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# MOBILIZE MISSOURI

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U.S. Congress Candidate Survey 2018

Candidate Name: **John Messmer**

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## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Survey:

### 1. How would you incentivize clean power initiatives?

I strongly support legislation already championed by Bernie Sanders that will encourage climate-neutral energy policies. These include: the Residential Energy Savings Act, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, and the Green Jobs Act.

### 2. Where should the money for infrastructure investment come from?

I would propose two sources of increased revenue: First, I would support a modest increase in the national gas excise tax. Second, I would introduce a direct national tax on carbon emissions. Such a carbon tax would have the added benefit of creating incentives for entrepreneurs to pursue new technologies that are needed to curb our reliance on fossil fuels. Such a direct carbon tax would be much more preferable than a “cap and trade” approach.

Yes or no:

### 3. Do you consider the internet a public utility?

Yes  No

### 4. Do you support net neutrality?

Yes  No

### 5. Do you support the expansion of light rail transit?

Yes  No

### 6. Do you support electrical grid modernization?

Yes  No

## HEALTHCARE

*Survey:*

### **7. What solutions can the federal government offer to address the heroin epidemic?**

First of all, the federal government needs to get its priorities straight. Astonishingly, marijuana is classified in federal law as a “Schedule 1” drug. This puts cannabis in the same category as heroine, ecstasy, and LSD. That’s absurd. And it needs to change.

Moreover, the Controlled Substances Act needs to be amended to prohibit the federal government (through agencies like the Drug Enforcement Administration) from enforcing drug laws in states that allow the medicinal and recreational uses of those drugs.

Right now, the DEA is not enforcing federal drug laws in states like Colorado but that is only because of a Justice Department decree! Since it isn’t in federal law, the DEA could always theoretically start enforcing federal drug restrictions under new executive orders.

Citizens in states with relaxed local drug laws should always feel safe from the powerful enforcement powers of the DEA and the U.S. Justice Department. Our federal structure demands a rational sharing of responsibility between the states and Washington D.C.

We make a mockery of this by holding on to a Controlled Substances Act that hasn’t been changed in decades and a DEA that is one executive order away from ignoring states’ rights and throwing good people in federal prisons.

Congress needs to get real when it comes to drugs. The real drug problem in America is the opioid epidemic. And the federal government is acting irresponsibly when it diverts needed government resources in the war against opioids by enforcing outdated, unpopular, and unnecessary laws regarding marijuana possession.

Specifically, there are three immediate solutions that the federal government can offer.

- First, it needs to encourage the integration of drug treatment programs into primary care health programs. Right now there are major government barriers to many medication assisted treatment programs and the training of qualified physicians. Congress should do more to eliminate these burdens to treatment.
- Second, the federal government needs to increase Medicaid coverage for drug treatment in all states. Right now, those in states that opted to expand Medicaid coverage receive much better drug treatment than the millions in states that did not expand. Moreover, there are millions that fall into the “gap of coverage” where they make too little to qualify for Obamacare marketplace subsidies.
- Third, the federal government must lead an effort to address the neglected populations in the criminal justice system.

**8. How would you address the dearth of adequate healthcare in rural areas?**

We already have an office dedicated to this within the already enormous Department of Health and Human Services. The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) was created with the explicit intent of improving the delivery of healthcare in rural areas. Clearly, it needs to do more and Congress should take responsibility in invigorating this office.

Congress should also take the initiative in encouraging (and in some cases requiring) that rural healthcare facilities be part of larger and more established healthcare networks associated with private, not for profit, or university systems. Congress could also do more to improve broadband internet service to these rural areas so that health care providers could more efficiently service at-need communities through telecommunications (often referred to as “telehealth”) if face-to-face care is impossible or too difficult.

*Yes or no:*

**9. Do you support the negotiation of Medicare/Medicaid drug prices with Canada?**

Yes  No

**10. Do you support the legalization of marijuana?**

Yes  No

**11. Should the government mandate that all state prescription drug monitoring programs are accessible to health care providers and other prescribers?**

Yes  No

**12. Do you support Medicare for All or a comparable universal healthcare solution?**

Yes  No

**13. The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) is a federal law that requires anyone coming to an emergency department to be stabilized and treated, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay, since 1986 this is an unfunded mandate. Do you support funding this mandate until a Universal Healthcare Solution is enacted to ease the cost burden on urban and rural hospitals?**

Yes  No



## ENVIRONMENT

*Survey:*

### **14. How should state and federal governments deal with clean water issues like Flint, MI?**

This was a manmade disaster. First, and most importantly, the federal government should have treated this catastrophe like it would have a major natural disaster and immediately taken control of the situation from the state. Then, it should have spared no expense to help the people of Flint immediately. Nationalizing the national guard, if necessary.

When the savings and loan industry collapsed in the 1980s and 1990s, the federal government didn't hesitate to come to the rescue. When the financial industry collapsed in 2008, the federal government didn't waiver in its immediate response to the crisis. And whenever a president says we need to go to war, Congress never hesitates to find the funding.

Disasters like Flint should have been handled with the same immediacy.

Second, because this was a manmade disaster, we need to get to the bottom of who was responsible. If state laws were violated, then we need to assist the state of Michigan in prosecuting those that were responsible. If federal laws – including, but not limited to civil rights laws – were violated, the Justice Department needs to prosecute those responsible to the fullest extent of the law. And if necessary, Congress should lead the investigation of those public officials that were responsible for this. This investigation should be public and it must be thorough in order to send the clear message to other government officials in the nation that this failure of the public trust cannot be ignored.

### **15. What should be the position the federal government takes on climate change? Why?**

Climate change represents one of the biggest threats to the future of global security. This is not the conclusion of latte-sipping tree huggers in California, this is what the Defense Department concluded in a Pentagon report from a few years ago!

Big money and organized lobbying has steered Congress toward unconscionably wrong-headed conclusions that are not only an international embarrassment, but – more critically – are also dangerous to life as we know it. If we follow the money we can get a better idea of why America is such an international outlier.



Other industrially developed nations embrace common-sense environmental regulations. These countries also aren't as receptive to organized lobbying and campaign finance corruption. That's not a coincidence.

We need to treat climate change as the national/global security issue that it is. The effects of decades of unregulated industrialization is already happening. We need a commitment from businesses, from individuals, and from government. We need to heed the Pentagon's warnings.

