

# #14

**COMPLETE**

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## Q1

Identity-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Candidate Name: **MIKE STUART**  
Office Seeking: **STATE SENATE**  
Party Affiliation: **REPUBLICAN**  
District: **7**

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## Q2

Contact Info-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Address **11 SOUTHCOVE LANE**  
Address 2 **ALUM CREEK**  
City/Town **SOUTH CHARLESTON**  
State/Province **WV**  
ZIP/Postal Code **25309**  
Country **USA**  
Email Address **mike@mikeforwv.com**  
Phone Number **304-553-1084**

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**Q3**

Education & Experience-Please fill out the indicated fields.

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

**MORGANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

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

**West Virginia University B.S.B.Ad. Business Administration (Accounting) and B.S. Political Science; Boston University School of Law, Juris Doctor**

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

**Dinsmore & Shohl, Partner, Corporate & Government Services**

Describe your current job & responsibilities

**I advise business and boards of directors, merger & acquisition, divestiture, criminal representation for white collar matters, advise of federal DOJ and law enforcement issues**

How long have you worked for your current employer?

**1 year and 3 months following my term as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia**

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**Q4**

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

I believe capitalism is the greatest gift in the history of humanity. Markets, not governments, should determine markets and products. Markets and capitalism work. It is only when government confuses markets with uncertainty or undue burdens that they operate inefficiently. In an ideal world, the role of government is to ensure primarily public safety but, otherwise, business and industry is best when government doesn't unnecessarily intervene or influence markets. I am perfectly fine in a modern world with government providing infrastructure or trying to ensure a competent, capable workforce but, on the whole, government is best and markets are best with as few regulations as possible, as little government interference as possible, and with as little taxation as possible. Business and industry should not have to hire armies of lawyers to comply with tax or regulatory regimes that are unnecessarily established to burden productivity and growth.

**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 a wealth of practical, real world experience. My life has been building to this opportunity. I have done everything from flipping burgers to shoveling horse manure at thoroughbred farm to installing ventilation ductwork in new construction to being a small business person (twice), an accountant for one of the largest accounting firms in the world, a corporate attorney for one largest law firms in the world, a corporate partner at the largest law firm in West Virginia, co-chair of then-candidate Donald Trump's campaign for President in West Virginia, the United States Attorney as nominated by the President and confirmed by the United States Senate including with the strong support of Senators Manchin and Capito, and, currently, a partner at one of the fastest growing law firms in the country. As a State Senator, I will draw on all my experiences on issues that matter to the long-term interests of our citizens.

I could go into a great deal of detail on each one of my professional experiences but, specifically, you need to understand the role I played as the US Attorney for the Southern District of West Virginia, the chief federal law enforcement officer for the District. In that role, I was responsible for the operations of four physical offices comprising nearly 80 employees with an annual budget of nearly \$10 million a year. During my tenure, I rebuilt and restructured all of the operations including hiring nearly twenty of the best and brightest attorneys from across the country. In my role, I coordinated all federal law enforcement activities including the activities of the FBI, DEA, IRS, HHS, USPS, and nearly a dozen other agencies. During my term, I accomplished big things. I set a record for prosecutions, had the highest rate of immediate detention in the country, prosecuted two of the five members of the WV State Supreme Court, took down a record number of drug gangs, removed enough fentanyl to kill nearly 44 million people, coordinated prosecution for corruption, elder fraud, domestic violence, Medicaid fraud, prosecuted nearly two dozen doctors and a dozen pharmacies, while bringing in nearly \$36 million in my final two years with a budget of only \$13 million.

In addition to my tangible experience, I also bring a wealth of intangibles qualities to the role of State Senator. As much as I am well-known as a competent and accomplished professional, for those that know me best, they will tell you that I have a strong work ethic, unquestioned character (in more than 25 years working in incredibly challenging environments there has never been a whisper of any issue), strong leadership capabilities, and I treat my co-workers and peers with respect at all times.

As a former CPA, a twenty plus year corporate and business attorney, a partner with multiple firms, and as a former Chair of the State Republican Party and as the former Chief Federal Law enforcement officer in the Southern District of West Virginia, I have had a distinguished career. More important than all of that "stuff," I love my family and have been married for nearly 27 years and I have two amazing daughters, Isabella (21) and Audrey (20). In all my years of professional life, I have never been confused as to my priority-family. They are my secret weapon, keep me balanced, and are the reason I have worked so hard over my career.

