

Candidate Questionnaire Responses

LD 23 Senate

John Kavanagh (R) jkavanagh@azleg.gov; drikavanagh@gmail.com

No response.

LD 23 House of Representatives

Tammy Caputi (D) – tammy@yaleelectric.com

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)?

I've lived in Scottsdale for twenty years. Arizona is home to me. I'm a local business owner, a marathon runner, and a mother of three children in the public school district. I'm a Scottsdale home-owner and a tax payer. I am invested in our state and I am passionate about having a voice in our state legislature.

I'm running for office because I can no longer watch as our legislators pass laws that defund our public schools, discriminate against our citizens, and destroy our quality of life. I want everyone to have the opportunity to be successful in their lives and to have access to the things they need to make this happen: Quality, affordable education, a diverse economy with less tax burden on families and small businesses, and a sane, mainstream voice in the State House that fights to protect our individual freedoms and the rights of all Arizona citizens.

I am committed to working on a better government that represents our shared American values of Opportunity, Responsibility, and Community.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. *Explain each in 100 words or less*

One Success: **SB1113 student loans; teachers; appropriation:**

SB1113 passed, appropriating \$250,000 from the state General Fund to the Mathematics, Science and Special Education (MSSE) Teacher Student Loan Fund. This Program is a student-centered, need-based forgivable loan designed to financially support and encourage Arizona college students to enter into the teaching profession and teach in a public school in the state.

One Failure: There is still no word on whether the restoration of KidsCare will be included in the budget, despite the fact that the federal government pays for the program and there is no fiscal impact to Arizona. It is heartbreaking that we can't even get a hearing on this important bill; apparently our current leaders place no value on poor children's healthcare.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

The biggest challenge facing K-12 education in Arizona today is the prevailing attitude among our current leaders that public education is welfare and that we should not be properly funding and maintaining quality, public education. The Arizona education system receives among the least resources in the nation, and the amount of funding has dropped substantially over time relative to the rest of the country. Arizona teachers are relatively inexperienced and receive low pay relative to the national average. Arizona also has fewer administrative staff than the norm. Arizona has a disproportionate share of disadvantaged students, which requires funding to overcome.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

In 2000, Prop 301 was approved by the voters, and included a 2% annual inflation adjustment for education. In 2010, our legislators refused to raise education funding as required, citing the recession. Several school districts sued because a referendum passed by the voters cannot be repealed. Two court rulings have decided the money must be paid to the schools, but the legislature refused to follow the law. After mediation failed, Governor Ducey drew up a settlement giving the schools about 72% of what they were owed. This settlement is called Proposition 123.

The schools will get an immediate injection of \$240 million and then \$50 million/year for the first five years, and then \$75 million/year for the next five. Sixty percent of the settlement comes from the State Land Trust (withdrawals from this will be increased to 6.9% from around 2% currently) and 40% from the general fund. Base level funding will increase by about \$300 per student, leaving Arizona at the bottom of the national average for school funding, even after passage of Prop 123. There are a few “triggers” tied to the money, which would go into effect if the economic climate changes, or if school funding reaches 49% of the general fund, which are a little concerning.

Voters should understand that Prop 123 is only a first step in improving our state education system. Restoring minimal, partial funding that was legally mandated by voters is not a substitute for real discussion, structural change and investment in education. We need to make sure that we elect leaders who value quality public education in our state, and who do not simply siphon the money off in corporate tax breaks, private prisons, and vouchers for private schools.

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. *300 words or less*

ESA's were established to help children who weren't able to get what they needed from their current schools. This was a good idea. ESA's were originally intended to help children who need special education services, attend a failing school, are in foster care, or have a parent in active duty in the Armed Forces. Allowing parents with children who have needs that cannot be met in their neighborhood school to get help in a more suitable educational environment makes sense. Helping parents who can't afford to provide a special needs student the educational tools they need to succeed makes sense. Expanding the program to include anyone, regardless of income, who simply prefers to take a tax credit to send their child to the private school of their choice with public dollars is not a good idea. This deprives the public school system of needed resources.