Here's where we need to start:

- First, we need a recommitment to the environment and that begins with a complete overhaul of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Ideally, the EPA needs to become a full-fledged executive department, led by a cabinet secretary. If commerce, transportation, and energy are important enough to warrant an executive department, so is the environment! Whether an independent agency or a department it should always be led by a true champion of the environment and not someone openly hostile to environmental protection as is the case right now!
- Second, environmental protection cannot be limited by political boundaries. As the scientific community knows, reversing the catastrophic effects of climate change requires a global strategy. It is irresponsible for the United States to not take a leading role in international efforts at environmental protection. First, it's our moral responsibility as one of the world's leading producers of greenhouse gases. Second, and more importantly, the US has always benefited when it takes the lead on global matters; it always suffers when it shirks its global leadership role. Environmental protection is no exception.
- Third, we need a federally led domestic effort that encourages renewable energy initiatives throughout the states. An outstanding example of one such possible program is the "Renewable Energy Initiative" proposed in Missouri by "Government By the People." Such "New Deal" type projects are needed if we are to make any progress on climate change. The more the federal government can do to promote and finance such initiatives, the better!

Yes or no:

**16. Would you suggest federal involvement in dealing with West Lake landfill?**

Yes  No

**17. Do you support private companies being allowed to drill on public lands, protected areas, or parks?**

Yes  No

**18. Do you support coal/oil industry subsidies?**

Yes  No



**19. Should we continue to fund the cost of national parks?**

Yes  No



## ECONOMIC & LABOR POLICY

*Survey:*

### **20. How do you think we can plan our economy for changes to industries/loss of jobs due to automation and the obsolescence of the nation's industrial sector?**

This is not our grandparents' world. Gone are the days when America – and America alone – wrote all the rules. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need to deal with a strong European Union and capitalism in China and India. The globalized economy was created by the United States. We cannot shy away from our position as an economic giant nor from the realities of an increasingly interconnected world.

The ascendance of free-trade is one of these realities. But free-trade doesn't necessarily mean fair-trade. Both parties have tragically failed at times to properly grasp this and that has been to the detriment of the American middle-class. As your representative I will always strive to protect the American worker from the often devastating effects of a globalized economy.

Congress has an awful habit of just seeing dollar signs when it comes to "free-trade" deals – again, often forgetting that FREE trade isn't always FAIR trade. Trade deals are not wrong on their surface. Unfortunately, however, evil sometimes lurks beneath the surface. That was certainly the case with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

And in addition to the effects of global trade agreements, Congress must also look at the effects of automation and the obsolescence of the nation's industrial sector. If the modern economy creates severe hardships on American employment, there must be measures in place to remedy the effects on workers, their families, and their communities. Congress can do more in this regard in two areas:

- First, it must require more out of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). This regulatory body needs to lead the national conversation in how specifically globalization and automation has changed our economy and how it has affected specific communities. More importantly, based on these findings the FTC needs to provide detailed recommendations on how best to ease the burden on our most vulnerable communities and how the federal government can assist them in transitioning from an "old economy" to a "new economy." In other words, the government needs to actively find new careers for these devastated and displaced workers. If current legislation does not require the FTC to provide such policy analysis and recommendations, legislation should be introduced to redefine the FTC's responsibilities.

This ability to transition from the "old" to the "new" is not hypothetical. American cities like Pittsburgh, PA and Columbus, OH are accomplishing this very thing. But more communities still stuck in an "old economy" way of thinking (e.g. St. Louis!) need help to

evolve. There's no reason to not demand that the federal government lead such an effort.

- Second, Congress needs to institute financial incentives to industries that help displaced workers either retrain for new careers, or find new jobs that still require their skillset. State and federal government programs that focus on retraining and education already exist, but they are proving inadequate to mean the accelerated pace of global economic realities. Congress needs to do more to greatly improve these programs.

## 21. What is your approach to tax policy?

We need to tax people more. To many, that may sound absurd. But the reality is that the country needs to raise revenue to cover inevitable budget deficits and to fund the expansions of health care and pensions that come with an aging population. These are realities that must be confronted. This is what I support:

- Return the corporate income tax rate to the rate before these latest reductions.
- Introduce modest increases in new marginal income tax rates on the wealthiest citizens. Right now, the top income tax rate (37%) for a household starts at \$600,000. We need slightly larger rates for larger incomes. Why does the top rate start at \$600,000 when there are extraordinarily wealthy Americans making much more? We need rates of 39% - 43% to cover the incomes of CEOs and hedge fund managers that make millions. Right now, a wealthy professional making hundreds of thousands annually pays essentially the same rate in income taxes as a CEO making tens of millions annually. That's ridiculous. Our income tax table needs to reflect the incomes of all Americans. Right now, it doesn't.
- Seriously look into the possibility of adding a national consumption tax. Twenty-nine other advanced industrial countries have a value added tax (VAT). It's about time we looked into instituting one, too. By far the best criticism of a VAT is its regressive nature. This is a warranted concern. That's why the only VAT that I would support would be one that took care to offset its regressive tilt. This could be done three ways: First, revenue generated by the VAT would directly fund progressive programs (like universal health care) and to boost subsidies for the working poor; Second, proceeds from the VAT would be used to lower payroll taxes for the low and middle class income earners; Third, certain basic necessities would be exempted from the VAT (food, clothing, medicine, etc.).
- The federal tax on the income we earn from work is higher than the tax we pay on capital gains. That is absurd and an insult to working Americans. What message do we send when we value income from the sale of securities and stocks more than we value income from labor and sweat? At the very least, capital gains need to be taxed at the same rate as the income from labor. Personally, I believe that capital gains tax rates should be HIGHER than tax rates on work. Whatever the case, federal tax policy clearly needs to reevaluate its priorities.

## **22. What role should unions play in our future? Please include your thoughts on Right to Work legislation.**

In our current political climate, labor unions are doomed. I am currently a proud union member so it pains me to admit this. But unions today trail the power of big business and industry when it comes to political clout. And that means trouble for the middle class. It's not a coincidence that when organized labor was powerful in American politics, the middle class thrived. When the system began to work against organized labor, the middle class sank.

Our politics – but especially our Congress – is “pay to play.” To get the attention of lawmakers, you need access. To gain access you need to either be a big campaign contributor or capable of deploying an army of lobbyists. If you can do both, you're sitting pretty.

Organized labor can't compete with the economic elites in the country. They contribute to campaigns and lobby, but not to the extent that business and industry can.

The result? Some political scientists and economists refer to the period beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the “end of the postwar social contract.” In the decades immediately after WWII, American worker productivity rose and worker wages rose along with it. Labor unions during this period were powerful in Washington and in our state capitals.

In the 40 years since, productivity has continued to rise, but worker wages have remained relatively flat.

And it was about this time that we started to see the rise of special interest largesse being translated into political power. The game was being rigged to the benefit of those that could flood elections with money and pay for nonstop lobbying. Organized labor just couldn't compete.

