

Kansas Senate/House of Representatives 2020

Response ID:18 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Molly Baumgardner

2. Political Party Affiliation

Republican

3. District Number of Office Being Sought

37th Senate District

4. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 29467 MASTERS CT

City/State/Zip : Louisburg

5. Phone Number

913-709-1069

6. Email Address

molly@molly4kansas.com

7. Campaign Website

molly4kansas.com

2. Candidate Background

8. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

Communications Coordinator, JCCC Marketing Communications - (2017-current)
Journalism Professor and student broadcast media faculty advisor, JCCC (2008-2017)

9. 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.

Spring Hill Chamber - member
Paola Chamber - member
Louisburg Chamber - member
Kansas Association of Broadcasters

10. Other recent political/community experience? (25 words or less)

Kansas Senator - 2014-present, Senate Education Committee Chair, Kansas Future of Higher Education Council, Kansas Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force, JCCC Trustee - 18 years

3. Issues and Policy

11. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (30 words or less)

1) COVID recovery; including balancing the budget, re-establish our workforce, all without harming education funding

- 2) Mental Health Access
- 3) Foster Care Reform

12. How would you propose to balance the state budget? What specific budget cuts would you support and what revenue enhancements would you consider, if any? (100 words or less)

I voted on an amendment that would have frozen the new budget to the FY21 dollar amount. The allotments Laura Kelly is making are too little for the fiscal year, leaving major cuts to be made by the legislature 7 months into the year. Cuts should be equitable and should start in areas where efficiencies experienced due to Covid. I've heard mention of cutting public school funding. I worked too hard negotiating, with Senator Denning as vice chair, the school funding bill that the Kansas Supreme Court ruled met the constitutional obligation for us to backslide on that legislative commitment.

13. What are your views on state tax policy, being as specific as you can? (75 words or less)

Finance website WalletHub listed Kansas as having the 3rd highest tax rates in the nation. My constituents are suffering with annual property tax increases that percentage-wise are in the double digits. I supported the tax transparency bill that was vetoed. Transparency is a priority for me. I don't anticipate a practical means, with our revenue problems, for cutting taxes. I don't believe there's an appetite for raising taxes and I would oppose such action.

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

My top priority during the 2019 legislative session was to put an end to the decades-long court challenges of the school funding formula. The Senate's position provided funding increase of \$360 million over four years. The House voted 76-47 and the Senate vote was 31-8. The Court ruled the funding formula met the obligation under the Kansas Constitution for suitable education for every child. Senate Sub. for HB 2540 is needed to address At-risk funds.

15. What are your priorities in the new statewide Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program? (75 words or less)

I provided testimony on Nov. 5, 2018, when the Kansas Transportation Vision task force was touring the state nearly. My priorities then, and continued now, are highway safety. K-68 has a high volume of traffic and is the longest stretch of two-lane highway with a double digit percentage increase in traffic volume with mounting accidents and fatalities. 69 and 169 also merit expansion as they are the primary north/south transport passageways in Kansas.

16. What types of economic development policies will you support to encourage job growth and business expansion in Kansas? (75 words or less)

The key to economic development - and improved education access - is high speed internet. Our EcoDevo policies must center on solutions to the lack of high speed internet access. Though this is a significant issue in our rural counties, the COVID pandemic has brought to light that Johnson County is NOT exempt from spotty access. It is an issue the Spring Hill community leaders have grappled with for years. No internet, limited new jobs!

17. What would you do to grow and develop the state's workforce? (75 words or less)

Career and technical training and retraining in fields where there are job vacancies is critical. I am a strong proponent of the Promise/Rise Act, that Laura Kelly vetoed on June 1. Getting our un- or under-trained workforce through the FAFSA/PELL Grant process and into certificate and degree programs that meet the regional needs in Kansas are essential to growing our workforce. I also can't say enough about the need for high speed internet access.

18. What are your views on the state's role with respect to ensuring access and affordability of post-secondary education? (75 words or less)

When we compare Kansas to states that surround us, we support college students with significantly less aid. This limits access. Many don't realize that nearly one third of JCCC's students are receiving Pell aid. With a rising number of first generation students seeking a post-secondary education, 2- and 4-year institutions need to provide more guidance to this audience on how to navigate the FAFSA process. Cuts to state higher ed funding will reduce affordability.

19. What are your views on healthcare policy and Medicaid expansion? (75 words or less)

I worked with Senator Denning to find a Kansas solution for Medicaid expansion. Throughout the hearings that were held in the interim and legislative session, the facts that only then surfaced are troubling. 40 (30%) hospitals with two patients or less for a daily census; 85% of Kansas hospitals operating at a loss. We don't have a sustainable rural health system. Legislators and healthcare providers need to work with these facts and form a solution.

20. What role should state government have in determining workplace employment practices and benefits offered to employees? What workplace changes, if any, would you support? (75 words or less)

Top priority right now is for the Department of Labor owning its responsibility to distribute unemployment benefits for the thousands displaced by COVID. The state has a role in assuring a safe workplace. We suffer, on average, one workplace death per week. Attention must be given to prevention. During Medicaid expansion hearings, we had employers urge passage so that they would no longer have to provide healthcare benefits for employees. That isn't an appropriate solution!

21. How control over decision-making is divided among the state legislature and local governments (including local school boards) on issues such as taxation, economic development, and education has been a matter of debate. What are your views on this issue? (75 words or less)

My preference is that local governments should exercise local control. Often, however, constituents turn to the legislature for resolution of what they believe are unjust policies or practices at the local level.

22. What do you believe most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (50 words or less)

What distinguishes me is my body of work as an educator and a legislator. I have sponsored and introduced multiple pieces of legislation that now offer common sense solutions to issues impacting Kansans; including Wrongful Conviction Restitution, KORA & KOMA transparency, Dyslexia, Sex Trafficking, Youth Suicide Prevention Oversight, Foster Care.

4. Thank You!

Your response has been successfully submitted.

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