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Q1

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

While significant steps have been taken in recent years to make West Virginia more business friendly there is much more work to be done. Government should have a minimal impact on business, and any government regulation should be limited. We have significant impediments to opening and operating a business from a regulatory standpoint. We need to reduce these as much as possible. Businesses flourish in an environment that fosters innovation and creativity. Government regulations hamper innovation.

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?

As an attorney, I serve as General Counsel to a trucking company that operates in the oil and gas industry hauling fracking sand. I bring my everyday knowledge of dealing with government regulation and the burden it imposes on businesses.

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.

Freemason, Transportation Lawyers Association, West Virginia Trucking Association

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?

At present the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic threatens our state more than anything else. We must develop legislation to modernize our procedures for operating government on a remote basis, interact with citizens and businesses in a remote manner if necessary, and ensure that our government actions conform to the Constitutional requirements while embracing technological innovation. A large obstacle to many businesses, including my own, is dealing with government entities with limited staff and office closures. The government's lack of being able to operate remotely or without contact has jeopardized many businesses and citizens. Outside of the Coronavirus pandemic, our State is still struggling to be an attractive tax environment to locate a business. We must move forward with legislation to eliminate the equipment and inventory tax.

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 personally supported the elimination of the taxes and will continue to vote to eliminate them in the future.

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?

Focus on eliminating taxes and reducing government occupational licensing requirements

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?

We must boost are funding to early intervention initiatives, reduce stigmatization of drug addiction so recovering persons are integrated back into society and the workforce, increase support for inpatient rehabilitation centers, and provide solutions for working addicts to receive MAT so they can maintain their employment and family life.

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?

I am of the philosophy that the least amount of government involvement in the private sector is the most advantageous. I personally support eliminating the WV Human Rights Act in total, and the Human Rights Commission, and rely solely on the Federal Government's EEOC for enforcement of those policies. This is the case in Alabama and North Carolina, and neither of those states have trouble attracting employers. The federal constitution is the most relied upon in these matters, and redundant state regulation in this area, that is sometimes inconsistent, does not provide certainty to employers.

Q9

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

Vocational and Technical education must be prioritized and funded at greater levels. Our tactics over the last 30 years on education was to prioritize the college track and the trades and skilled crafts were defunded and even discouraged on some levels. We need to provide assistance to students paying for these programs that do not have federal aid available.

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 think the work group needs to happen. The rule, as it is applied in West Virginia, is problematic due to the definitions of some of the terms and the practical reality. As a member of the Rulemaking Review Committee I remain engaged in the discussion and open to new ideas, but I do not support the US EPA recommendations.

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?

We have to look at the practicality of these rules and their application. In several different instances in the past session I viewed the proposed rules of the DEP and came to the conclusion they had to be developed in a vacuum with no thought to the real life application. I believe that some members of industry need to be on a committee that has input in the development of these rules so the real world implications are truly explored.

Q12

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

It has been an honor working with you over the past two years in the legislature and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Q13

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

yes

Q14

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

facebook and twitter

Q15

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Brandon Steele

Q16

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Q17

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Q18

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