Then, Citizens United v. FEC happened. Corporations are now given even more power to influence elections. Then McCutcheon v. FEC happened. And wealthy individual donors are now given more power to influence elections, too.

So. Now what?

We need to fundamentally fix our political system. We need to end “pay to play.” We need to level the playing field so groups representing average Americans – and not just economic elites – have a chance to access decision makers and make their case in Congress. Congress needs to fear voters. And not just fear lobbyists and their money.

That is the primary focus of my campaign. And it is why I have proposed a 15-point plan for reform that deals with campaign finance reform, election reform, and ethics reform. We need these reforms to give more interests access to our political process. We need these reforms to give unions power and prestige again.

“Right to Work” legislation adds insult to injury to unions and the middle class. Political mountains are moved in America through the power of groups. This is why “Freedom to Assemble” is a fundamental liberty in the First Amendment! “Right to Work” undercuts unions. It requires unions to represent workers but allows these workers to “ride for free.” All philosophical arguments aside, the goal of this legislation is simple: it’s to weaken organized labor. Period.

As a representative in Congress, I will always respect the need for organized labor. And I will always support federal legislation that protects unions and I will always fight against those looking to undercut the power of the working class. “Right to Work” legislation at every level is wrong for America.

*Yes or no:*

**23. Do you support an increase to the federal minimum wage? If so, what dollar amount?**

Yes  No  \$ 15 or a living wage (whichever is higher)

**24. Do you support a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT)?**

Yes  No

**25. Should there be increased enforcement of antitrust laws?**

Yes  No

**26. Do we need to decrease federal spending?**

Yes  No

**27. Should we continue to fund Medicare and Social Security; the so-called entitlements?**

Yes  No

## POLICING/JUSTICE

*Survey:*

### **28. What are your thoughts on reducing the prison population, and recidivism rates in the US?**

The US prison population is extraordinarily large. And we need to have a national conversation about its consequences, its causes, and what it says about our society. But most importantly, we need to discuss what can be done about it. And Congress needs to lead the effort. There are several things that Congress can do. But I would promote three things above all others:

First and foremost, we need to outlaw for-profit private prisons. The most comprehensive legislation that I have ever seen that attempts to do this is Bernie Sanders's "Justice is Not for Sale Act." This legislation would go a long way in fixing our criminal justice system. The problems with private prisons are numerous. But most troubling is the fact that they depend on rising incarceration rates for their economic survival.

Criminal justice – and especially rehabilitation – needs to be society's responsibility. It is absurd and counterproductive to put this responsibility in the hands of those who will economically benefit with rising incarceration rates! Eliminating private prisons nationwide would go a long way to addressing the national tragedy that is our unusually high prison population.

Second, Congress needs to lead the national conversation with respect to reducing mandatory minimum guidelines and "three-strikes" laws. Judges are often the most sympathetic to the injustice of many of these ridged statutory requirements. They need the flexibility to provide more humane sentencing – especially with respect to non-violent offenders.

Third, Congress needs to lead a national effort at providing expanded educational and job-training opportunities to those incarcerated. If we really want to do something about recidivism we need to understand that many resort to crime out of desperation. Without skills or education, many who leave prison will just end up back in legal trouble. We owe it to them – and the communities that they return to – to offer them opportunities to succeed and to gain lawful employment.

### **29. How would you improve equity within our Court system with reference to plea deals, 3-strikes laws, and mandatory minimums?**

There is much that Congress can and should do with respect to our federal criminal justice system. And they can also do more when it comes to leading the overdue national conversations – along with the Department of Justice – when it comes to the criminal justice systems in the states. Of particular concern to all of us should be the lack of equity found in our

court systems and how unfair our system is to immigrants, poor populations, and in particular, people of color.

“Three-Strike” laws and mandatory minimums only have a place in our criminal justice system with respect to habitual violent crime. Adhering to rigid legislation that puts in prison for long periods of time perpetrators of non-violent crime makes little sense. And is one of the reasons why we have such an extraordinarily large prison population in the states. Congress should lead the effort to encourage states to eliminate “Three-Strike” laws and mandatory minimums for non-violent crime and to give back to judges the flexibility to make judgements that they see are appropriate given specific circumstances.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments require due-process for all individuals subject to US law. We need a Congress that understands this and demands that treatment of our criminal justice and Court systems respect all individuals – be they citizens or immigrants – equally.

And the 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment requires all individuals subject to US law enforcement to have the right “to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.” This implies (and subsequent court cases have affirmed) that this means everyone has the right to a decent legal defense. And if one cannot afford a lawyer, one will be provided by the government.

Congress can do more through its oversight function with respect to the quality of legal defense offered to those facing federal prosecution. But the real problem in this country is found in the public defenders programs in the states. Congress should lead the national conversation with respect to how poor populations are facing extraordinary challenges when confronted with criminal prosecution.

One should not be at a disadvantage simply because they cannot afford an expensive defense. It should be incumbent on the government to ensure that justice not be a function of one’s economic situation. And if states refuse to address these clearly unconstitutional inadequacies, Congress should pressure the Justice Department to seek recourse through legal means. To deny US citizens their 6<sup>th</sup> amendment right is to deny them a fundamental civil liberty. And the fact that these poor populations are disproportionately represented by racial and ethnic minorities makes this situation even more troubling.

*Yes or no:*

**30. Are you in favor of for profit prisons?**

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

**31. Would you support restoring the vote to felons who have served their time?**

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



**32. Are you in favor of federal legislation to remove the “felon box” from job applications?**

Yes  No

**33. Do you think police departments need military grade equipment?**

Yes  No

**34. Do you support ending the death penalty?**

Yes  No

**35. Do you support creating a committee to study and make suggestions on how to reduce crime in prisons?**

Yes  No

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS & GENDER ISSUES

*Survey:*

**36. Where do you stand on reproductive freedom for women? Please discuss such topics as: abortion, ease of access to birth control, fact-based sex education, and rights/responsibilities of fathers? Please add how you will present your position to voters with different opinions.**

American women have had a constitutional right to abortion since 1973. This is now a fundamental right that is fully protected by the American judicial system. Such fundamental rights in a civil society cannot simply be negated. And they should not be so cavalierly reversed. Since *Roe v. Wade*, an entire generation of women have lived with this liberty.

Anti-choice legislators sometimes fail to appreciate this fact. They abhor abortion to such a degree that they often refuse to appreciate the consequences that laws that restrict reproductive rights have on society – particularly on American women. Reversing this established right would be cruel and counterproductive. That is why we need more legislators that will fight for reproductive rights.

But there are as many important similarities between opposing sides in this debate as there are differences. We can agree that abortion should be rare. And we can agree that there is a role that government can play in reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies. And I would hope that we can all agree that among the things that government can do, making criminals of women and their doctors should not be an option.

