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Q1

Identity-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Candidate Name: Laura Wakim Chapman
Office Seeking: State Senate
Party Affiliation: Republican
District: 1 (Hancock, Brooke, Ohio and part of Marshall Counties)

Q2

Contact Info-Please fill out the indicated fields.

Address: 23 Hamilton Ave
Address 2: PO Box 903
City/Town: Wheeling
State/Province: WV
ZIP/Postal Code: 26003
Country: United States
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Phone Number: 3042802765

Q3

Education & Experience-Please fill out the indicated fields.

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

Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy, Wheeling, WV

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

Middlebury College, Vermont; B.A. in Political Science

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

Self, Constitutional Attorney

Describe your current job & responsibilities

Advocate, research and draft pleadings, represent clients in court, etc.

How long have you worked for your current employer?

I have been self-employed since 2013

Q4

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

My entire reason for running for office is to keep our children and grandchildren in West Virginia. We have already suffered the loss of yet another congressional seat because of population decline. We must stop hemorrhaging population. The only way to do so is to focus on economic development so that there are meaningful opportunities for our citizens to work and raise a family.

That being said, no one knows business, manufacturing, or industry like the owner/operators of the entities. I am of the philosophy that the less government intrusion in business, manufacturers, and industry the better. Government needs to do everything in its power to create environments that are favorable for job and industry creation (through favorable tax structure, reasonable regulations, etc.).

If government can attract new businesses, manufacturers, and industries to the state through legislation, then it should act on that legislation. The government should have goals to bring new businesses, manufacturers, and industries, but also to support the businesses, manufacturers, and industries already existing and operational in West Virginia.

I truly believe that the more a state can do to be business, manufacturing, and industry-friendly, the better. When business, manufacturing, and industries are booming, so is the state.

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?

By education and experience, I am a constitutional lawyer and an advocate. I have handled numerous cases on a pro-bono basis because it was the right thing to do. While in law school, I was a student lawyer at the WVU College of Law low-income clinic. As a lawyer, I see how the legal system deals with controversies involving businesses and industries.

Before having my children, I was involved with the Junior League of Wheeling where I was the co-chair two years in a row for the Junior League's main fundraising event. I was also the head of my college's main student weekend event where I was able to raise record-breaking amounts despite working from a deficit. In law school, I assisted in the research and crafting of a detailed proposal which resulted in the creation of an advanced trial advocacy course for law students.

I am the daughter and granddaughter of entrepreneurs and veterans. I joke that I earned my unofficial MBA sitting at the Sunday dinner table listening to family members speak about their businesses. I have a clear understanding of the challenges facing business owners and industries and am incredibly sympathetic to the issues you face.

I am a tireless worker and as a mother and lawyer, I am a full-time problem solver. I often attack problems in creative ways. I know I can make a difference.

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 routinely volunteer my time to Legal Aid when they need lawyers to handle case intakes.

I am a member of the Women's Club of Wheeling and the Follansbee Chamber of Commerce. I am a former member of the Wheeling Junior League (I did not renew my membership when I had my children). I am a supporter of various veterans organizations. I am also active in my children's school by being homeroom mom and volunteering occasionally for lunchroom duty and other events.

I also volunteer as an alumni admission interviewer of West Virginia high school senior candidates for admission to Middlebury College (Vermont).

I am a member of two Second Amendment organizations (NRA and CDL).

I am an active member of the Ohio County Bar, as well as the WV State Bar.

I resigned my position on the Ohio County Health Department Board when I decided to run for state senate. I was a member for approximately 4 years.

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 decline in population is the largest threat. With an ever-aging population and our young people leaving, we need to create opportunities for our children and grandchildren.

The first step is fixing our failing infrastructure. Roads and broadband internet are priorities of mine so that we can attract businesses, manufacturers, and industries.

Education can be improved by offering more career-track and life skills courses to our children. For example, we face a teacher, nursing, firefighter, and commercial driver shortage. If a child can obtain some career training while still in high school, he or she may be able to enter the workforce more quickly upon graduation. School safety must be priority one for the legislature in the 2023 session (if not sooner).

Childcare is also an issue that needs to be fixed. I think that can be accomplished by changing the funding available to childcare businesses to an enrollment basis, instead of an attendance basis. Perhaps regulations need to be revisited so that it is easier to retain qualified employees.

I have countless ideas of how to move West Virginia forward, but I do not have all of the answers. I love to hear from actual business owners, industry leaders, and individuals as to what the issues are and what could help.

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.

Absolutely. This is critical because other states do not have this tax and it is definitely a hindrance in attracting new business, manufacturing, and industries. Also with inflation hurting everyone, not having the onerous personal property tax will help the average citizen.

I generally support any effort to reduce or eliminate taxes so long as it is a true tax cut and not a tax swap.

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 think a tax overhaul (which is what the legislature seems to focus on at this moment) is a huge help. I would love to eliminate the state income tax eventually because that would help bring more people (and revenue) to the state. I am hopeful that West Virginia will soon become a leading state in business, manufacturing, industry, and relocations.

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?

Investments need to be made in drug addiction treatment and mental health. We have a lot of empty buildings in the Northern Panhandle. I would love to see each county have a treatment center. I would love to see criminal reform where the courts have the option to send someone to a treatment center instead of jail (while drug court exists, it is under-utilized). Obviously, this would not be an option for violent criminals.

I truly believe that if we are able to provide good, decent-paying jobs to our citizens, the opioid crisis would not be such an issue. The feeling of hopelessness and lack of opportunity drives many to drug use and abuse.