I support EPA's for their originally intended use. Draining money out of our public schools makes the educational pie even smaller, at a time when we desperately need every dollar. Once the money shifts to a private school, there is no accountability to the tax payers for the use of these public dollars. In addition, many of the private schools these taxes are being shifted to are religious based, which makes the use of public money an unacceptable mix of church and state. Public tax dollars should not be used to promote a particular, private religious curriculum that may not align with all citizens' personally held beliefs. Let's keep ESA's in place as originally intended for those who need it and not allow expansion to those who are clearly just taking advantage of the system.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in *your* legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? *300 words or less*

Charter schools have pros and cons. Some charter schools do an excellent job of motivating students who need a smaller, more intense academic environment. Charter schools are able to focus on specific areas of study, such as technology or foreign language, that district schools do not have the flexibility to do. This suits some students better. Charter schools can offer competition to district schools to motivate them to be more proactive and accountable, and generate better student results. But charter schools that co-exist with high-achieving district schools can pose problems. Charter Schools in Arizona have shown to do no better and sometimes worse, than traditional public schools. Charter schools are less likely to be racially or ethnically diverse, which is not a reflection of the world our children live in. Children need to learn how to get along with all different kinds of people. Charter schools tend to regulate the composition of their student bodies through expulsion and admit only the most suitable students, creating a high pressure environment. They can change the makeup of a high-achieving district school, taking the best and brightest away (along with the needed dollars). Mixing children of different abilities in classrooms helps all students reach higher and do better. For example, in my children's school we have “gifted cluster” classes, where gifted kids are with all the other students. Being surrounded by higher achieving students makes class interesting, and motivates everyone to reach higher.

Charter schools are not accountably transparent, yet they siphon public dollars. This drains resources from district schools and we lose the ability to track our money. Charter chain investors (who often don't live in our district, state, or even country) drive curriculum, textbooks, and teacher evaluation, so we lose control over our dollars and what our kids are learning.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? *yes or no only please*

Yes

Jay Lawrence (R) – jlawrence@azleg.gov; jayaz@aol.com

No response.

Michelle Ugenti-Rita (R) - mugenti@azleg.gov; michelle@michelleugenti-rita.com

No response.

LD 24 Senate

Katie Hobbs (D) – khobbs@azleg.gov ; katie@katiehobbs.org

No response.

LD 24 House of Representatives

Lela Alston (D) – lalston@azleg.gov; lalston2@msn.com 602-278-2002

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? *100 words or less*

I am a retired teacher from the Phoenix Union HSD who currently serves as the board president in PUHSD. Having served 18 years in the State Senate during the 70's, 80's and 90's and most recently 6 years in the State House, I have always had the interests of students and families upmost in my mind as I advocate and vote in the legislature. I am concerned about the shortfall in funding as it affects all school districts throughout the state. I want to continue this advocacy at the legislature.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. *Explain each in 100 words or less*

The most important success of this legislative session is the passage of KidsCare which will provide medical care for 30,000 uninsured children. This keeps children healthy and helps the medical economy at the same time. One of the biggest failures was the passage of the election bills that promote "dark money" and put up more barriers to voting.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

Lack of appropriate funding to meet the needs of all of AZ students causing teachers to leave the profession or the state. The lack of funds for capital improvements and technology is not allowing us to prepare students for the workforce and higher education.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

Prop 123 is needed to settle a lawsuit that has been agreed to by the plaintiffs (AZ Education Association, AZ School Business Officials, AZ School Board Association) and the state. There must be a constitutional change to increase the amount of funds taken from the state land trust and approve the method of funding for schools for the next ten years. There are pluses and minuses and it is expected to be a close vote. Money will come to schools immediately but some school allies are concerned about the state land trust and the "triggers" that could halt future funding for a period of time.

There has been a lack of good faith on the part of the legislature as it relates to school funding creating an extreme lack of trust among our citizens who time after time show they are eager to support public district schools.

Next steps include:

- * increasing per pupil funding and funding for programs and capital projects beyond what Prop. 123 will provide.
- *delaying, reducing or eliminating tax cuts that reduce the General Fund

*capping, reducing or eliminating tax credits for charter and private schools and Student Tuition Organizations.

*limiting percentage of STO money that can be used for administration should be an immediate first step

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. *300 words or less*

They should be scaled back and in many cases eliminated. Most of the students using them are from good schools and have high family incomes. They are becoming a down payment for private and religious education in many cases or nest eggs for college expenses. There is very little accountability of these public dollars. Our goal should be to make all schools quality schools.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in *your* legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? *300 words or less*

We have some good charter schools and some not so good ones. Sometimes the charter schools get the funding for students but then send them back to the public schools when it is time for testing or they are not performing well. The public school takes the "hit" for the not so good outcomes. I have a very diverse population and many school districts in my legislative district making it difficult to assign the pros and cons you are asking for. Some charter schools offer electronic tablets and other benefits to entice students away from the district schools reducing the funding for the district. In small school districts, loss of a few students can be critical. Again, lack of accountability for charters is a big problem.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? *yes or no only please*

Yes!