When it comes to this issue, too many Americans live in a world that no longer exists. Victorian and puritan morals belong in museum displays, not in the decision-making of elected representatives. If we want to lower the prevalence of abortion, we need a strategy that fits today's realities. Here is a start:

- Congress needs to encourage REAL sex education curricula in our nation's schools. Young people will have sex when they're ready. No lecture from mom or dad or a teacher will stop that. It's absurd to accept that fact but then NOT educate adolescents with the facts – both biological and psychological – that they need. And the curriculum needs to be grounded in reality – not in a Norman Rockwell version of reality that treats sex as something dirty and sex education as taboo.
- Adolescents need to learn from this curriculum that they are not abnormal if they choose to abstain from sex. At the same time, however, we need to face the reality that if adolescents do engage in sex that they understand everything they need to know with respect to birth control. Along with fact-based education efforts on birth control should come convenient access to contraceptives. In countries where this combination exists, unwanted teen pregnancies are rare. Allowing old-fashioned prejudices about sex and birth control to dominate this debate is ridiculous and a gross disservice to our children.



- Congress should compel the states and the Department of Health and Human Services to do more for pregnant women. If women seek abortions because they are unsure of their ability to care for their children, a civil society would want to naturally do more to make carrying a baby to term a more appealing option. Government at all levels can do more to make pre-natal and neo-natal care more affordable and accessible. In addition, more should be done to remove the unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to adoption.

**37. What would your public and private response be if allegations of sexual harassment were made against a colleague in government or a member of your political party?**

My public and private response would not be different. And it wouldn't matter to me if it involved a political foe, friend, or colleague. First, and most importantly, I would emphasize the need to find the truth. Everyone always deserves full due-process. But sexual harassment is a serious accusation. So until the truth is determined we should error on the side of caution. If the accused was someone in my office, for example, I would insist that that person be suspended from normal office/job interactions with others.

Just as important, I would make sure to respect the rights of the person making the accusation. The reaction by many, unfortunately, is to blame the victim or to immediately cast doubt on the accuser. Again, until we can get to the truth, we need to respect everyone's rights in the process.

*Yes or no:*

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

Yes  No

**39. Do you support revoking tax credits for alternatives to abortion agencies, specifically, crisis pregnancy centers which have no state regulations?**

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

**41. Do you support mandatory sentences for those convicted of sexual assault?**

Yes  No

**42. Do you think federal civil rights law should be expanded to protect transgender Americans?**

Yes  No



## ETHICS/TRANSPARENCY

*Survey:*

### 43. What approach do you take in deciding which campaign contributions to accept?

I made clear publicly at the start of my campaign that I would not accept money from corporate PACs. And I would discourage to the best of my ability support for any independent expenditure committee (Super-PAC) endorsing my candidacy.

I will only accept contributions from individuals. Still, I am very careful to only accept money from individuals that I am confident are not looking for something in return. It's this "quid pro quo" system that has turned the Congress into a "pay-to-play" legislature. If an individual donates money to my campaign it must be because they believe in my message. If I would suspect for a moment that they were hoping to by favor or access, I would immediately refuse (or return) their donation.

I have made fundamental political reform the centerpiece of my campaign. This includes campaign finance reform, election reform, and ethics reform. I have a 15-point plan that includes 15 actionable items that I pledge to initiate in my first 100 days in office. The first four of these points in this plan deal exclusively with campaign finance reform.

Political campaigns in America have become absurd competitions for funding. Those who raise the most money are the most likely to win. And most of the money is coming from big-moneyed interests. Donors know what they're doing: they're buying access to Congress. And with that access they are being rewarded handsomely.

The disastrous Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court made a bad situation worse. We currently have a system where one's political worth is equal to their net worth. That, by definition, is a corruption.

My plan is to lead the charge to reform our campaign finance system.

This is what I propose:

- **An immediate return to the campaign finance limits outlined in the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971.** This would immediately bring limits and regulations on donations back down to more reasonable levels. The maximum limits as they stand right now are too generous and therefore exclude the average citizen from being able to compete.
- **An immediate ban on all campaign donations to Congress from registered lobbyists.** Either you get paid to lobby Congress or you donate to their campaigns. To allow both is to allow lobbyists to buy preferential treatment from our elected public servants. Lobbyists should succeed if they make sound arguments. Their success shouldn't be about the ability to bribe public officials.

- **The creation of the “Independent Select Committee on Campaign Finance Reform.”** This will be a committee made up of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans. The committee will thoroughly investigate ways we can rid federal elections of contributions that are so large that they corrupt the electoral process. An election should be a competition of ideas, not a competition of who has the wealthiest supporters. This committee will thoroughly look into – but not be limited to – the following:
  - **Publicly funded federal campaigns.** Several states and municipalities already employ various levels of public finance for viable and serious political candidates. This allows candidates to focus their campaigns on what’s important, and not obsess over their need to obtain private financing. This committee’s job will be to look into how a publicly funded campaign system on the federal system could operate. This would greatly expand the efforts already introduced in the “Government By the People Act.”
  - **Greatly improving disclosure requirements.** Who is contributing to federal elections? Where are federal candidates getting their money? This committee’s job will be to look into how we can strengthen the Federal Election Commission (FEC) in order for it to do a better job in fully disclosing where campaign money is coming from and where it is going. This information needs to be easily and readily available to all Americans and not buried in an overwhelmed – and at times neglected – federal bureaucracy.
  - **Eliminating loopholes and “dark money.”** Money spent in any capacity on federal elections needs to be publicly disclosed. Right now, there are loopholes that allow big money to bypass regulations and allow contributors to escape full public disclosure. The process needs to be transparent. This committee will look into how we can close these loopholes and how we can bring “dark” money in from the shadows.
- **Constitutional Amendment on Campaign Finance.** Even with these reforms, however, we still face a grotesque reality established by Citizens United. Corporations are not people and money is not speech. Thus, if the Supreme Court refuses to overrule the Citizens United decision, we need to address it through a Constitutional Amendment.

In my opinion, the best amendment language has been proposed by former Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens:

***Neither the First Amendment nor any other provision of this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit the Congress or any state from imposing reasonable limits on the amount of money that candidates for public office, or their supporters, may spend in election campaigns.***

**44. Discuss what truthfulness in campaign ads means to you and how you have put that into practice.**

The first amendment protects us from government infringement on speech. That right, however, is not absolute. But the kind of speech that has traditionally received the most iron-clad first amendment protection has always been political speech – and that includes speech used in political campaigns.

That explains why it sometimes appears that candidates can get away with saying/writing anything without repercussion. Courts are naturally reluctant to restrict political speech because the free flow of such speech is considered vital for a democracy.