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**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.

I was prohibited from being involved in any outside activities while the United States Attorney so I am currently rebuilding my efforts in that regard. I am just beginning to get re-engaged. I currently serve on several committees for the YWCA, am a member of the Republican National Lawyers Association, the Federalist Society, the WV State Bar, the American Swiss Foundation, the National Association of Former US Attorneys, and the national Association of Bond Lawyers.

Additionally, in addition to formal organizational commitments, I regularly speak around the state to business groups and political organizations on a variety of subjects. I am a champion of ending the scourge of domestic violence and ensuring we strengthen laws in that respect. I continue to work with families that have lost children to the opiate scourge to speak with youth and to build initiatives that can assist in ending this terrible epidemic. I am a member of the Republican State Executive Committee (was the former State Chair) and actively participate with Republican organizations across West Virginia.

One final example of my leadership and my involvement in community activities is my initiative for West Virginia to propose and host a national general election Presidential debate in 2016. In 2014, entirely based on my own initiative, I sought and received the commitment and participation of the State of West Virginia and Governor Tomblin, the City of Charleston and Mayor Jones, West Virginia State University and West Virginia University to formally submit a proposal to host the national debate at the Clay Center between nominees Trump and Clinton. Our proposal finished fifth in a field of four accepted proposals. We worked with the Commission on Presidential Debates, built a working committee and President Gordon Gee and I travelled to Washington DC on multiple occasions to sell our proposal. Had our proposal been accepted, it would have been the single biggest political event in the history of West Virginia. Despite us finishing just short, it was a worthy proposal that built bipartisan respect among the members of the working committee.

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**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?

West Virginia faces many critical- absolutely critical- challenges but the greatest single threat West Virginia faces is "satisfaction with incremental change." What do I mean by "satisfaction with incremental change?" West Virginia has pockets of growth but those pockets are substantially limited. There are positive signs of a changing economic landscape but for decades the "brain drain" has sent our best and brightest out of West Virginia while we retained lesser talented, lesser education, greater government-dependent citizens that fundamentally changed our workforce in a negative manner. Our infrastructure needs are massive with too few resources, our population decline has been devastating, the changing energy and environmental demands has been crushing, and from Clarksburg south to the border at Princeton and Huntington, our state is a hollow shell of its once mighty past.

While we are making incremental improvements, our neighbors are also making incremental improvements. The challenge is that our neighbors are substantially larger with significantly more resources than West Virginia. The result of our making incremental change is that with each passing year we get exponentially further behind. "Their" 3% improvement laps our 3% improvement. We cannot afford to make small incremental change. Doing just a little better further aggravates our "crisis of viability." Incremental change is our enemy.

West Virginia needs leaders like me who are able lead the change. I have a proven record of doing big things and building winning teams. I fundamentally believe a single person, a single State Senator, can be the difference maker in building a consensus for hope and accomplishing big goals. My message every day in the State Senate will be "Go Big and do it now."

We face traditional challenges – chronic challenges- like the loss of people, industry, infrastructure, educational attainment, workforce development, etc., but those solutions begin with real leadership and vision. I have solutions for all those problems but I believe the over-arching solution for the problems of West Virginia is electing people like me to help lead the future.

It's time that West Virginia "swing for the fences." We need strong leadership with a true vision of the future. We need a sense of urgency and we must stop playing "small ball." We need to do it now.

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**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 support passage and actual repeal of the personal property tax in West Virginia. I am an outspoken and enthusiastic supporter of approving the authority to repeal the personal property tax and, as a member of the State Senate, I will be pleased to sponsor legislation eliminating the personal property tax. No reservations. No apologies. No deal making. No hollow promises. It needs to go as quickly as possible.

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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?

I have a great deal of plans and proposals to help build the West Virginia economy and to strengthen the social fabric of the Mountain State.

In terms of overarching principles, I am an actual conservative- not a theoretical one. I don't need a consultant or a lobbyist to tell me what to think. I know what to think because being a conservative is innate to my being. I am a bonafide actual business-oriented conservative.

