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Page 1

Q1

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

Government should create a business climate that is inviting to business and industry. That means taxes should not be levied in a way that is not hostile to business and regulations, when necessary, should be as minimal as possible

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?

Having previously served in the State Senate I have a very pro-jobs, pro-business record. Personally, as a contractor in the IT industry, I have worked for thousands of government, military, SMB and Fortune 500 companies in every state in the US. From funeral homes to steel mills and paper mills, military bases to restaurants and television stations, there are very few industries I haven't spent time in talking to owners and operators about the day to day process of succeeding in their industry.

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.

TXSSA, USDLA, Upshur Chamber of Commerce, BCS Chamber of Commerce

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?

The COVID19 setback to our economy has devastated our job creation and hit the bottom-line of businesses large and small. We were having great success in WV getting our economy on track and now we need to redouble our efforts to create that pro-jobs, pro-growth environment.

I will continue working to remove unnecessary regulations and I will oppose the massive tax increases we know the minority party will be pushing next year.

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.

As the previous chair of the Select Committee on Tax Reform I worked on the issues surrounding the Personal Property Tax and how it is so discouraging to industry in WV. We created a resolution to amend the State Constitution that we were unfortunately unable to move.

I support its repeal and will continue to work to repeal it. We will need to address the question of local funding but I believe it can be done.

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?

We still have much to do on the question of needless regulation, though we have done much.

The single biggest piece we have not completed is the tax reform question.

We are need to continue letting people know things have gotten better in WV. For businesses looking for manufacturing and campus locations we have many great choices but our prior anti-business reputation is still an obstacle.

For our young adults, they too have developed a belief that WV doesn't offer a real future. We need to change that perception.

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 are short on drug treatment facilities.

I belief the foundation of the issue rests with hopelessness. Continuing our efforts to improve opportunity and to let people in crisis know that the opportunities are real is critical.

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?

We need to make sure they know they are welcome. That starts by ensuring that our laws treat everyone equally.

Q9

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

Education. Trade schools and technical schools are important. Higher education opportunities where needed for specific careers. Improving our K-12 education system. We can't stay near the bottom and expect to have the skilled workforce we need.

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 am not familiar with the specific rule but my record shows I support minimally invasive regulations. I served on Rulemaking review for four years and was able to use that position to shape rules in a very pro-business, pro-jobs manner. I look forward to continuing that work next year.

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?

Regulations need to be based on science not emotion.

I believe that simple rule is enough to allow industry to operate while maintaining a clean, healthy environment for West Virginians.

We have too many rules on the books that were written in crisis and as a result they do more harm than good. The Aboveground tank bill being a very recent case in point.

Q12

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

We have made a lot of progress for WV and our citizens over the last 6 years.

At the same time we face a constant push back from the other side.

It is important we have the votes to carry issues, it is just as important that we have people able to drive issues and explain issues. In part that is your job, but it is also important to have legislators that can explain the issues to fellow legislators on the floor or in the committee room. Somebody who can make things happen and stop bad things from happening.

For four years I was that kind of legislator.

I look forward to working with you next year.

Q13

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

Yes. 304-997-2625

Q14

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

SenatorKarnes on Twitter, Facebook and Parler

Q15

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Robert Karnes

Q16

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Q17

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Q18

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Q19

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Q21

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