So we need to be the most vigilant of this kind of speech. And as candidates, we have a responsibility to protect the truth. Personally, I take this responsibility very seriously.

That is why I spent such a long time making sure that my website was exactly as I wanted it to be before officially announcing my candidacy. And that meant making sure that everything that I posted was accurate and supported with references and sources.

One of the things that I have noticed, however, is how loose other candidates are with the term “grassroots.” As in, *“This is a grassroots supported campaign.”* Ann Wagner has stated that. Yet 98% of her individual contributions are listed as “large contributions” (defined by the FEC as \$200 or more). Others in this race are also claiming “grassroots support” despite getting over 80% of their donations from individuals contributing over \$200.

A true grassroots campaign would get the vast majority of their contributions from small donations – contributions that ordinary American can afford. In this race, I can proudly claim that mine is a grassroots supported campaign.

Yes or no:

**45. Do you support publicly funded elections?**

Yes  No

**46. Do you support a standardized code of conduct for all elected officials at a federal level?**

Yes  No

**47. Will you release your tax returns?**



Yes  No

**48. Will you commit to holding town halls with all members of your constituency?**

Yes  No

How many: Minimum of once every 3 months. More if time allows and circumstances dictate.

**49. Do you have a plan for remaining engaged with your district while in D.C.?**

Yes  No

**50. Do you believe Citizens United should be overturned?**

Yes  No

**51. Do you support expanding voter ID laws?**

Yes  No

**52. Do you support an inclusive, clean census, counting all diverse members of our society in census?**

Yes  No

## VOTER ENGAGEMENT

*Survey:*

**53. Much of our population either votes along party lines, or doesn't vote because they don't believe either main party serves their interest. Do you think it's more important to reach across the aisle to voters your party has lost over time or to invigorate non-affiliated voters?**

Both sets of voters are equally important.

As an elected representative, my attitude will be that I represent everyone in the district. That includes my most ardent supporters, my most vocal partisan critics, and people that have shown no political preference at all.

My job will be to build coalitions in order to achieve legislative majorities in order to construct necessary regulation and public policy. Members of my own political party are probably more likely to support me. But that will not prevent me from seeking out the approval of those of another party or people back at home that that have divorced themselves from the political process.

I respect those who have different ideological or partisan positions from me. I may disagree vehemently with some of their positions, but if they are Americans I will respect their right to these positions. And I definitely can sympathize with those that have "dropped out" of the political process. Our system is broken. Parts of it are corrupt. Many have been offended by government actions to the point that they have disconnected themselves from all that is political. I understand their frustration. But that will not mean that I will forget about them or ignore their concerns.

I will represent the district first and will do everything that I can for the benefit of the nation. And that includes everyone calling the nation home – members of my party, members of the opposition parties, and the non-affiliated.

**54. What are your strategies to increase voter turnout?**

Our low voter turnout rate is a national disgrace. We need the federal government – led by Congress - to address the fact that millions of Americans have either been unfairly disenfranchised or are demonstrating their disgust in the electoral system by refusing to participate. One of the best organizations to lead the way is Jason Kander's "Let America Vote" project.

In my 15-Point plan for fundamental political reform, Point #7 is to propose the formation in Congress of the “Select Independent Committee for Election Reform.” Among this committee’s responsibilities will be to build on Jason’s effort and to investigate the different ways that we can improve turnout. This includes:

- Making voter registration easier and/or automatic;
- Making the act of voting more convenient (changing the days that elections are held, making election day a holiday, allowing early voting, etc.);
- Improving voter-education efforts.

In addition to this committee, it is also important to fundamentally improve other aspects of our electoral system. With these improvements, voters will regain confidence in our elections. With this improved confidence, voter turnout will increase. This is also what I would propose:

- ***Greatly strengthening the powers and capabilities of the Federal Election Commission.*** As the nation’s watchdog over federal elections, this regulatory commission is supposed to make sure federal elections are fair. Unfortunately, Congress has allowed this very vital agency to collapse into an impotent absurdity. Its budget has been cut so severely that it can’t investigate even clear-cut campaign violations. Its power has been stripped so much that it can’t even collect the fines that it imposes! This committee’s job will be to revitalize the FEC by reorganizing its place in the bureaucracy and giving it the tools to effectively enforce federal election law.
- ***Greatly improving the integrity of American elections.*** The 2016 Russian hacking scandal has put a spotlight on the integrity of our elections. Much of the problem stems from the fact that we rely so much on electronic voting machines that can be accessed by nefarious online hackers. Such concerns are no longer confined to the most paranoid among us. Nothing demands attention to integrity more than our vote choice. This committee’s job will be to treat these threats as a major national security concern and to propose ways to restore the public’s faith in the process. This must include – but not be limited to – legislation requiring all ballots in American elections to include a paper backup (voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT)).
- ***Improving the prospects of 3<sup>rd</sup> party and independent candidates.*** Many Americans don’t participate in politics because they find choosing between the “lesser of two evils” distasteful. Many more people would participate in politics if they had more options. It’s unfair that the system is sometimes perceived as “rigged” by the two major political parties. Independents and 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates deserve more respect. This committee’s job should include looking into areas where we can change the law to make it more fair for candidates that wish to run as something other than a Democrat or Republican. This could include looking into things like “proportional representation”, “instant runoff voting”, and “ranked choice voting.”
- ***Address concerns regarding the Electoral College.*** Twice in the last 17 years the winner of the popular vote count has not won in the electoral college. This “quirk” is the result of our antiquated way of electing Presidents. Moreover, the electoral college system



forces campaigns to concentrate on just a handful of “swing” states at the expense of the others. This is wrong and has become a growing concern among an increasing number of Americans. This committee will look into what can be done. Our best hope might lie with an effort known as the National Popular Vote. Failing that, this committee should look into amending the Constitution to eliminate the electoral college once and for all.

**55. How do we make it easier to vote?**

Many of the strategies to increase voter turnout are successful precisely because it makes it easier for people to vote. Eliminating barriers to registration, making the act of voting more convenient, and improving voter-education efforts obviously will also make it more likely that people will vote.

Probably the most encouraging idea, however, lies with the “Automatic Voter Registration (AVR)” effort. So far, 12 states and the District of Columbia have AVR and 20 more states have introduced legislation in 2018. With this policy, eligible citizens are automatically registered to vote – and their registration information is automatically updated - unless they decline upon their interaction with a government agency.

*Yes or No:*

**56. Should voting day be a federal holiday?**

Yes  No

**57. Do you support automatic voter registration?**

Yes  No

## EDUCATION

*Survey:*

**58. Briefly discuss your ideas to ensure that all children have access to equitable education to ensure a well-educated populace?**

The key problem with public K-12 education in America today is injustice.

