

Johnson County Public Policy Council
2018 Kansas State Representative Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Melissa Rooker

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Political Affiliation: Republican

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District: 25

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Campaign Video Link: N/A

4124 Brookridge Drive
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Occupation/Work History (last five years – 25 words or less):

Retired film executive, Community Volunteer

If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held:

Northeast Johnson County Chamber of Commerce

Other recent political/community experience (25 words or less):

Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority Board member, Kansas Forest Service Advisory Council member, Shawnee Indian Mission Advisory Board member

As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (10 words or less per issue)

Resolving Gannon school finance lawsuit, Maintaining responsible tax policy, Good government - investing in infrastructure, securing our water & energy future, ensuring key state services delivered effectively & efficiently

What are your views on state tax policy, being as specific as you can? (100 words or less)

We are on the road to restoring balanced tax policy and need to safeguard the progress made in 2017. That said, we also need to analyze federal changes and potentially make a few adjustments. I would like to address the food sales tax rate, ensure Kansans can take itemized deductions but we must avoid costly tax cuts that undermine our recovery. I also want to address internet sales. The US Supreme court decision regarding sports gaming is a potential new revenue source that should be considered. All in all, I favor a measured, responsible approach anchored in good data.

With record low unemployment rates, what would you do to grow and develop the state's workforce? (75 words or less)

We have to restore the Commerce department so it functions as intended to attract new business to Kansas, get federal funding to Kansas Works job training programs in a timely manner, foster partnerships between our system of education and the business community. We need to analyze the eco-deco programs to ensure good ROI and we need to enhance reporting about them. We need to stop making headlines for passing controversial policies.

What are your views on funding K-12 education? (75 words or less)

I am proud to have helped draft a new school finance formula that is now certified as equitable by the court. I am also proud to have helped move \$823 million new dollars into K-12 over 6 years. I do

agree with the court that inflation will impact the value of those dollars over time and we need to make the proper adjustment. Quality schools are one of the best eco-deco tools we have.

What would your priorities be in any new statewide transportation plan? (50 words or less)

Southern Johnson County surrounding the intermodal. Making 69 highway 4 lanes to Oklahoma border Safety upgrades to long-identified problem areas Bridge safety Modernizing the system to reflect changing economic needs

Do you support maintaining the current dedicated sales tax transfer to the State Highway Fund for the purpose of funding transportation infrastructure, or should transportation be subject to the appropriations process where legislators determine funding levels entirely? (50 words or less)

Transportation should have a dedicated source of funding. A longterm transportation plan can only be implemented if the funding is secure. Even the dedicated sales tax wasn't protected, so I favor looking at a fuel tax increase to ensure the funds are protected by the constitution.

What types of economic development policies will you support to encourage job growth and business expansion in Kansas? (50 words or less)

Certain current programs appear to be successful but we have no meaningful way to evaluate their impact. I would like to know more about number of jobs created in the various programs before specifically naming any one of them. A fully functioning Department of Commerce can lead the way.

What are your views on the state's role regarding immigration and do you support employment-based immigration reforms to assist with workforce shortages in specified industries? (50 words or less)

I believe immigration to be a federal issue. That said, I would likely support employment based reforms. I also support the in-state tuition for undocumented Kanas high school graduates.

What are your views on the state's role with respect to access and affordability of public higher education? (50 words or less)

The state needs to continue to work on restoring funding to higher education to help control tuition costs. Higher ed and K-12 need to work together to create more shared credit programs and ensure that Kansas kids graduate ready for success in their next steps.

What are your views on healthcare policy and Medicaid expansion? (50 words or less)

We should expand Medicaid. I have voted to do so and voted for the veto override.

What role should state government have in determining workplace employment practices and benefits offered to employees? (50 words or less)

I think the state should avoid interfering with private employers, however on this issue I can simply say I will take each bill as it comes and evaluate the pros & cons to make up my mind rather than making a blanket pledge.

What do you believe is the most pressing issue or challenge facing Kansas today and how would you address it? (50 words or less)

Solving the adequacy school funding issue is job 1. I am already working with KSDE to evaluate the requirements to comply and will engage in moving legislation to do so. Job 2 is protecting the progress we made in 2017 -2018 and making measured decisions to restore certainty and stability.

What project have you been most proud to work on? (50 words or less)

Rewriting the school finance formula. With the block grant set to expire June 30, 2017 and no plan in place, the pressure was high but the satisfaction was enormous when the court ruled it constitutional on equity grounds. I look forward to helping solve for adequacy as well.

What do you believe most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (75 words or less)

Experience. No amount of enthusiasm can prepare a person for the job and a freshman will have very little influence on the process. I have built strong working relationships that enable me to move legislation and get the job done. I have a strong working knowledge of the rules, and the issues we deal with. I am willing to work across party and ideological lines.