We need to reduce and streamline the size of government, overhaul and eliminate as many regulations as possible, lower taxes with the elimination of the personal property tax and substantially reduce or eliminate the income tax, and ensure that we create adequate incentives for job creators and the creative class. We need to foster entrepreneurship and job creation but not in a way that manages the result. Job creators and companies should manage the result based on markets. We need to ensure that West Virginia has the greatest level of economic freedom in the world. We must achieve the lowest per capita tax burden in the nation.

West Virginia must become a leader in education- primary, secondary and higher- in the engagement of entrepreneurship education, financial competency, high-skill and trade-skill development with skills standards initiative being a foundation to the educational experience. Beyond charter schools, we need to offer magnet schools, specialized STEM schools, and literal public-private partnerships. Can you imagine the Apple School for Applied STEM as a HIGH SCHOOL? How about the Google School for Applied Sciences for a MIDDLE SCHOOL? I would like to see West Virginia high schools offer a "Workforce Sciences Degree" in cooperation with trade schools for those careers in which an advanced degree is not necessary. For instance, electrical, plumbing and landscape sciences. How great would it be if a student in high school could graduate with the entirety of the required certifications in place?

We must become a leader at creating our future. Can you imagine if we set a target of making Charleston the most technologically advanced city in the United States on a per capita basis within the next ten years? As crazy as it sounds, we can do it. Our opportunity is that we are small enough to get it done but large enough to matter. How about establishing actual trade agreements not only with countries but states? I don't know why we haven't established trade and work agreements with other nations that can build long-term partnerships for the benefit of West Virginia.

Immigration is another area that the typical Republican is shy to discuss. In my view, one of our great challenges in West Virginia is people. More specifically, a lack of people. We should build international partnerships to encourage and embrace high-skilled LEGAL immigration for the development and growth of West Virginia. There are actual studies across the nation that provide evidence of the positive impact on economic growth of an immigrant class. Minnesota is a perfect example.

West Virginia needs to also invest in new statewide traditions. We need to continue to build the identity of West Virginia to the world. Although these ideas may not be specific to manufacturing, a better business climate and more people will directly impact positively the manufacturing base of the state. I want to see the establishment of new traditions- the establishment of the largest country music festival in the nation - MountainFest (100,000 people plus over a three day event); a "Statewide Festival of Lights" at the State Capital at Christmas; the aggressive immersed development of the equine industry including investment of substantial infrastructure in partnership with WVU; relocating and rebuilding of the WV State Fair in a more centralized location; youth sports arenas and facilities regionally located across the state; motor sports facilities with the goal of building a Nascar partnership; a recommitment to the arts throughout the state; and the substantial commitment to building a material and substantial agricultural sector.

I also believe that coal and natural gas can still be our future but, for that to be realistic, it will take a proper amount of investment including research and development. I would like for the state to partner with West Virginia University in the formation of the Institute for Applied Energy Research and for us to work with our federal representatives to bring the best and brightest scientists from across the world to spearhead an effort to take coal from "dark and dirty" to "clean and green." It would be a "Manhattan Project" style endeavor. I maintain that if we could develop a vaccine for Covid in less than six months through Operation Warp Speed, we can build

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a critical sense of urgency for finding environmentally better ways to drill, frack and mine. It simply makes sense.

Companies that look for investment and growth also want to know that the state in which they operate are honest and fair in the business dealings. They want a level playing field. West Virginia needs substantial ethics and corruption reforms. We need new laws to require greater transparency. We need lobbyist reform. We need PSC reform. We need "good ol' boy" reform. We need to ensure honest, trusted government so that businesses know that their work- not government interference or the good ol' boys- are the reason for success or failure. We shouldn't be in the business of managing or picking winners or losers. We need to let markets and competition pick winners and losers.

