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Q1

Identity-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Candidate Name: Hannah N. Geffert
Office Seeking: WV State Senator
Party Affiliation: Democrat
District: 16

Q2

Contact Info-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Address: 752 Rock Cliff Drive
City/Town: Martinsburg
State/Province: WV
ZIP/Postal Code: 25401
Country: USA
Email Address: hngeffert@frontier.com
Phone Number: 304-263-4339

Q3

Education & Experience-Please fill out the indicated fields.

High School Attended (Ex: School name, city, & state): Cheltenham High School, Cheltenham, PA
Colleges Attended & Degrees Obtained (Ex: Marshall, MBA): Temple University, B.A., M.A.
Current Employer & Job Position (Ex: WVMA, Director of Operations): Retired policital science professor, Shepherd University; now WV State Senator
Describe your current job & responsibilities: WV State Senator representing the 16th District of WV
How long have you worked for your current employer?: I was appointed to the Senate in Oct., 2021; had worked at Shepherd for 20+ years

Q4

Describe your overall philosophy toward the role of state government as it relates to business and industry.

State government should create an environment which is friendly to business and industry, and which protects the rights and safety of both companies and workers.

Q5

What do you bring to the office you seek? Specifically, what have you built, improved, or changed for the benefit of your community or business?

I bring 40 years of work in my community to the WV Senate, both for employment and as a volunteer.

In 1986, I accepted a part-time position with Shepherd College teaching history courses in Berkeley County. This evolved into a full-time position, first as a history professor and then as a professor of political science. I oversaw honors programs in political science and African studies, and supervised numerous internships.

At Shepherd, I created the School-to-Career Academy, which helped 8th grade children and their parents learn about college and scholarships. And, I chaired the International Business and Economic Training Seminar.

I helped bring the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College to Berkeley County, and was selected as the Dean of Instruction of that institution. I served several years in that position, and then returned to teaching at Shepherd, from which I retired in 2017.

For ten years, I was also show co-host of a morning talk show and a political analyst at WRNR radio. Toward the end of my tenure, I had my own show, Mid-Morning with Hannah, and won a Talk Show of the Year award in 2017.

I have been active in several community based programs. I have delivered food for the Berkeley County Back Pack program, read to grade school children as part of the Read Aloud program, helped review grant applications for the United Way, and worked on the Martinsburg children's garden project. I was a member of the board of the Shenandoah Valley Health Services, producer of the summer youth program at the Apollo Theatre, a member of the Apollo board, and a member of the board of the Arts Centre.

Q6

Please list any groups, associations, or non-profits in which you are an active member or volunteer such as civic groups, labor organizations, advocacy groups.

Please refer to my answer to question 5. In addition, I taught Sunday school and volunteered at the VA domiciliary

Q7

West Virginia is facing many challenges. What do you consider to be the most important and critical challenge that threatens our state and what is your plan to alleviate this threat?

The most serious threat to our state is the loss of our talented young people to employment in other states. To reverse this, the state must attract new businesses which offer careers which allow our youth to stay and raise a family.

A key to reversing the drain of our young people is education. An educated work force is necessary for employers. And, business leaders will want to live and work in an area where their children can get a solid education.

The state must improve its school system, which U.S. News and World Report ranks 41st among states for kindergarten through high school. Good teachers and support staff are the key. The pay raises passed in the last session help, but they are not sufficient. We also need up to date technology and facilities.

Q8

Do you support the passage of Amendment One on the November 2022 General Election ballot? The measure provides the legislature with the authority to repeal or phase out tangible personal property in the future, this includes tax on personal vehicles, small business inventory, and tax on manufacturing inventory, machinery, and equipment.

I do not support that amendment. Local governments must be able to control their income in order to budget for police, fire, water and sewer services, and for schools. The needs of local governments in the Eastern Panhandle are not the same as the needs of counties in the southern part of the state, nor are the business climates. Local governments, not the state legislature, should determine what is best for them.

In addition to these considerations, there are no concrete proposals for how to make up for the income lost should personal property taxes be phased out or repealed. The uncertainty created by this void is unfair to local governments.

Q9

What ideas do you have to help build our state's economy and improve West Virginia's position in competing for investment and job growth?

See my answer to question 7.

Q10

Use of and addiction to opioids in West Virginia and our region have reached crisis levels. This is a problem being recognized not only at the state level, but at the federal level. What ideas do you have to help stop this devastating trend in our state?

Drug addiction is a product of despair. When people have no prospects for a decent job with decent wages, no prospects for improving their lives, they will turn to drugs for escape. Improving our schools and employment opportunities are key to undercutting the perceived need of some for drug escapism and addiction.

Q11

Racial justice and equity, LGBTQ rights and gender equity are important factors for many current West Virginia employers, companies that consider moving to our State, and employees who may consider relocating to West Virginia. How would you address these issues to recruit and retain companies and employees for whom this is a priority?

The WV Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, blindness, disability or familial status. These fairness provisions should be made known to potential new employers.

In addition, the Act should be amended to specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Q12

What are your specific ideas for addressing workforce skills gaps in industry? Specifically, with the growth of manufacturing jobs in the state and need for diverse and skilled labor, what are your ideas to prepare the state's current and future workforce for manufacturing jobs.

In addition to what I have set out in my answer to question 7, schools should build connections with apprenticeship programs and support provided to learners while in those programs.

Community colleges should emulate the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College in Berkeley County. That school contacts employers to learn what training is needed, and then works with those employers to create suitable training programs.

Q13

What are your ideas for improving outcomes in the state's K-12 public education system?

See my answers to questions 7 and 12.

In addition, teachers should be freed from administrative duties so they do what they have been trained to do: teach.

Q14

What ideas do you have for incorporating a focus on STEM education in our public schools and how could industry engage to support increased workforce learning models in middle and high schools, as well as career and technical education centers (vo-tech)?

See my answers to questions 7 and 12.

Q15

Please describe policies that you believe may be helpful in balancing state regulations and environmental rules while maintaining a competitive atmosphere for industrial job growth and investment?

This is not a question which I can answer in a meaningful way in the abstract. Where the possibility of significant harm is greater, the need for regulatory oversight is greater. However, consolidation of regulatory functions, without decreasing protections to workers, nearby residents and the environment, could cut the costs of compliance for a manufacturer and allow the manufacturer to concentrate more on safety than on paperwork.

Q16

What do you think West Virginia could do to promote energy diversity including the growth of renewable energy sources in the state?

The state should give the same sort of support to renewable energy producers as it offers to other manufacturers, like Nucor.

Q17

Many corporations have established environmental, social, and governance criteria. How would such goals impact your decision making on relevant policy issues as a member of legislator?

It would not, unless those criteria conflict with the law.

Q18

If you could work on a single piece of legislation to help support manufacturers with in the state of West Virginia what would it be? and Why?

The most important is legislation which would invest in our education systems.

Q19

Would you be available for an interview remotely or in person?

Yes.

Q20

Where may the WVMA follow you on social media? Please list social media handles including Facebook, Twitter, and others.

My website is: SenatorGeffert.com.

I have a Facebook page: Senator Hannah Geffert. I also have an Instagram page: SenatorGeffertWV. Each can be accessed through my website.
