

2020 Senate District 66 DFL Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Cari Ness

Position Candidate Is Seeking The Endorsement For: Minnesota House 66A

Website: <http://www.cariness.org>

Please respond to the following questions, limit 5 pages for the entire questionnaire.

1. Education What should the state do to address the educational needs of our children, the working conditions of our teachers, and educational opportunities for adults?

For decades Minnesota has been seen as a top performer when it comes to education. When you peel back the layers, it's obvious that our schools have only truly excelled at serving white students. As public schools continue to lose students to more deregulated, culturally focused and charter schools, it may be time to create a pot of funds for public schools to access that allows them to develop student curriculum, staff recruitment strategies, and programming that more authentically serves the students who have, until now, been left behind. I will support a moratorium on new charter schools and will work with the education committee to do a full evaluation of our school system priorities through the lens of equity.

2. Youth Services What would you do to better support our youth population?

As a board member of a YMCA Twin Cities camp, I know the value of the Y's Youth Intervention Program that services homeless and at-risk youth in a positive, non-judgmental, and trauma-informed way. Programs like these and others that work to engage and empower our youth need our attention and investment to ensure the future of our state.

3. Senior Services As the size of the aging population grows, how would you address the increasing needs of seniors?

We need to think about creative housing solutions for seniors that include access to transit and other forms of transportation. Supplying our state with access to broadband is also critical to our seniors being able to age-in-community.

4. Environment 4a) In your view, what should be the state's role in mitigating and preventing climate change impacts? 4b) On a state level, do you oppose the construction of Enbridge Line Three?

Climate change is already having significant impacts on Minnesota, including a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged communities. At the Capitol, I will strongly support and visibly champion the 100 percent clean energy effort carried by members like Rep. Jamie Long and rally Senate partners to ensure we can make immediate and dramatic progress. I will stand on the front lines with leaders who organize times of action like the youth climate strike to show that leaders at the Capitol don't just hear you, we are with you. When you have a seat at the table, it's your responsibility to bring voices along with you and I will do that from day one. We need to stop investing billions of dollars in polluting pipelines and power plants and invest in a clean energy economy that places the stewardship of our water and natural resources and the health of our residents over profits for fossil fuel interests and corporations.

I'm ready to dig in and stand shoulder to shoulder with environmental partners to ensure a just transition is the expected path that others are forced to push us off of. The solutions that prioritize impacted communities aren't just possible in theory -- many of them are sitting right in front of us. In the efficiency space, utilities leave millions unspent in multifamily energy efficiency funds every year while collecting tens of millions in incentives for implementing other efficiencies. We need to tighten the screws on that program to make sure they prioritize multifamily projects. We need to work with the Department of Commerce to help us better utilize our Low Income Heating Assistance Program dollars so that they don't just bandaid over expensive heating bills and instead help weatherize and improve homes so bills and emissions actually go down over time. But we can also prioritize electric buses over cars, and community solar projects with backup subscribers that help folks of all incomes get access to solar.

5. Mining 5a) What is your stance on copper-nickel mining in the state of Minnesota? 5b) What alternative proposals do you suggest to bring needed jobs to the area?

Copper-nickel mining has not been proven to be a safe method of mineral extraction for a wet environment like Northern Minnesota. I have grave concerns for the safety of our treasured fresh water and pristine wilderness. I think that this type of mining poses too great a threat to our natural resources for the promised return in jobs and economic development. However, IF it can be proven without a shadow of a doubt that this type of mining can be done successfully, then I'd support union labor in those jobs ensuring the highest-quality safety standards are met.

6. Immigration 6a) What concrete steps will you take to ensure immigrant Minnesotan's rights are protected/to protect these communities from unreasonable fear of deportation? 6b) Do you support the abolition of ICE on a federal level and noncooperation with ICE on the state level?