I also want to see us pass several innovative plans for West Virginia business development including what I call "Made Right Here"- an innovative plan that creates incentives for products that are at least 80% conceived and produced in West Virginia. By way of example, let me use milk. Milk may not seem like manufacturing but there are many processes that go into the process. Under my plan, the company would apply to the WV Department of Commerce to have a particular product designated as "Made Right Here." If it met the standards - produced in West Virginia with at least 80% of all value added services - it would be designated as "Made Right Here." What would it mean for the Company? Tax breaks and incentives for investment in infrastructure and employees. In the case of milk, imagine shopping at a grocery store in Wheeling. If the West Virginia milk was designated as "Made Right Here", it would have a sticker attached to the jug to notify the public that it is made in West Virginia (a significant competitive advantage to the out of state milk) and, even better, on a quarterly basis, the Company could seek a rebate from the State of West Virginia for all sales and income taxes related to the product. The rebate would be required to be invested by the company in its employees or equipment and infrastructure in West Virginia (they could not send the money out of state). This program would generate jobs and development.

I also want us to begin the process of recruiting our people back to West Virginia. I support what I call the "Come Home to West Virginia" program. As much as I appreciate the program developed by Brad Smith to bring new people to West Virginia, the challenge with the program is it cannot be replicated and it's not redundant. It is sadly akin to socialism- at some point you run out of other people money. We need a better recruitment tool. We need to provide a 5 year income tax exclusion for any gainfully employed person relocating to West Virginia. There would be certain terms and conditions but the concept is to create an incentive, open ended, to bring productive citizens to the Mountain State.

I have many proposals for building the future. We have begun the process of turning West Virginia around but, trust me, we ain't seen nothing yet. We need leadership and vision. I have both.

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**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?



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There is probably no one that understands the opiate crisis better than me with my background as the United States Attorney. I literally carry in my pocket each day a wallet filled with the pictures of the victims of the opiate crisis while I was US Attorney. I attended the funerals and embraced the moms and dads. I toured rehabilitation clinics and spoke to countless schools.

This is a chronic and perpetual problem. Sadly, despite more than 100,000 Americans dying each year to overdose, there seems to be a lack of urgency to actually solve the problem. We deal with the problem "on the edges" with no real commitment to solve the crisis. This isn't rocket science. This shouldn't take one million more people succumbing to the epidemic. We need to focus with a sense of urgency and we need to do it NOW.

First, we need to be honest about the problem. This is both a supply and a demand problem. Sadly, we seem to always want to deal with the demand side while ignoring the supply side. We cannot solve this problem without addressing both. To only deal with the demand is simply too slow and will only result in countless millions more victims to the scourge.

Drugs and the opioid crisis are the great challenge of our time. I would argue that the decline of the nation, the deep national divisions, and the damage to the social fabric is the result of decades of drugs eating at the social fabric of our country. In West Virginia, there is a not a town, street, school, church or family that hasn't been significantly impacted. There are two things that must be done to solve this crisis- first we must destroy the cartels and stop the free flow of illicit drugs into the nation; second we need to prepare our communities for the long term healing that is necessary to move forward.

In terms of the Cartels, they declared war on us long ago. Did you know that since 1999, we have lost more people to overdose than the combined deaths on WWI, WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, 9/11, the war on terror, and the combined gun deaths during that period? This is a war we have chosen to fight with law enforcement. Frankly, law enforcement was never intended for a battle of this scope and scale. We must declare war on the cartels. We must destroy them where they sit, sleep and eat. I can tell you as a former US Attorney with top-secret security clearance, we know where they are, where they will rest their head this evening, and where they produce their goods. As I suggested to the President of the United States and the US Attorney General many times, this is a war worth fighting. It would be the most worthy military engagement in the history of the country. And we could effectively destroy the cartels and their minions in less than two months.

Simultaneously, we need to do the opposite of the cultural messaging we are getting. We don't need to soften laws with respect to drugs. We need to strengthen laws to deal with the gangs and trigger pullers that has preyed on our families and our communities for decades all in the interests of money. We also need to specifically increase the availability of effective rehabilitation in communities all across West Virginia and we need to police the rehab industry through the creation of the WV Task Force on Sober Living. I can tell you that there is a crisis in rehab today. There are some really good rehab centers. Sadly, there are many more that are simply bad and bleeding money from taxpayers in a corrupt manner.

I also want us to strengthen and grow "second chance" laws to ensure former addicts and those with substance abuse disorders can get back into the workforce. It is critical that we encourage and codify second chances and redemption.

