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Q1

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

I have a limited government perspective of a business environment designed to entice and keep business and industry here in West Virginia. With less burdensome regulation, competitive tax structure, good infrastructure, a competitive workforce made of skilled and semi-skilled workers, West Virginia can create an environment conducive to staying-power and growth. Additionally, the less government takes out of our pockets the more the state of WV and her people will prosper.

Q2

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 have owned/operated two successful manufacturing businesses in West Virginia, first as President of Fairchild International in Beckley and also as the President and owner of Marathon Industries. I have now resided in Greenbrier County for over 30 years, starting my successful law practice from scratch. In saying this, I believe that I bring business acumen and keen experience to the table. As a trial lawyer, I deal with rules and regulations on a daily basis, and I seek to use this experience to help our state and her people succeed.

Q3

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.

WV Right to Life
NRA-National Rifle Association
WV Bar Association
Charter Member of Emmanuel Community Church
ACLJ-American Center for Law and Justice
WV Association for Justice
CUFI- Christians United for Israel
West Virginia Farm Bureau

Q4

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?

We must plan now for a post-COVID world where businesses, who have been slapped in the face over and over in 2020, must be aided in order to save our state's economy. In order to regain the economic momentum that West Virginia has experienced under conservative leadership, we must make sure that we have adequate professionally-skilled and semi-skilled workers to meet demand. This is a multi-pronged issue that must involve research into the type of job industries that we are looking to attract to West Virginia, and making sure that we have the skill sets available to meet the needs of those industries or companies to continue economic recovery. We must also listen to the companies that are already here in order to maintain their residency. We can never abandon them. In my own district, ABB is a prime example of a large manufacturer that recently left the area, having a profound negative impact on the Greenbrier Valley. One of the reasons I'm running for office is to ensure the legislature is doing all it can to prevent major departures like this from happening again.

Q5

During the 2020 Legislative Session, SJR 9 and SB 837 moved in the West Virginia Senate, but fell short of the votes needed to move to the House of Delegates. The intent of the effort was to allow West Virginians to vote on a constitutional amendment to phase-out/repeal of manufacturing inventory, machinery, and equipment tax, business inventory, and tax on passenger vehicles while making local governments and schools whole. Please describe your ideas for addressing this issue which requires a change to the West Virginia Constitution.

I support the elimination of the business and inventory tax, and the ensuing change to the state Constitution. This must be done with adequate funding to fully supplement the money lost by counties for their budgets. I would be opposed to simply letting this tax be offset by a substantial increase in local property taxes. Instead, in order to make it happen (this stranglehold on manufacturing must be dissolved), the state government must look from within for budget cuts, working with the OED to come up with a common sense solution. I plan to be on the frontlines of this issue in the legislature if I were to be elected.

Q6

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?

This takes a multi-pronged approach. 1) We must heavily invest into broadband expansion immediately. 2) Our roads, despite constant talk, have not improved quickly enough. We desperately need this infrastructure upgrade. 3) We need a judicial system that is fair to employers and not unduly burdensome. As someone experienced in law practice, I know how judicial reform would benefit the enticement of manufacturing firms.

Q7

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?

This crisis is responsible for the ruination of countless lives, as well as multiple deaths. It has hampered the state's ability to attract new businesses, as the workforce is naturally far less reliable. Productivity is hurt by this issue. First, we must build an economic climate that allows individuals to break the cycle of despair by getting good jobs. Second, proven treatment methods must be made available to all who seek it. Recovery will make a huge difference. Third, we must attack the source of the problem, which is the interstate drug trafficking problem infiltrating our borders. Drug traffickers must be treated as though they are committing pre-meditated murder, and must be dealt with as such. Finally, I recommend that we look to join with neighboring larger states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Virginia through a joint task force to come up with the best solutions.

Q8

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?

Socially-minded companies must know when they come to West Virginia that here, all must be equal and should be treated as equal under the law. If inequality exists, then the legislature should move to remedy. Employers, of course, have rights as well and should never be discounted in favor of radical social agendas.

Q9

What are your specific ideas related to developing a diverse and skilled workforce in West Virginia?

It is vital to look at the specific job needs, and adequately stimulate the market for skilled and un-skilled workers to meet those needs, based on the required skill sets. I support legislative efforts to expand the reach and affordability of trade schools. In doing so, we also must let young people know that there should be no stigma around going to trade school, and that it should be truly encouraged as a great and usually very profitable option for their futures.

Q10

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection proposed a rule for the 2021 Legislative Session to adopt a portion of US EPA recommended human health criteria which established limits for certain environmental permits. The WVMA is actively involved in ongoing discussions related to these criteria and supports the WV DEPs approach to establish an active work group to further evaluate these important measures. Please describe your position on the proposed rule.

I agree with the WVMA that this is a measured approach toward evaluating these measures. In terms of adopting limits and/or regulation, I believe that benefits must always have proven advantage of the cost of new regulation. We need to return to common sense conservatism when addressing these issues. I have as a manufacturing business owner dealt directly with environmental issues. I understand the magnitude and I support balanced, reserved approaches toward addressing them. I think it's also important that we observe what other, larger manufacturing states are doing in the process.

Q11

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?

I think it's important that we do not re-create the wheel. As a Christian, I believe God made us to be good stewards of His creation. Without a clean and productive environment, it will inhibit business profitability. I believe that governmental rule making should be based on the sound belief that governmental rule making should be based on sound science, not on media hysteria. I also believe that manufacturers should be allowed a fair comment period on potential new regulations before they go into effect.

Q12

What would you like to share with our members that we have not asked?

As a policy point, I fully disagree with an immediate raising of the minimum wage, as has been proposed by one of my opponents, as this would be disastrous to businesses across the state. On a personal note, my education and experience in business and the legal system along with my faith in God have brought me to the decision to give back to my community by representing them in WV Legislature. It should be known that I am a constitutionalist and therefore will always base my decisions on the protection of the WV and US Constitutions.

Q13

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

Anytime, anywhere. Absolutely.

Q14

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

<https://www.facebook.com/Barry4WV/>

Q15

Name

Barry L. Bruce

Q16

Office Seeking

WV House of Delegates, District 42

Q17

Party Affiliation

Republican

Q18

District

42nd

Q19

Email

barry4ww.com

Q20

Phone

3046469568

Q21

Address

Address

Address 2

City/Town

State/Province

ZIP/Postal Code

Committee to Elect Barry Bruce

PO Box 351

Lewisburg

WV

24901