Immigrant rights are human rights. Short of making dramatic and structural changes to our immigration system at the Federal level, Minnesota at the very least needs to make the improvements we can at the state level. When Republicans like Rep. Rod Hamilton are ready and willing champions across the aisle, there is absolutely no reason why we shouldn't push for Driver's Licenses for All. I support the abolition of ICE and the noncooperation with ICE at the state level.

7. Labor A new wage theft law was passed last year, yet there has already been a hearing to attack this legislation. Business owners and other employers feel that it is a burden and that there is too much confusion adhering to the law. In addition, employers are trying to get around this legislation by misclassifying workers as independent contractors (see legislation against this practice in HF4009/SF4018). What will you do to protect workers and this law?

Last year the Minnesota legislature passed the toughest wage theft laws in the nation. I will actively defend these laws and fight for adequate funding and human resources at the Dept. of Labor and the Attorney General's office to investigate and prosecute allegations of wage theft and protect our workers.

8. Transportation Public transportation often gets reduced in areas where it is most needed. In your view, what should the state do about public transit infrastructure while addressing concerns about access and affordability?

Our first priority has to be putting increased dedicated funding in place for transit. Until we have the funds we need to electrify our bus fleet and add more high frequency service, we'll never be able to adequately reduce our emissions and expand our access. That will lead to cleaner air in our urban core that has been hit worst by air pollution and greater access for everybody. We also need to ensure regional rail projects like those connecting St Cloud, Duluth, Rochester, and another trip to Chicago move forward so people have clean alternatives.

9. Housing We are in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. What would you do to advocate for our district and the state in solving this crisis?

No one single strategy is going to fix our housing crisis. We need a multi-pronged approach that is unified across municipalities. Collaboration between cities, counties, and the state is key. From lifting the state-wide ban on rent to control to reshaping our zoning, to addressing the lingering effects of decades of redlining our communities of color, to innovating what housing can look like including communal and micro-housing strategies, we need to invest at housing at all income levels all across the state. We know that creating paths to homeownership, in turn, develops pride and investment in communities. Creating incentives for non-profit developers and tenants will keep future housing affordable in the long term.

10. Food Security Would you support the State of MN funding breakfast, lunch and snacks for all Pre K through 12 school children in public schools with no fees?

Yes! Kids can't learn if they are hungry. We need to provide meals to all kids regardless of need.

11. Healthcare 11a) In your view, is healthcare a human right? 11b) Do you support passing single payer healthcare for Minnesota, and what would the transition look like? If not, what is your proposal to provide affordable healthcare for all Minnesotans?

Yes, healthcare is a human right. It's time to implement the Minnesota Health Plan so all Minnesotans have access to the health care they need. It's clear that the private health care system has failed to create affordable solutions that work for Minnesotans. No one should have to launch a Go Fund Me account to pay for life-saving procedures or choose between going to the doctor or paying rent. I will be a champion for health care reform in the house. Specifically, I intend to set a clear timeline to reach a Minnesota Care for All threshold by which all Minnesotans would be covered. Within that timeline, there would be mile markers along the way where Minnesota Care is initially and immediately available as an option for all consumers on the MNSURE exchange, staffing, and administrative systems are built out to accommodate new patients and procedures, and Minnesotans are transitioned to the new system. Single-payer health care is not only a publicly supported policy but morally necessary if we are to dismantle the broken system that currently

leaves so many behinds and gouges those who are able to find somewhat adequate coverage through work or other means.

12. Cannabis 12a) The current medical cannabis program is not affordable (\$250 for certification, \$200 to participate, and hundreds of dollars for the medication) Will you work to make this affordable and accessible to all? 12b) Do you support the legalization of cannabis for adult use in Minnesota? 12c) If cannabis for adult use were to be legalized in Minnesota, what measures will you take regarding Minnesotans currently incarcerated under cannabis-related non-violent drug charges?

Minnesota needs to legalize medical and recreational cannabis and put a stop to the use of this drug as a tool for arresting and detaining people of color disproportionately.

13. Gun Control What is your position on gun control, and what specific legislation would you be willing to sponsor?

It is a public health crisis and needs to be approached that way so that we can make needed investments in suicide prevention and mental health care. In the United States, 52 women a month die in domestic partner gun violence situations and often children are present and in harm's way. We need to invest in our communities and in preventing the roots of this kind of violence as well as limiting access to guns. I believe that lack of action on gun violence is one of the most disgraceful failures of our time and a dereliction of duty on the part of our elected officials who have failed to act. We need to take action in Minnesota by passing universal background checks, red flag laws, and other measures to curb gun violence.

14. Women's Rights Do you support the ERA becoming a part of the Minnesota Constitution?

YES! I am a fierce advocate of women's rights and we MUST pass the ERA so that women are on equal footing constitutionally with men. I joined a working group that is being put together by the Attorney General focused on issues of women's economic security in our state. I hope to help inform and prioritize a legislative agenda for women in our state and passing the ERA is the first step. Minnesota needs to strengthen state protections for women and underrepresented communities. Across the country, women's rights are being eroded and rolled back. We need to eliminate the many restrictions for abortion and prenatal services, tackle pregnancy discrimination, strengthen the Pregnancy and Prenatal Leave Act for all families, and find solutions to the dismal disparity in outcomes for women and babies of color.

15. Diversity The folks at the endorsing convention will not fully reflect the diversity of gender identities, racial and ethnic identities, and religious affiliations in our community; if elected/re-elected what do you see as your role in addressing the needs of folks underrepresented?

I am saddened by the lack of diversity present in our current caucus and convention. It does not represent the reality of our district. I vow to work to reform the systemic barriers that prevent our citizens from participating in our process and our government.

16. Corporate Money in Politics 16a) Do you take campaign contributions from corporate

PACs? 16b) What is the approximate average individual donation size currently to your campaign? 16c) What would you support at the state level to curb the role of corporate money in politics?

I have signed the No Fossil Fuels Money pledge and I will not take contributions from corporate PACs. My campaign has an average contribution of \$100 from individual donors. I am absolutely in favor of campaign finance reform. Minnesota has some of the best rules in this area, but we can still do better.

17. Ranked Choice Voting 17a) Do you support ranked choice balloting, locally and the state-wide level? 17b) What do you see as positives and negatives of ranked choice voting?

I support ranked choice voting (RCV) for three reasons. One, RCV incentivises positive campaigning. There is no point in mudslinging or sensationalized campaigning, because candidates are always looking to be voters' second choice. Two, RCV eliminates the need for a costly, low-voter turnout primary election. It brings the most candidates to the general election where there are the most voters. Three, RCV opens the door for non-traditional, diverse candidates to get into the political arena.

18. Public Health/Emergency Preparedness 18a) If elected, what steps will you take to ensure that Minnesota is better prepared for the next pandemic? 18b) What steps should Minnesota be taking for emergency preparedness (such as COVID-19, grid collapse, etc.)?

Our state must work with FEMA and the Center for Disaster Preparedness, as well as businesses in our state such as 3M and Medtronic to make sure we have the resources and plans we need in place for the eventuality of the next pandemic. Climate change exacerbates the potential for another pandemic and we need to take drastic action to reduce carbon emissions and transition to green technologies across the state. We must also be collecting as much data as we can during this crisis so that it can inform smart policies and our emergency preparedness plans for the future.

19. Consensus Building What are your strengths for positive community outreach and consensus-building?

As a life-long nonprofit/charity person, I have a collaborative nature and thrive on relationship building. I will bring that perspective and experience to our district and will work to build consensus with leaders across our municipalities and county for the best outcomes for all. We must include all voices and points of view and do outreach in new and creative ways to make sure that the under-resourced and under-represented are heard. I look forward to partnering with organizations that focus on breaking systemic barriers to participation in government and focus on people-centered co-governing like Take Action and Isaiah/Faith in Minnesota.