Finally, as one of my first acts as a State Senator, I will introduce the innovative "Parents Right to Intervention Act" which will allow parent/guardians of DEPENDENTS aged 18-26 to be involuntarily placed into a mental hygiene evaluation and, if appropriate, placed into long-term drug rehab treatment. The key is this bill would be focused on DEPENDENTS- young people that are dependent (live with the parent, remain on the parent's health insurance, etc.). This is not my idea. It is the odea of Stacy Archer, a mom that lost her son Joel to overdose when he was 24 years old. Stacy tried many times to get her son treatment but he would never stay in treatment. Joel was a student at WVU and a total dependent on Stacy and her husband. Stacy believes to this day that Joel would be alive if she could have forced him into treatment. I don't know but I do know that if my 20/21 year old daughters were on drugs and addicted, I would want the chance to save them. I think it's worth a try.

**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?

I believe in fairness and equal treatment for everyone. I have worked in large organizations with respect to employee fairness for decades.

Every state is unique. West Virginia needs to remain unique while ensuring we can compete for the companies and related jobs that "fit" for West Virginia. Many states treat issues differently and, interestingly, some of the fastest growing states in terms of the business climate are Alabama, Oklahoma, Georgia and Florida, hardly innovators in terms of workplace equity issues. Fairness, in my view, is the key. And, frankly, West Virginia may not be the right "fit" for some companies and we shouldn't try to force a square peg in a round hole.

In terms of recruiting and retaining companies in which this is a priority, I would first make sure we are economically and regulatorily competitive. In terms of human resource issues, we must ensure a level playing field for all employees and all companies. I don't believe it's the role of government to lead in these areas but, rather, I believe companies should shepherd and lead on matters of importance to their companies.

I do not believe that West Virginia should be in the business of social engineering or social experimentation but, rather, I simply want to ensure we are fair and predictable as a place to do business. We will allow companies to operate as they want with as little interference as possible but companies should not dictate to us how we operate the State of West Virginia.

The loudest voices aren't always the correct voices. We see that every day with companies like Walt Disney that confuse managing a company and delivering on their mission with mandating social behaviors that may, in some instances, be counter to the character and values of a population. Walt Disney is a great company but, as a stockholder in the company, I can clearly state that it lost focus on its principle business objectives. There must be a balancing between interests. Companies and communities each carry a value proposition that must be weighed, considered and balanced.

Common sense is rare in America today. Perhaps with common sense balanced and fair laws that protect companies self-determination while respecting the character and value of communities, we can create the balance needed to better attract and retain current and new employers. I believe we need to do our best to ensure personal freedom while ensuring fairness in the workplace for all Americans.

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## 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.

Incredibly important question- workforce capability and competence. One of the great challenges we face today is that we don't have a tremendous workforce. Yes. I said it. We DON'T have a great workforce. Until we acknowledge the problem, we can't begin to solve it.

Manufacturing is vital to US national security and our national defense. Manufacturing is critical to West Virginia as we continue to build to the future. We face several distinct challenges in this respect:

1. Our workforce participation rates are pathetically low;
2. Our education system has failed to adapt to an overwhelming rate of change in the market;
3. Our best and brightest departed West Virginia while our least capable remained; and
4. West Virginia has not been competitive until recently in key business development metrics.

It will be difficult, if not impossible, for the nation and West Virginia to successfully compete without a robust manufacturing sector. Last I checked, each manufacturing job supports nearly 3 additional jobs in the economy. West Virginia is a blank slate, tabula rasa, when it comes to potential improvement. One positive in an otherwise challenging environment is that we can rebuild and recreate the education system and our priorities for the system as we deem necessary more easily than larger states can with comparative challenges.

I believe we must be proactive on workforce development issues for West Virginia to be successful. We need to create "engineering and manufacturing institutes" in association with both universities and other educational institutions in West Virginia. We also need set parameters and designate certain state universities as "manufacturing universities" and establish manufacturing skills standards initiatives.

We need to "mainstream" entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business education, and technical trades within the traditional education system. From middle school through high school, we must mandate the annual immersion and exposure of students to business and industry with the understanding that at some point in their futures these skills will be paramount.