Too many public schools across the country rely significantly upon property taxes in the district. So school districts with lower property values will end up funding their schools substantially less than districts with higher property values. As an added outrage and injustice, these poorer districts are also disproportionately populated with people of color.

Compared to schools in wealthier districts, schools in poorer districts will have less money to spend on teachers. So classes are larger and teachers are not as experienced in the poorer district. Less money to spend on technology and equipment, so things like computers are older and less prevalent. Less money on extracurricular activities, so poorer kids miss out on activities like art or music or sports.

In much of America your public school educational opportunities are a function of your neighborhood's wealth.

That is an injustice.

Almost as importantly, it's horrendous policy for the future of this nation. What message does this send? And how can we in good conscience claim that America is a land of opportunity when we allow the quality of public education to be tied to something out of the control of students – the wealth of their communities.

"Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps!" is what many Americans say. Thanks to the way we often fund public education, however, not all "bootstraps" are the same. Not even close. And in some of the more economically devastated parts of the country, these "bootstraps" are non-existent.

That's wrong. And the federal government needs to do something about it. Here is where I'd start:

- Congress needs to direct both the Department of Justice and the Department of Education to bring lawsuits to states that are not guaranteeing equitable per pupil funding in public education. What we have now in some parts of the country is a violation of the equal-protection clause of the 14th amendment.
- Congress needs to immediately connect federal education dollars to how a state is funding its school districts. Districts with more equitable funding formulas should

receive more money than other states. States that are the most egregiously unfair in their funding across school districts shouldn't receive a penny of federal money for education!

### **59. What are your ideas for improving the academic achievement of students living in poverty?**

Schools in our nation's poorest communities are in crisis. Students attending these schools are often several grades levels behind students in higher-income neighborhoods. Graduation rates are abysmal. And even when these students do graduate, they are usually not adequately prepared to enter college or vocational schools. That puts them at an immediate economic and social disadvantage and a lifetime of diminished opportunities. The families they then raise just continue the cycle of poverty and despair.

There are probably a dozen major policy initiatives that we need to do that could make a significant difference in these schools. But I don't think there is anything more important than fundamentally improving teacher quality.

Poverty is a stain on our nation. The inability to appreciate the connection between poor schools and the cycle of poverty is one of our society's greatest failings. To right this wrong demands a bold initiative and a new way of thinking about teaching.

Studies have suggested that the next decade will demand a significant increase in teacher recruitment because of a coming wave of retirements and increasing enrollments. Much of this recruitment will be in less affluent urban school districts. This provides the nation with an opportunity to make real strides in radically improving the quality of education in our most troubled communities.

Turnover among teachers in urban school districts is extraordinarily high. This results in many schools being forced to put unqualified teachers in some classes. Often, students in these poor districts are stuck with teachers that have no background in what they're supposed to teach. This is especially true in math and science courses. This, of course, helps explain why performance in these districts is so poor and why student drop-out rates are so high.

The only real answer to this very serious educational crisis is to dramatically upgrade the quality of teachers in these devastated schools through new recruits. And that means luring outstanding college graduates into our most challenged school districts. To do that we will need to significantly improve the salaries of these new teachers.

Currently, we cannot seriously expect quality graduates coming out of our colleges to give up more lucrative careers to go teach in the inner-city. Though some will do it out of a "love of teaching" the reality is that a teacher's salary can no longer compete with other professions. So

if we want quality teachers in the communities most in need of quality teachers, we'll need to pay for it.

This needs to be a national goal – making teaching poor kids the career choice of talented college graduates. Teaching K-12 – even in the inner city – needs to be viewed as respectfully as careers in engineering, or law, or medicine. And that will require that we pay these teachers what one makes in engineering , or law, or medicine.

To raise teacher salaries to such levels, the federal government would need to commit itself to significantly increasing its share of K-12 spending. Doubling its current share would mean spending an extra \$25-\$30 billion a year. This is a significant amount. But given what's at stake and what potentially we could accomplish for the poor and historically discriminated against, I sincerely believe that this would represent a very wise and profoundly needed investment.

*Yes or no:*

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

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

**61. Should state universities and trade schools be a part of our public education system?**

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

**62. Should we add educational assistance programs specifically for people who are being downsized due to industry obsolescence?**

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

**63. Should teachers carry firearms in school?**

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

**64. Teachers often work in other industries due to being underpaid. The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) acts often mandate that earned Social Security is not available to draw on for retirees. Do you support legislation to correct this while ensuring the “no double-dipping” standard set in WEP/GPO?**

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

## IMMIGRATION

*Survey:*

### **65. What approach should the U.S. take in our refugee resettlement program?**

There's much to be outraged about regarding Trump administration policy. One of his most shortsighted and disappointing moves was gutting the US Refugee Resettlement Program.

I am the son of refugees. My parents were ethnic Germans living in what is today Romania. In World War II, they and millions of other ethnic Germans (known as Danaschwaben) were forced from their homes by advancing Soviet troops. They resettled in Germany but never were accepted at "true" German citizens.

They applied for and were granted refugee status by the United States and settled in St. Louis in 1955. (I still have a copy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch with the front page story "St. Louis Welcomes European Refugees.").

Naturally, this is an important topic for me. And it is why I consider the president's decision to essentially scuttle the program shortsighted and disappointing.

It's shortsighted because America is at its best when it leads the world by example. It's disappointing because America must never abrogate its place in history as a refuge from fear. We must never forget our place in humanity's continuous quest for opportunity and prosperity. We must never turn our back on those desperate for freedom and a new beginning.

This is what defines us. It is what has made us for over two centuries the envy of the world. It is what makes us unique in the annals of history.

As a member of Congress, I will always remember this part of my family history. And I will forever be in debt to the country and its citizenry that so kindly and graciously welcomed my parents into its fold. What needs to be done immediately, is the restoration of the US Refugee Resettlement Program. Moreover, we need to recommit ourselves to this program and significantly increase the number of refugees that we process.

The current administration greatly scaled back the cap of refugee admissions – far below the levels under Presidents Obama. Combined with the President's travel ban, America has declared war on refugees. This is an outrage that no American should tolerate.

Not only does America have a moral duty to accept refugees, it has a responsibility to appreciate its role in causing much of the turmoil that has led to the refugee crisis. Our inability to lead international efforts to broker peace in war zones like Syria - combined with the continued ravaging effects of globalization - means that America needs to bear some responsibility.

And it needs to honor this responsibility by opening its borders. It needs to embrace its role as that “shining city upon a hill.”