Ken Clark (D) – kenclark@azleg.gov; kenclarkleadership@gmail.com

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? *100 words or less*

I am running again because there is still so much yet to do. The legislature continues to become more corrupted by dark money and distant from the needs of the voters. I want to continue my advocacy on many issues and my efforts to empower voters to change the capitol for the better.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. Explain each in *100 words or less*

In a legislature where the bills of Democrats are usually not even assigned to committees that will hear the bills, the definition of failure and success maybe a little different. I often measure success by which bad ideas I can stop.

I was unable to stop SB1516 from passing in this current legislative session. SB1516 is the legislation that codifies dark money and corrupting influence into our laws. Even though I was not able to stop the bill in the legislature, I have not given up. I am working with a bipartisan group to refer the bill to the public in November.

On the other hand, I do count as a success our ability to stop further progress payday loan expansion in Arizona.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

The biggest challenge facing K-12 education in Arizona is the need for not only funding but in a new philosophy at the legislative level that trusts local control — school boards, parents and teachers— to make the best decisions for students.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

Proposition 123 aims to fund part of what the Legislature owes schools by taking money from the state trust land fund over ten years. The next steps in addressing K-12 education involve properly funded schools from 2015 and 2016 budget surpluses, as well as ensuring that further funding for schools is not given way in the form tax cuts to special interest groups.

The Republican-controlled legislature and the Governor have created this situation, which takes money from our state trust land fund, that should be a perpetual trust. Arizona needs new leadership in the legislature and the governor's office to ensure that this type of choice will not be presented to us again.

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. 300 words or less

I believe that Empowerment Scholarship Accounts drain funds from public and charter schools in Arizona. There is little no oversight over how that money is spent, and all indications are that the money does not support the low income students that its proponents talent tout as its major benefits. Empowerment scholarship accounts should be scaled-back.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in your legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? 300 words or less

I believe that there are incredible charter schools in Arizona. I also believe that we need more oversight over how charter schools spend Arizona's taxpayer money. This year the Grand Canyon Institute released a study showing that on average charter schools spend more than twice as much for administrative costs as public schools. Taken as a whole this difference cost taxpayers as much as \$128M per year. We must find a balance between allowing charter schools for freedom to try new ideas, and responsibility for taxpayer dollars.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? yes or no only please

Yes

LD 28 Senate

Kate Brophy-McGee (R) – KBrophyMcGee@azleg.gov; kate@katemcgee.com

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? *100 words or less*

My family moved to Arizona in 1870, and I've lived in Arizona my entire life. I want my children to call Arizona home, get great jobs, settle down and raise their children here. I've spent my entire career in public service advocating for our state's most vulnerable – children, the disabled and elderly. I've championed reforms in child safety, fought for funding for education and the disabled, and bucked my party and leadership to make this happen. If elected, I will continue to do exactly that.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. *Explain each in 100 words or less*

Success: JTED funding, ironically born of failure from last Session's budget, when JTED was cut with no hearings or discussion. It is one reason I did not vote for the budget last year.

Failure: If we do not adopt a budget reversing the funding cuts imposed by last Session's budget, it will be a failure. As I write this, I am holding out again, with some of my colleagues, for critical funding for education. It's not just about money – it's about paying our teachers, buying textbooks and maintaining schools to ensure our children receive the best education possible.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

The biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today is protecting quality educational choices like SUSD. From a mandate and funding perspective, district schools are the option the legislature persists in regulating the most, and funding the least. It is critical that, as we level the playing field and encourage all forms of educational choice for parents, we keep in mind that 80% of parents choose district schools like SUSD.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

Prop 123 is the first step of many that must be taken to restore funding, flexibility and stability to Arizona's K-12 education system. Prop 123 is the result of a settlement to a five year lawsuit by the education community against the state for failure to fund inflation as required by Prop 301, which voters approved in 2001. Under terms of the settlement, the State agreed to pay \$3.5 Billion dollars over the next 10 years - \$1.5 Billion from the General Fund, and \$2 Billion from the State Land Trust. The State Land Trust is voter-protected, so any changes to the distributions must be approved by Arizona voters. Earnings from the Trust are intended to fund K-12 education, and 2.5% of Trust earnings are currently distributed each year. Prop 123 would increase the distribution from 2.5% to 6.9% for the next 10 years, approximately \$2 Billion. If voters approve the increased distribution, Arizona schools will receive sustained, reliable funding over the next 10 years to address immediate needs, such as teachers' salaries, class sizes and programs such as gifted education. Prop 123 resolves the long-standing lawsuit while providing immediate help to the schools. If we are successful in passing Prop 123, it will provide the path forward to addressing additional funding needs for schools.