In terms of secondary education, for decades we have debated the issue of vocational and trades education. We need to fix it once and for all. Sadly, today, vocational education programs are considered "secondary alternative" education for the kids that don't measure up. That view is entirely wrong and it needs relegated to the dust heap of history. We need to establish trade charter schools and re-market and re-package trade schools to not offer "alternative" education but, rather, make it clear that these educational skillsets are primary opportunities for a substantial segment of our students. We have falsely been sold a narrative that a student must go to college to be successful. In a word- FALSE! Students who want a career in a field that requires a college education should be on a college track in their studies but, in many instances, our students don't need college, they need skills and experience. I want our trade schools to offer full certification and to work with manufacturers to specifically develop the capabilities needs for a better workforce.

I believe in focus-driven living and focus-driven education. I also believe in innovation. I want West Virginia to not only further build out charter schools and to introduce magnet schools to the options available to our students but, additionally, I want West Virginia to hyper-charge public-private partnerships in the area of public education. One of my concepts is public-private trade public schools where the emphasis isn't on a college track advanced studies schedule but, rather, a hands-on trades-focused experience where, for example, a private sector manufacturing company can partner with a school system to develop a trades school with a valuable and

enriching educational experience that is focused on practical job schools, business metrics, and trades experience.

Finally, we need to address the dependency on government benefits by so many West Virginians. A workforce participation rate of near 50% is not acceptable. For decades, West Virginia has been the worst state in the country for workforce participation. We need to begin to wean the dependence of our citizens on government and replace it with jobs and job creation. We must change that generational dynamic and mindset.

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### Q13

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

The West Virginia education system is, frankly, a disaster. It is an antiquated system of a failed status quo. There is very little about it that is outcome based. Sadly, it has become all about process and a tug of war between interests seeking structure over substance. Outcomes are a mere accidental side-effect in most instances but outcomes, sadly, are a certain result and, most typically, in a negative way.

We must overhaul the entire education system in West Virginia- top to bottom. We have done a good job providing alternatives like school choice and charter schools but those are no substitute for actually fixing the problem of public education. Charter schools help but it is a mere finger in the dike of dam that is collapsing. Overhaul. Complete overhaul. Anything less is not acceptable.

We must reconsider the structure of school systems in West Virginia and spend time re-imagining the leadership at the state and local levels to incorporate efficiencies and cost-savings. Unelected bureaucrats absent the input of parents should not be making all the decisions affecting the education of our youth. Did you know the State Superintendent of Schools has a salary higher than the Superintendents of much larger schools systems in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland? If our performance were stellar, that would be unacceptable. Given our failure to perform, it is tragic. Yet no one does a thing.

It is time we re-envision education in West Virginia and how we teach our children in the classroom. We need to bring market based principles to education- accountability, incentives- to ensure our schools are performance based. I also think it is time we consider the "year round" academic calendar or trimesters with flexibility for students and parents to determine the pace and path of student achievement and advancement. Setting a standard of "180 days of instruction" is crazy and serves no purposes. No one student will be on a static path or a static plan but we must ensure that the foundation is math, technology, reading and science from the youngest ages.

I want to see industry and companies play a role in setting the standards for students as opposed to a traditional static calendar that is outdated based on pure prior standards that don't work and don't encourage achievement. We need not only charter school options but magnet schools and schools specialized in STEM aptitude. There are good models in this regard. Take a look at Arizona which traditional has some of the highest rated schools in the country.

Public-private partnerships, incorporating professional, experience based instruction, integrating national experts, ensuring financial and entrepreneurial literacy, technology integration, and career-focused options through focused trade schools- this is the ticket to a transparent education system that bring the best market opportunities to students with the greatest opportunities for successful employment.

Finally, we need to provide for "encourage flexibility" within school systems to ensure the process is adaptable to current trends and current market needs.

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**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)?

I believe I have addressed this previously in the questionnaire but, of course, STEM is critical for the development of our youth to be productive members of the West Virginia and global marketplace. The reality is we don't operate in a bubble. We compete with the world. To compete, we need the best and the brightest.

STEM will be one of the central focuses of successfully building a "outcomes" focused and success focus student population.

The challenge here is a lack of focus and priorities by current leadership. The system is broken. It needs overhauled. It needs re-ordering of priorities. It needs critical structural improvements. We cannot be afraid to take on the special interests that hinder or development and our push to national excellence. If they get in the way, we simply need to run them over.