## **66. What would be your approach to dealing with illegal immigration and the policies surrounding it?**

America is a nation of immigrants. It always has been, of course. But that hasn't prevented immigration policy from becoming a volatile issue that consistently tests our emotions. As the son of German immigrants I have always been particularly sensitive to this issue. Though my experience growing up with foreign-born parents was overwhelmingly positive, I do recall times when my family faced bigotry and even hostility.

To narrow-minded people, my parents were less American. They were less deserving. They were second-class.

They came to this country voluntarily. They understood the sacrifice. But they took a chance because they believed in the American ideal. They worked hard and they succeeded. That is America's story. And in my eyes that makes them as American as anyone. Without exception.

But we are a nation of laws, not of men. We are also a civilized society. Therefore, we must find a compromise between our openness to immigration and our need to protect our borders. Yes, illegal immigration is a problem. But we cannot solve that problem by callously denying that we are a nation built by immigration.

And it certainly doesn't help matters when our President openly criticizes immigration from countries he considers less desirable.

A national immigration policy that understands this need for finding a compromise will not be easy. But Congress should never shy away from an issue just because it isn't easy. Unfortunately, that's exactly what has happened.

In 2013, a group of eight U.S. Senators forged an immigration compromise. Known as the “Gang of Eight” this bi-partisan group engineered a bill that recognized the need to balance these two worlds: respect for the fact that millions are looking for a better life in America, and the need to protect our borders.

What they created was an excellent example of what reasonable people can do when they listen to each other and respect opposing viewpoints. Though far from a perfect bill, it represented a significant improvement over the haphazard and ridiculously inconsistently enforced policy we currently had.

After much debate – and long hours of work – the Senate bill passed 68-32. It then went to John Boehner’s House of Representatives where it never saw the light of day.

House Republicans didn’t like portions of the bill. But instead of working on it in committee, hearing testimony on it, analyzing it in detail, and offering amendments or substitutions, they simply refused to act at all. The bill then expired at the end of that Congressional session.

Cowardice.

As your representative, I will work diligently to address real immigration reform. Personally, I would start with the compromise agreed to by the Senate five years ago. Among its more significant features:

- Improved work visa alternatives especially for those working in the agricultural sector;
- Immigration system reforms to better handle the visa granting backlog that has become a growing frustration for American employers and immigrants alike;
- Greatly expanded and improved employer-verification systems to enforce legal residency and immigration status; and, most importantly:
- A path to citizenship that is genuinely possible for those here illegally – but far from easy. Such a program must recognize the legitimate need to control our borders but balance that against the thousands of productive and upstanding residents that are already integral parts of our communities.

A civilized society would also need to include legislation dealing with the children of illegal immigrants; children often caught in a legal tug-of-war.

I therefore fully support the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act). This law would create a multi-tiered procedure for minors that meet very specific qualifications. This act would first grant conditional residency and then the potential for permanent residency and even citizenship.

Immigration is about as difficult and as emotionally draining as public policy gets. But there’s no excuse for Congress failing to meet its responsibilities. The good news is that the Senate understood this and was able to hammer out a very responsible bi-partisan compromise.

The House of Representatives’ refusal to even consider the bill is inexcusable. Nothing demonstrates Congress’ incompetence and dysfunction more clearly than its failure here.



*Yes or no:*

**67. Do you support a clean DACA bill with a path to citizenship?**

Yes  No

**68. Do you support a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants already within our borders?**

Yes  No

**69. Regarding what is known as “The Wall,” should the existing structures along our southern border be expanded and fortified?**

Yes  No



## RACIAL JUSTICE SECTION

### *Survey*

**70. What is the role of the federal government in addressing racial inequities in access to healthcare, employment, housing, and living wages? Discuss some key policies that you support that would reduce racial gaps in these areas.**

James Madison wrote in Federalist #10 about the “mischief of faction.” It was his defense for why there are times in which you’d need a stronger central government in order to protect political minorities. Ironic, of course, given that Madison was one of our largest slave holding presidents!

But his point is still sound. And its why the nation deemed it essential to include an “equal protection” clause within the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment. It is that part of the Constitution that demands we protect Civil Rights. And it is that part of the Constitution and our history that must fuel us in demanding racial equality to essential services.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 expands upon equal protection to demand it within public accommodations. What we need out of Washington is a renewed commitment to this charge; a renewed appreciation that racial inequities are still pervasive that that injustice for some is injustice for all.

Congress needs to take the lead with this two ways: First, Congress needs to fully investigate and then address specific areas where the power of the federal government can be used to tackle pervasive racial inequities. Second, Congress needs to use its oversight role to encourage (pressure, if necessary!) the offices of civil rights in the federal bureaucracy. In addition to the Department of Justice, there are six executive departments that have an office of civil rights within its jurisdictions (Health and Human Services, Defense, Energy, Commerce, Labor, and Transportation). The only body that is designed to make sure these offices are doing their jobs is the US Congress via its oversight function. This is a constitutional issue in addition to being an issue of right and wrong. Congress needs to remind the nation of that.

The focus of my campaign is political reform. We need to do something about the stranglehold that big money has on Congressional decision-making. I am convinced that among the undesirable consequences of our “pay-to-play” Congress, is that we end up with a “people’s branch” that only represents a tiny and shrinking sliver of the people. If we could end the stranglehold that big money has on decision making, I am convinced we can have a legislature

that will be more responsive to ordinary voices – and that would include the voices most affected by pervasive racial injustice.

Much could also be done in this area if we would become serious as a nation with respect to economic justice. Though much of our racial inequities are still a function of overt racism, much of it too is a function of economic condition. If we could improve the economic condition of our most vulnerable, we would go a long way in addressing the racial inequities in the nation. Thus, a serious policy toward economic justice would require the enactment of living wage laws. Furthermore, any serious move toward economic justice would also echo the 2016 Democratic Party platform: *“we are committed to doing everything we can to build a full employment economy, where everyone has a job that pays enough to raise a family and live in dignity with a sense of purpose.”*

Yes or no:

**71. Do you support federal funding to remedy food deserts in predominantly black neighborhoods?**

Yes  No

**72. Will you commit to making racial inclusivity a priority when recruiting your own staff?**

Yes  No

**73. Arrests for drug possession and selling are disproportionately skewed to imprison minorities, essentially making drug use and selling quasi-legal for white Americans. Do you support policy changes to reduce this inequity?**

Yes  No

## CONCLUSION

### 71. Why are you seeking the endorsement of Mobilize Missouri?

In the spring of 2016, my 19-year-old daughter was home from college for the weekend. On Saturday afternoon she asked me if I wanted to go with her to hear Bernie Sander speak at Affton High School. I was floored by this. Despite the fact that her political science professor dad always talked politics, she NEVER showed any interest in politics before. And she never appeared to be someone interested in sitting in a crowded gym to hear a candidate for public office speak.