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. *300 words or less*

Arizona ESAs have exceeded their purpose, particularly given the lack of accountability and transparency. The proposed ESA expansions have become a way to bypass the Arizona constitution and subsidize unaccountable education options, as opposed to promoting real, funded school choice.

This summer I served on a committee chaired by Senator Bradley which recommended scaling back ESA's for the original intended recipients – special needs students who could not find an educational path forward with their home districts. The committee recommended testing and benchmarks to determine continued eligibility. This is the policy area we should be working within. Many proposals have been made to expand ESA's beyond this original purpose - turning them into student vouchers. We have many outstanding educational choices in Arizona – traditional, charter, home school and private; our immediate focus must be to ensure our public schools get the resources they need.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in *your* legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? *300 words or less*

I hear many anecdotal stories of students who leave district schools for charters and then return. I also hear stories of students who are successful and achieve in charter schools. To the extent both choices are available, we have to make sure we are funding our public schools so all children have access to a free, quality education. We also need a level playing field, in terms of requirements imposed on district schools that are not imposed on charter schools.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? *yes or no only please*
Respectfully, this is not a yes or no question. We need a level playing field that ensures high quality teachers in ALL our public schools, and we should not favor one choice over another.

Eric Meyer (D) - ericforaz.com - emeyer@azleg.gov; electricmeyer@gmail.com

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? *100 words or less*

The most critical issue facing our state is our failure to invest in the future. Our state's brand has been tarnished in the last eight years. We have cut funding for education by over \$4 billion and have a teacher retention and recruitment crisis. These cuts are unacceptable. I have served in the State House for the last eight years. I have been a voice for

sensible education policy and an advocate for our public schools and our teachers. If elected to the Senate, I will continue to work for positive change. Our children are the key to a bright future for Arizona.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. Explain each in 100 words or less

The Republican legislators and Governor cut funding for JTED classes (career and technical education in our high schools) last legislative session. I voted against that \$32 million cut a year ago. The programs have a graduation rate of over 90% and often allow students to enter the workforce after graduation. These are classes that Arizona should be promoting. This year, after successful state wide pressure from thousands of constituents, the mistake was corrected. I was happy to advocate for and then vote for the restoration of the JTED program.

I offered an amendment to this year's budget for the restoration of \$116 million in K-12 funding. It failed along party lines. Even though the State had over a billion dollars surplus in the bank, we failed to increase investment in our students, schools and teachers.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? 100 words or less

The greatest challenge is a lack of funding by the state that has led to a severe teacher recruitment and retention problem. We started last school year with more than 1000 teacher vacancies in Maricopa County alone. Next school year is predicted to be worse. The states neighboring Arizona pay higher average salaries and have better working conditions so we are losing our young teachers to other states. Many of our experienced teachers are eligible to retire in the next few years. I offered up a plan to address this problem at the Capitol and it was ignored.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. 300 words or less

Prop 123 was the settlement of a lawsuit that was filed against the state due to the fact that the legislature and Governor failed to provide voter approved inflation funding for our public schools. It was a compromise between the plaintiffs in the case, the Governor and Republican leadership to restore for 10 years some of the funding owed our schools. It did that by using general funds, sweeping \$2.3 billion out of the State Land Trust, while also putting a cap in place that will make it hard to move past 47th in per pupil spending and a trigger in place that automatically cuts K-12 public school spending when the economy slows.

The most important next step occurs Nov. 8 when the voters have the chance to elect legislators who actually support public education. I have served in the House for eight years. I have fought for our public schools. I would have funded our schools as the voters demanded, and I voted to do so. Arizona had a budget surplus that could have been used to settle the inflation funding lawsuit without caps and triggers and without using state trust funding. I offered an alternative plan that would have done exactly that without raising taxes, without touching the rainy day fund and without putting the budget out of balance. Unfortunately the majority of legislators that I serve with are more interested in giving special interest tax cuts or vouchers to private school students than actually funding our public schools.

If I am elected to the Senate, I will continue to fight for our students, teachers and parents. I have a long list of budget choices that can be made that will begin to restore the billions of dollars that have been cut by those who claim to be public education supporters. My phone number is on my website: www.EricforAZ.com

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. 300 words or less

The single biggest disappointment with the last session is that we did not begin to restore the massive education cuts that have occurred over the past eight years and instead spent a significant amount of time on bills that would have expanded vouchers in Arizona. I was part of a bipartisan group that defeated the worst of the expansion bills and I consider that one of the "biggest successes" of the past session.

Unfortunately, the Arizona legislature is putting the public education system at an unfair disadvantage. They are cutting funding and increasing mandates for public schools. Meanwhile, they have increased tax credits and vouchers for private school while requiring little accountability. These changes are leading to a tiered system. Private schools use public dollars to fund education for a few students. Public schools use the dwindling funding they receive from the state and attempt to educate the vast majority of students. Our democracy is based on the American ideal that everyone should have a chance to succeed. A strong public school system helps to ensure that every child has this chance. In Arizona our failure to provide every student with a quality education guarantees many are destined to live in poverty and ultimately puts our democracy at risk.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in your legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? 300 words or less

The charter school movement was established with the goal of creating competition in areas where traditional public schools were underperforming. It did give parents more choice and had the effect of driving local public schools to expand their offerings. Unfortunately the legislative structure for charters and district schools were not created equally and those laws that regulate our schools have continued to change over the years to create two unequal educational tracks in Arizona. It is also unclear that the goal of improved academic outcomes has been achieved.

There are quality charter schools just as there are quality district schools. The larger issue is that there is no long-term plan and that we have limited resources. We now have the most "choice" of any state in the country but there is little evidence that our goal of increased academic performance in areas that underperform has been met. We have new charter schools opening in very close proximity to A ranked schools. This results in students moving from a high performing school to a school that may underperform. This was not the intent of the charter movement initially and is a waste of limited tax dollars. I have proposed that we limit the opening of charter schools in areas where schools are already highly performing. It is time that we develop a long-term plan for all schools in our state that is funded appropriately and improves academic outcomes for all students!

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? yes or no only please

YES

Jason Neil Parsons (I) aujason4azsenate@yahoo.com

No response

LD 28 House of Representatives

Ken Bowers (R) – KBowersJr@cox.net

No response

Kelli Butler (D) – kellibutleraz@gmail.com

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? 100 words or less

I am running for the State House of Representatives to provide responsible, moderate solutions needed to address the critical issues we face. For too long, our legislature has failed to prioritize the needs of our children, our public schools and our most vulnerable citizens. That has to change. Our children are the future of Arizona; investing in education is the best way to ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve their greatest potential and be prepared for the jobs of the 21st Century.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. Explain each in 100 words or less

The restoration of funding for career and technical training (CTE) programs was one of the few successes of this legislative session. Last year's \$30 million cut would have been devastating to these vital programs, which provide effective training and proven workforce development. CTE is a wise investment because high school students who participate in CTE programs perform better, graduate at higher rates and are better prepared for college and careers.

The public outcry over the senseless funding cuts and the resulting citizen-led push to restore CTE funding, demonstrated the public's support for these crucial educational programs.

I am disappointed that the Governor's budget proposal and the more recent proposals from both the Senate and the House do not include a commitment to restoring funds cut from our K-12 public schools since the beginning of the recession. There is no restoration of KidsCare, nothing for needed childcare subsidies, little for our state universities and no "next steps" beyond Prop 123. Where is the vision for Arizona's future?

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

The biggest challenge facing K-12 education is our current legislature's unwillingness to adequately fund public schools. The reality is that we are at the bottom of nearly all education metrics; per-pupil funding, average teacher salary, and student retention/graduation rates. Student achievement suffers because we simply don't provide adequate funding to public schools. We have a teacher recruitment and retention crisis, largely caused by our uncompetitive pay scale relative to other states. We are asking our hardworking teachers to do an impossible job - teach too many students, in under-resourced classrooms, for too little compensation.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

Proposition 123 is a constitutional amendment, referred to the ballot by the legislature. Prop 123 would settle the five-year legal battle over voter and court-mandated inflation funding that the legislature has failed to allocate to our schools since 2010. If passed by voters, