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Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Tuesday, July 05, 2022 4:40:05 PM
Last Modified: Tuesday, July 05, 2022 5:47:45 PM
Time Spent: 01:07:39
IP Address: 107.77.223.237

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Q1

Identity-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Candidate Name: Bengy wanson
Office Seeking: house of delegates 77th district
Party Affiliation: democrat
District: 77th

Q2

Contact Info-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Address: 4536 mason dixon hwy
City/Town: core
State/Province: West Virginia
ZIP/Postal Code: 26541
Country: United States
Email Address: swanson4house@gmail.com
Phone Number: 13046506270

Q3

Education & Experience-Please fill out the indicated fields.

High School Attended (Ex: School name, city, & state): Clay Battelle High School Blacksville WV
Colleges Attended & Degrees Obtained (Ex: Marshall, MBA): Fairmont State University BA
Current Employer & Job Position (Ex: WVMA, Director of Operations): owner Rt 7 Pawn/Ironworkers local 549
Describe your current job & responsibilities: own and operate Rt 7 Pawn/Ironworker
How long have you worked for your current employer?: 10 years/22 years

Q4

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

State government, especially in WV should focus more on bringing more staple businesses to the state, make a point to use WV workers to build and operate those businesses

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 am a 22 year Ironworker, I also served as the Business Manager for 6 years of the local of which I am a member of, I have experience in negotiating contracts, supporting new business, putting 500 members to work, managing their pension, health and security funds. I also come from a family of small business owners and have successfully owned and operated two small businesses of my own.

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.

Member of local 549 ironworkers
Former cochair of Project BEST (the biggest labor/management organization in the state.
Former member of the Ohio County Development Authority.
Former board member of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley
Former clerk of the works for the Wetzel County Commission.
Member of the WV Pawn Assoc.

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 alarming situation in my mind is the vast number of residents who are exiting the state at a rapid rate. Reasons such as no jobs, the state's drug epidemic, lack of good benefits at the jobs the currently have, etc.
Once again, we must focus on bring more, better paying, long term jobs in. Fixing infrastructure, tax breaks and development of greenfield sites would be a great place to start.

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, like everyone else, despise paying taxes, but taxes are needed. I would however support the gradual phase out of taxes, if the state can sustain the loss of revenue.

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?

Overhaul infrastructure...roads, bridges, internet, cell service, bigger airports.

Open up the state for business, cut direct routes from cities in WV to major cities in surrounding states. No reason we do not have better routes to DC, Columbus, etc.

Develop unused lands throughout the state, make this place more pleasing to potential investors.

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?

I believe 4 things would help.

1. Better paying jobs. We are a very oppressed state, for generations now, once a group has been oppressed for so long, why wouldn't they turn to a substance that raises confidence? I believe this is the root of many drug addictions. If I have a good job that will allow me to provide for my family and allow me to live better than paycheck to paycheck, I think much of the drug issues would go away.

2. Better mental health facilities in the state. Some need help, some want help, but there are times when this is just not readily available.

3. Stricter penalties for criminals. I deal with lots of drug abusers and law enforcement at my pawnshop, so there is much conversation from both sides about the other side. The one thing that upsets me most in those conversations is when a law enforcement officer tells me that the only want the big fish, the dealer... not the abusers. I say arrest them all, jailing some might just be the wakeup call they need to get the help they require.

4. More education for our youth. It is never too soon to begin educating our youth and begin guiding them in a direction that will produce a responsible adult.

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?

Many of our bigger cities in this state have already passed minority laws and/or ordinances which protect the rights of those mentioned in this question, and I believe those cities are on the right track. Personally, when working as the Business Manager of the Ironworkers, all of my apprentices signed discrimination contracts, which led to their dismissal if broken. On the flip side they also signed whistleblower contracts that protected those who came forward if they were being or witnessed any kind of discrimination.

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.

Bottom line... promote and fund trade schools.

Q13

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

Make the teachers happy and the kids will be happy. Fix PEIA, make pay to teachers comparable to the surrounding states. I strongly believe our youth is this state's biggest asset. Retain phenomenal teachers and you will produce better students.

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 put on many career fairs, been to 100's of high schools in this state recruiting ironworkers. If industry were serious about our youth and investing in them, they would be at all those schools too. If a new factory comes to town, why not donate the very machines the factory uses to the local schools? Invest in the community by teaching the skills necessary to obtain a job once high school is completed.

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?

N/A

Q16

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

We must as a state, find a way to get past the old way of thinking. We as a whole focus on coal, because it's all we have ever been taught. We sit on one of the biggest natural gas deposits ever discover, yet we still have those sold on coal fighting to stop the production of gas in this state. God forbid we take it one step further and mention solar or wind energy. It amazes me that a state such as California can be building windmills, putting up solar panels, etc and the vast majority of this state refuse to believe it actually works. We must do a better job of marketing and education our citizens on the value of renewable energy.

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?

N/A

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?

Introduce legislation that would force the development of unused state lands and private greenfield sites and make them readily available to those who actually want to come here and build plants.

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.

Swanson4house.com

Swanson4house on facebook