Well, I was already going to go by myself. I was ecstatic that I would now have company! So there we were, outside Affton High School, in a long line waiting to get in, getting soaked in a steady spring rain. I was so excited to head out to the event with my daughter, that I didn't bother to grab an umbrella!

After a few hours, we got in. After a little bit more of a wait and a long introduction by Danny DeVito, we finally got to hear Bernie. It was glorious. And I loved the fact that my daughter found it glorious as well.

I spoke to her afterward. She was inspired. She was moved. Bernie struck a chord in her. Well, he struck a chord in her old man, too.

I don't think it coincidence that the only candidate talking constantly about the need for fundamental reform had captivated the youngest generation of voters. Every other sentence from Senator Sanders was about how the system is rigged and how we've allowed money to corrupt the democratic process. Most importantly, Bernie spoke about how change has to come from the people – not individual leaders like him – but from the masses.

To a 19-year old that is finding it harder each day to ignore the injustices in our nation, this is a rallying call. A call to fight. It provides hope for a future that will give her and her cohorts the opportunity to right past wrongs. To expose and defeat injustice.

But it's not just for 19-year old's. It's for everyone that cares about justice. It's inspirational for everyone that still cares about the health and future of our republic.

Bernie Sanders's campaign inspired me to run for Congress. His call for fundamental political reform – particularly campaign finance reform – so strongly appealed to me that it is the centerpiece of my campaign. To receive the endorsement of Mobilize Missouri – an organization inspired by Bernie's 2016 campaign – would be a great and fitting honor.

**72. What are your top three legislative goals when elected?**

1. Political Reform. The centerpiece of my campaign is a 15-point plan toward political reform across three areas: campaign finance reform, election reform, and ethics reform. I pledge to initiate these 15 measures in my first 100 days in office. *(Please see my campaign website: [johnmessmer.org](http://johnmessmer.org) for specifics regarding this 15-point plan).*
2. Healthcare Reform. We must strive for universal coverage. And we should aim for a single-payer system.
3. Education Reform. We need to fundamentally transform the relationship between K-12 education and the federal government. We should start with a massive federal effort to radically improve the quality of teachers in urban school districts across the nation.

Yes or no/fill in the blank:

**74. Do you have a fundraising plan?**

Yes  No

**75. Do you have a campaign manager?**

Yes  No

**76. What amount of time per week do you envision dedicating to campaigning/call time?**

40 hours

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

Yes  No

**78. What is the size of your universe?**

Approximately 91 billion light-years.

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

187,501 (50% +1 of the estimated 375,000 votes that will be cast)

**80. Do you have someone organizing volunteers for your campaign?**

Yes  No

**81. Are you willing endorse the winner of your primary race if you are not the selected candidate?**



Yes  No

**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 that may not have been covered in our questions.**

Three days after announcing my candidacy in January, I was spoke at a meeting of the Tri-County Labor Club in St. Charles. I spoke for about 15 minutes, told them about me and my campaign, and answered a few questions. It was a good reception. After the meeting, I stayed and spoke with a few union members.

Bill Otto approached me, shook my hand, then started to berate me. Shouting at times, Bill wanted me and everyone else to know within earshot that he was upset that I had entered the race. He told me that I had “no chance because I wouldn’t be able to raise enough money.” He said that all I would do is “gunk up the works” and “ruin it for the Democrats.”

I tried to calmly explain to him that I disagreed and that I thought that having a good message would win the district. His reply? “You’re living in a fantasy world. Message doesn’t matter.”

Bill is a good Democrat. He wants Ann Wagner to lose more than anyone. But he was dead wrong. Message does matter. Moreover, he was out of line to tell me or anyone not to enter the campaign.

*(Two other candidates in this race have subsequently told me that Bill Otto approached them, too, and strongly recommended they drop out of the race, as well. Both men declined).*

My candidacy is focused on fundamental political reform. But it’s not just about reform we need in Washington D.C., it’s reform we need at home, too. It’s not just in Congress, it’s in our political parties, as well.

This kind of bullying from the party cannot be tolerated. The days of the “smoke filled back rooms” where party elites choose the candidates are supposed to be long gone. Whether it’s the DNC in 2016 with presidential candidates or Bill Otto in 2018 in Missouri’s 2<sup>nd</sup>, these abuses of power must be confronted and eliminated. Primaries need to be about what the people want. Not what party leadership commands. It should be an election. Not a coronation.

The four other men running in this race are fine candidates. I will not hesitate to endorse either of them should one of them win and I don’t. We agree on most of the issues. But I disagree with them on one fundamentally important point: they think that Congress’ biggest problem is simply that the wrong party is in the majority.

There are three groups in Congress: Republicans, Democrats, and Democrats committed to fundamental political reform. We can all agree that the Republicans are a disaster. They are the cause of most of our problems. And they are certainly not normally part of the solutions.



But we are making a mistake if we think that all we need to do is vote in Democrats. Of course, with a Democratic majority we'll get better policy. No doubt. But without electing Democrats committed to reform, we'll still have problems. We'll still have a "pay-to-play" Congress. We'll still have lobbyists calling the shots. And we'll still have campaigns that become absurd competitions to see who can be the best fundraiser.

Yes, we need Democrats. But we need Democrats that are committed to fixing Congress. In this race, I am the only candidate that meets that standard.

Additionally, I sincerely believe that I give the party the best opportunity to flip the district. In 2016 Democrats were excited about the candidacy of Bill Otto. He had name recognition and money. But despite raising and spending seven times more than any other Democrat, Bill Otto still got crushed. The share of the vote won by the Democratic candidate increased by only 0.6%!

The sad reality is that Missouri's 2<sup>nd</sup> District has been designed – gerrymandered – to always give the Republican candidate an advantage. No amount of money will overcome that fact.

But the good news is that we can win the 2<sup>nd</sup> if we win over the voters that are necessary in a district like this. Swing voters – independents and moderates – will decide this election. To win over these voters we need a candidate that is committed to the reforms that they want.

The Democratic party has always been the party of reform. Now we just need a Democratic candidate that understands that. A Democrat that has the message these vital voters want to hear.

The definition of political insanity is campaigning the same way, nominating the same kind of candidates but expecting different results in the election. We can flip the 2<sup>nd</sup>. But not if we don't learn the lesson of Bill Otto and 2016. To win over the voters that are crucial, we need a candidate that understands that being a Democrat means making reform a priority. In this race, I am the only candidate that meets that standard.

***For more information about my campaign, including a look at my 15-point plan for reform and my detailed positions on several national issues, please visit my website at [JohnMessmer.org](http://JohnMessmer.org)***