Our state, our nation is relying on us. Our students are relying on us. STEM integration and immersion is but a small piece of what must be done. We must build the ideal education system incorporating innovation, technology, and learning objectives that can be measured. Absent the courage to take on those that will hold us back, we won't be successful is redirecting and rebuilding education in West Virginia.

I have a proven record of taking on tough interests and tough challenges and winning. My skin is thick. I am a winner and I like winning. It's time we win for West Virginia and the promise of our future.

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**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?

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The word “balance” is the key word. We are all vested parties in the interests of a clean and vibrant environment with clean air, clean water, and reduced carbon output but, those interests must be weighed and balanced with the critically important requirement for investment, economic growth, and good jobs.

We know that we could reduce carbon output to zero but shutting down all companies, mandating people stay home, and forcing shutdowns of all human activity. The result would be disastrous for West Virginia, the nation, and humanity. We must have a balanced approach that recognizes the qualitative and quantitative improvement to society from economic and technical development.

As a former United States Attorney, I appreciate that there are jurisdictional differences between federal and state laws and regulations. As a State Senator I will have input and jurisdiction over state environmental laws, rules and regulation but I will communicate and work closely with my federal counterparts on these matters. Frankly, it is too important not to work with them.

Honestly, climate crazies – unreasonable zealots- are unilaterally disarming the nation's production potential. Manufacturing is important not solely because we want a new wrench or a new widget but because it strengthens our national security, improves our quality of life, and strengthens the upward mobility of each and every citizen of the world.

Before we shut down productive capability, we must ensure that West Virginians can put food on the table, pay their mortgage, provide for their children's education, and save for retirement. In Washington DC, the “balance” has been lost.

The United States cannot single-handedly right the wrongs of the world's industrial pollution output. The nation has done a stellar job at reducing carbon output but all our actions cannot overcome the growing carbon and industrial pollutant output happening in the developing world, China, Russia, India and so on and so forth. We cannot allow the American engine to be destroyed while strategic international competitors can continue to operate without consideration for environmental considerations.

The overwhelming challenge on these matters is federal overreach but, as they say, it “is what it is.” We have to ensure that West Virginia has a proper balance to protect the environment but we cannot fail to appreciate the critical importance of economic growth and output including industrial and energy development.

First, we need to challenge and push back in every possible manner the federal overreach that unconstitutionally inhibits and hinders the West Virginia determination of acceptable economic activity.

Second, we must ensure that adequate regulates are in effect to achieve our goals while not allowing unelected bureaucrats to overwhelm manufacturing and industrial development in a substantially adverse manner.

Third, we need to streamline and remove all unnecessary rules and regulations from the backs of economic producers.

Finally, we need to apply common sense, a rare commodity, for a proper balance between a safe environment, worker safety, and economic growth and development.

In perhaps no other area is it more important that we elect the right leaders, leaders that understand the delicate balance. My opponent has been in the State Senate for 16 years and, if you review his record and public comments, he fully believes the solutions to every problem and every challenge is big government programs and big government intervention. I think this is entirely the wrong approach.

Rather than find the source of every solution in government, I think we should be working with manufacturers and industry to co-create reasonable balanced solutions to achieve the balance between environmental concerns and the critical essential need for economic development and growth.

Leadership matters. It's all about leadership.

**Q16**

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

West Virginia has been improving in the area of energy diversity at least from a legal standpoint. The West Virginia Legislature is correct to take an "all the above" approach including traditional energy production like coal and natural gas while adding nuclear, wind, solar, etc.

We need to be careful when it comes to selecting energy output through government determination. My view, consistent with everything I've stated in the marathon questionnaire, is we should let markets determine energy diversity without unnatural and fake government controls and regulations.

We often hear the common refrain that "coal is dead and fossil fuels are going away." I understand the refrain but I believe we should be investing substantial resources in critical research and development to change fossil fuel resources from "dark and dirty" to "clean and green." If we could develop a nuclear bomb through the Manhattan Project and a vaccine to the Covid-19 pandemic in a matter of months, I fundamentally believe that if we could harness the collective intellectual energy of the world's best and brightest scientist and engineers, in a matter of months we could develop wholly innovative solutions and technologies to make the transition not to "green" forms of energy but, rather, the holy grail of fossil fuel transition.

Research and development is truly the solution to both the environmental challenges we face and the critical need for growing energy resources. The real holy grail is the development of fusion energy. With fusion, we could energize all of West Virginia from a reactor the size of a small office. Interestingly, we are getting closer. The US Navy actually has filed several patents on the subject. Despite the patents, we are probably years away from actual fusion capability.

Many of these issues are driven by Washington DC. Extreme environmental policies are harmful to the nation and our ability to compete internationally. It is federal overreach. That said, we have no choice but to operate within the requirements of federal law and to appropriately innovate for the future. I welcome the development of renewables and green energy alternatives but much more research and development is necessary before they are real alternatives to traditional fossil fuels.

In my role as a State Senator, I think we need to encourage markets, not government, to make the determinations of energy output. We also need to ensure that the Public Service Commission is not determining economic output. Markets are best. Companies can make these determinations far better than government. I will continue to support policies of "all the above" and the full integration and involvement of all energy sources- fossil, renewable, nuclear, fusion, and not yet developed forms of energy output.

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**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?

Environmental, social and governance criteria are a growing component of corporate governance today. As a big firm corporate attorney and as a former CPA with one of the largest firms in the world, I appreciate that Companies are reacting to a changing social environment with respect and consideration for improving markets and output with the need to balance environmental and social considerations. Government, however, is not the place to dictate these policies. We need to leave those issues to companies in their reasonable determination of competitive needs for profitability and growth.

Despite the rise of ESG policies, companies must keep a keen eye on the traditional priority of company output- maximizing shareholder value. No matter the growth of ESG, if companies fail to achieve profitability, those ESG policies are pointless.

The best thing we can do to is to create a level playing field and allow companies to make the competitive determinations best for their companies based on the circumstances. Those company determinations and ESG considerations should not mandate Legislatures or governments to match priorities or to take state action to endorse or otherwise institutionalize corporate decision making.

A balanced, reasonable common sense approach focused on markets and not regulation or government fiat is the key.

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**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?

We don't have to work on a single piece of legislation for the improvement of the manufacturing or business sector. We can walk and chew gum at the same time.

If, however, you want me to pick one legislative action, I think we need to pass the ballot initiative and, then, the Legislature needs to wholly and fully eliminate the personal property tax.

The key is not a graduated removal or a piecemeal approach. Trust me, there will be pressures inside the Legislature to remove it slowly and in a piece meal target manner but we must resist those voices of doom. It must be passed and fully eliminated ASAP.

Second, we must work to reduce the tax and regulatory burden on all businesses and companies in West Virginia. Maybe that comes in the form of the substantial reduction or elimination of the income tax or, alternatively, it comes in the form of regulatory overhaul and a discussion of a reduced tax on WV business output, provided, that, those profits are ultimately taxed through wages paid to workers in West Virginia.

Third, I am open to a Reinvestment Tax Credit for companies in West Virginia. We need to encourage investment in property, plant and equipment and employees in West Virginia and I think we could draft reasonable, investment oriented legislation to encourage greater West Virginia investment.

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**Q19**

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

Of course- 24/7/365

Please note, although I may not be an incumbent or elected policymaker, I am not a new voice or an unknown person. I am the former Chair of the WV Republican Party where I completely rebuilt and remarketed the state party; founded the WV Conservative Foundation; led a bipartisan effort with the State of WV, WV State University, WVU, and the City of Charleston to bring a national Presidential debate to WV; effectively led the 2016 WV Trump for President campaign including organizing the 25,000 person rally and leading the WV delegation to the Republican National Convention in Cleveland; served as the Presidentially-nominated and US Senate confirmed US Attorney where I prosecuted some of the highest profile cases in WV history including two members of the State Supreme Court; and have a professional career of being a partner and working for some of the largest companies in the nation. I have a long record. But, yes, I would be pleased to meet with you or members of your committee.

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**Q20**

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

Facebook is-

<https://www.facebook.com/mikestuartwv>

(I have a personal page and a Mike Stuart for Senate page)

Twitter is-

@MikeStuartWV

Campaign website-

MakeWVGreat.com

Dinsmore website bio-

<https://www.dinsmore.com/michael-b-stuart/>

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