

#58

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Friday, July 15, 2022 9:33:11 AM
Last Modified: Friday, July 15, 2022 4:13:48 PM
Time Spent: 06:40:37
IP Address: 184.19.101.58

Page 1

Q1

Identity-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Candidate Name: Gabe Pena
Office Seeking: House of Delegates
Party Affiliation: Democratic
District: 51st

Q2

Contact Info-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Address: 405 King Avenue
City/Town: Fayetteville
State/Province: West Virginia
ZIP/Postal Code: 25840
Country: United States
Email Address: gabe@gabe4wv.com
Phone Number: 3047319830

Q3

Education & Experience-Please fill out the indicated fields.

High School Attended (Ex: School name, city, & state)

Chester W. Nimitz, Irving, TX, 75060

Colleges Attended & Degrees Obtained (Ex: Marshall, MBA)

Kansas Wesleyan University, B.S. Biology

Current Employer & Job Position (Ex: WVMA, Director of Operations)

New Roots Community Farm, Development Director

Describe your current job & responsibilities

Oversee strategic development and diversification of NRCF's revenue streams, community partnerships, and producer support programming.

How long have you worked for your current employer?

3 Months

Q4

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

There are numerous impediments to locating and developing new businesses and industries in West Virginia; particularly in Southern West Virginia: underperforming public school system, widespread community blight, substance use disorder, poor health outcomes, and inadequate infrastructure. I believe that it is the state government's role to empower local governments to address the persistent issues occurring within local jurisdictions through strategic allocation of state and federal funding, and by creating opportunities for local sovereignty in policy and revenue generation i.e. expansion of home rule legislation.

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?

Up until this past March, as an employee with the Fayette County Commission, I spent the last seven years working on community and economic development project and helped to bring over \$1.8 million in grant funding to Fayette County Commission projects focused on downtown revitalization, litter control, historic preservation, food access and recreational asset development in Fayette County.

Major accomplishments in projects I have led include a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment grant awarded to the Commission which funded development of a redevelopment plan for Montgomery and Smithers. This redevelopment plan helped the municipalities articulate a vision for community revitalization resulting in a \$4.6 million congressional earmark for an integrated trail system between the two communities.

I will bring to the House an insight on the kind of support and resources rural energy communities and municipal leaders need as they work to recover from a changing economy, the ravages of substance use disorder, and an ongoing pandemic that exacerbates already poor health outcomes in the rural parts of our state.

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.

Council Member, Town of Fayetteville, 2019 - Present

Board Member, New River Health Association, 2014 - Present

Coach, Fayette County Youth Soccer Association 2018 - Present

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?

Outmigration threatens to undermine the state, county, and local governments ability to provide the basic services that are so important to our communities. We can be creative about generating revenues that support programs and marketing campaigns that bring folks to West Virginia, but the state has to take advantage of the \$6 Billion dollars of infrastructure funding, AML funds, and increased allocation to the Appalachian Regional Commission to invest in strategic infrastructure improvements that will allow areas primed for growth to facilitate commercial and residential development.

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.

No. This amendment is absolutely detrimental to county governments and will effectively defund county law enforcement agencies who are on the front lines of battling the ongoing effects of the opioid epidemic.

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?

Invest in public education and trade schools to help build a skilled workforce, redevelop downtowns and industrial sites making room for commercial and residential development, invest in infrastructure allowing for a quality of life that will help attract young families, entrepreneurs, and small businesses.

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?

Public school systems are on the front line of both dealing with and mitigating the widespread effects of substance use disorder. The trauma that too many of our kids in Southern WV are living with threatens to perpetuate substance abuse into the next generation of West Virginian's. Our public school systems and educator's must have the resources, federal or otherwise, to assist children in overcoming childhood trauma to foster sound mental health and prevent substance abuse.

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?

No one should ever be fired, evicted or denied public services because of their race, who they are or who they love. This kind of discrimination absolutely sends the wrong message to companies considering relocating here and it discourages young people from staying in our state and helping our economy grow.

I would advocate and vote for the Fairness Act as proposed by Fairness WV.

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.

Fayette County has one of the best vocational schools in the state. Replicating and growing such programs in order to prepare our future workforce must happen in partnership with community colleges and technical schools in order to build a skilled workforce. Taking revenues away from county school systems as proposed in Amendment 1 would be a step in the wrong direction. Should Amendment 1 pass, legislators will have to work much harder and be more creative to identify revenues needed to support technical skills development efforts in the state.

Q13

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

Pay teachers a competitive wage with a fully funded benefits package. As online gaming continues to grow with professional sports, WV legislators should be looking to this economic activity to generate revenues that can be allocated to, if nothing else, assuring that PEIA is fully funded.

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)?

Even though teachers in WV are generally overworked and underpaid, a grant program that would allow teachers of school systems to fund STEM based-projects or programs would be an excellent resource for public schools and technical education centers. Likewise, a scholarship program for vo-tech students in need would be great for creating equity in the states manufacturing sector.

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?

Start with assuring that the WVDEP has enough well inspectors/ compliance officers to monitor ongoing drilling and associated operations occurring in the Marcellus and Utica formations. I understand that abundant energy resources is one of the state's major assets in attracting manufacturers but the ability to efficiently produce oil and gas shouldn't come at the expense of the quality of the waterways that contribute largely to West Virginia's tourism industry.

Q16

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

Support large scale renewable energy projects that are sited on abandoned mine lands allowing the state to make use of both AML funds and the recently passed infrastructure bill in order to create the energy supply needed to support job creation in the Southern coal fields.

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?

I would examine corporation's follow-through on their environmental, social, and governance criteria to assure that they are accountable to the policies they themselves have established and to the community in which they aim to locate.

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?

Legislation that modernizes the state's energy system through the development of renewable energy sources signifying to corporations and other job creators with environmental, social, and governance criteria that West Virginia is ready to build a more innovative economy with an eye towards the future growth of our state.

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.

facebook: @gabe4ww

Twitter: @gabe4ww

Website: gabe4ww.com

Instagram: @Official.Gabriel.Pena
