold toxins, and particulate matter, conducted numerous human health and ecological risk assessments, negotiated with diverse stakeholder groups, and testified as an expert witness in state and federal courts. I have a special interest in communicating complex technical material to lay audiences – an expertise that I hope will be helpful in explaining issues to voters, empowering them to resist the Republican disinformation machine.

So – I have no political experience whatsoever. I am running to represent the 63rd district because I see such big problems with where this state is and where it's going that I cannot sit by and wait for someone else to fix it. I would like to apply my training and experience as a scientist to developing policies based on evidence rather than ideology.