I also ascribe to the broken-window theory. I support the state auditor's campaign to handle dilapidated buildings. I also think if there is more wealth within the state, people will fix the run-down properties. When the surroundings are well-taken care of, then there will be less crime. I also support our law enforcement in the efforts to curb the drug crisis.

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 do believe that this is addressed in federal law and if someone believes there is discrimination, there are courts available to hear those issues. This goes to my fundamental philosophy that government should not have a large role in businesses and industries.

However, I am willing to listen as to what legislation would be needed to attract businesses. I do not pretend to have all of the answers and will of course, vote for pro-business, pro-manufacturing, and pro-industry legislation.

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.

I wish to expand the vocational-technical education opportunities for our children. I think our local high schools in the Northern Panhandle do a great job at preparing our children for the workforce. I appreciate that local colleges also work with our high schools to prepare our children for the future and that should be encouraged. I would also like to see more career-track courses at the high school level, including partnerships with local colleges. The local colleges are not able to keep up with the demand and if some career coursework is available at the high school level, our workforce would be able to be staffed more quickly after graduation.

Q13

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

School safety must be priority one for the legislature in the 2023 session (if not sooner).

I believe that the schools in the Northern Panhandle are the best in the state. However, there is always room for improvement. Unfortunately, because of the Covid school shut-downs, our state suffers from a huge learning loss that must be addressed sooner, rather than later. Our schools must never shut down again.

I support higher salaries for our educators and smaller class sizes. I say this knowing that there is a critical teacher shortage within the state. The legislature must address this quickly.

Education can be improved by offering more career-track and life skills courses to our children. For example, we face a teacher, nursing, firefighter, commercial driver, etc. shortage. If a child can obtain some career training while still in high school, he or she may be able to enter the workforce more quickly upon graduation. I do not like that some counties only have a particular program offered at one high school and not the other. For example, I do not want a child who attends Cameron High School to have to travel to John Marshall High School to take a welding course. Those courses should be offered at both schools if feasible, or at a minimum, offered on an alternating basis (one year at Cameron, the next at John Marshall).

A rigorous STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) program in each of our schools will surely assist in better outcomes for our children. Robust elective courses including foreign language, theater, and music courses also must be a priority. We also need to prioritize physical education and long periods of outdoor play and exploration which improves learning outcomes and helps our children be healthier. Every elementary school must have a playground. In other words, children must be provided with outlets to foster their creativity, physical health, and imagination.

I also believe that any child who is falling behind needs to be provided tutoring, summer school, and evaluations into dyslexia, dysgraphia, and other learning disabilities. I think we do a disservice to our children to just push them through the school system and we need to do everything we can to have them master the skills needed to continue to the next grade. Strong guidance programs and vigorous career testing should be encouraged so that our children's unique skills and interests are properly explored. I would love to see different metrics be used to evaluate our children's progress because just teaching to pass standardized tests is not necessarily a good way to master a subject.

I support partnerships between local colleges to provide coursework to eligible high schoolers. Financial literacy and life skill courses must be offered.

Mental health is a huge problem in our schools and we must offer resources for schools to address this, such as conflict counselors, etc. Alternative seating to "get the wiggles out" are also unique ideas which can be phased into our schools. Ohio County Schools are evaluating how to make the high school start at later times because our children are chronically tired. I support later start times for our high school students.

I do support children entering the school system at a younger age because early education is a good predictor in future success.

In short, opportunities must be abundant for our children because an investment in them will pay off in dividends in the future. I am open to hearing more ideas of what would improve our public education system.

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 support partnerships between local colleges to provide coursework to eligible high schoolers. Financial literacy and life skill courses must be offered. I also think that local industries and employers should work closely with high schools so that the high schools can better prepare the students for the marketable and high-paying available jobs.

Education can be improved by offering more career-track and life skills courses to our children. For example, we face a teacher, nursing, firefighter, commercial driver, etc. shortage. If a child can obtain some career training while still in high school, he or she may be able to enter the workforce more quickly upon graduation. I do not like that some counties only have a particular program offered at one high school and not the other. For example, I do not want a child who attends Cameron High School to have to travel to John Marshall High School to take a welding course. Those courses should be offered at both schools if feasible, or at a minimum, offered on an alternating basis (one year at Cameron, the next at John Marshall).

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?

State regulations should not exceed federal regulations. We should look toward our neighbors who are thriving to see how to adopt similar environmental policies so that businesses, manufacturers, and industries wish to come to West Virginia.

Q16

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

I support the exploration of all energy options. I fully support our fossil fuel industries but also believe it is important to explore renewable energy sources.

If elected, I will work with our US Senators to explore how to utilize the Ohio River. Pike Island in Brooke County may be a great hydropower option. New Martinsville (outside of my district) has hydropower and I do not see why District 1 cannot also harness the power of the Ohio River.

I fully support nuclear energy as well.

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?

We need to make West Virginia attractive to businesses, manufacturers and industries. I am generally not in favor of onerous regulations. I support our energy industry and would not support measures that harm the industry.

Again, I believe it is incumbent on the legislature to remove obstacles for businesses, manufacturers, and industries to come to West Virginia and set the proper environment for success.

That being said, I am not sure what policy issues you refer to and so I would have to see any bill related to these issues before I could say that I am for or against such policy measures.

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?

Tax reform. A reduction of taxes would be a serious attractor to new manufacturers, as well as our existing manufacturers. However, I do not pretend to know all of the answers and would like to know what issues are important and critical to manufacturers.

Because of national and international supply chain issues, I believe that West Virginia is in a unique, once in a generation, position to provide manufacturing opportunities given our location within the United States and our proximity to resources.

Q19

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

Yes, either in person or remotely, at your convenience.

Q20

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

LauraforWV on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
