

2020 Election Questions – State Candidates

On behalf of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee (PAC) thank you for your interest in elected leadership serving constituents in the communities of McLean County.

Please find our candidate survey attached to this email for the November 3, 2020 general election. Answers must be complete and submitted no later than Friday, July 10, 2020 by 4:00 PM to be eligible for candidate interviews slated for late July and early August. Responses from the survey and interview will be considered by the full PAC Board when endorsing candidates and/or providing a financial contribution.

We look forward to getting to know you as a candidate. If you have any questions about the PAC or our endorsement process for this general election, please call Charlie Moore at 309-829-6344.

Best regards,

Meghan O'Neal-Rogozinski
Chairman

Candidate Name

Keith P. Sommer

1. What are your top three advocacy/policy priorities for the State of Illinois as a whole?

My ultimate priority is to put Illinois on a better path forward. In order to do that I am focusing on 1.) having an environment that is more friendly to job growth, 2.) moving toward fiscal stability by leveling spending, and 3) giving tax relief to our families, workers and job creators.

2. What are your top three advocacy/policy issues specifically for your constituents in McLean County?

McLean County has so much to offer employers, families and all residents. I will continue to help the area with job growth, ensuring that education funding at all levels supports our youth and that social services support the needs of our community.

3. If elected, how would you work with other elected and community leaders throughout McLean County to enhance and ensure regional collaboration?

I work to help those in all parts of my district and other areas in the region broaden and deepen their relationships with other leaders in order to bring new opportunities. We have great leaders throughout the public and private sectors in McLean County. Bringing them together has been important to me in the past and will continue to be in the future.

4. How can McLean County improve and/or stand out compared to the rest of the state regarding business growth, expansion, and attraction?

McLean County has a great story to tell; great business successes, advantageous infrastructure, and a dynamic workforce. Focusing current resources and leveraging programs through the state to tell that story is critical.

5. The State of Illinois is in financial despair. What do you propose should be done about it and how are you prepared to lead that charge?

It sounds daunting, but the time is long past due. All expenditures and programs must be examined for benefit and cost-effectiveness and spending must be kept in check. Huge increases in state spending, like those in the Governor's recent budget, are out of touch with our financial reality. Responsible budgeting and cost control are the things we all do in our jobs. As far as leading that change, it's a monumental task. The fiscal culture and attitude of those in the majority must change. Those who are in favor of fiscal reform, like myself, will continue to be a vocal minority.

6. COVID-19 brought on a limitless number of issues and challenges for business in 2020. What is your opinion on how the State initially managed the crisis? What would you do/have done differently?

I think that the people of Illinois pulled together to show great strength. In the end, the state didn't manage the crisis, the Governor did. That was a mistake, as it took away the voice of the people. Legislators live in every region of the state and travel every county weekly. If I were in the Governor's spot, I would have engaged the Illinois House and Senate to have those local voices heard. A blanket approach failed to minimize the impact on workers and businesses in regions without significant COVID numbers.

7. Moving forward, how should the state manage the Restore Illinois phasing plan and overall economic recovery?

Now that we have moved to a somewhat regionalized approach, I think we're on a better track to take the appropriate response based on how the virus impacts our area. The state should continue to ask businesses and organizations to take the steps required to keep workers and customers safe. We learn more about the virus every day and, knowing what we currently know, I don't see a return to a total shutdown as beneficial to anyone.

8. Policy issues with the State have continued to be the same over the last decade with very little movement. How do you propose to address issues regarding workers compensation, pension liabilities or property tax rates?

I propose that we cap all appropriations and new spending until these issues are addressed in a meaningful way. Ultimately until there is a shift in the electorate across the state to demand that leaders be more fiscally responsible, change will be very difficult. I will be continue to be an advocate for a more responsible approach such as the one I mentioned.

9. How do you feel about a graduated/progressive income tax and its affect on Illinois to be competitive for entrepreneurship, business attraction and employee/citizen retention?

I believe that a graduated income tax will drive entrepreneurs, investors, and middle-class workers from the state. A new tax structure does nothing to address our issues. It only gives the same legislators who increased spending by an additional 6% for FY 2021 another vehicle to add to the tax burden of our citizens.

The McLean County Chamber of Commerce works with the Political Action Committee to help its membership understand who you are as a candidate and what your policies will be if elected. We achieve this by sharing your responses with the membership to help increase the turnout of educated voters. I agree that the McLean County Chamber of Commerce may share and publish my responses as submitted and as presented, on the McLean County Chamber of Commerce website www.mcleancochamber.org.

Yes

No

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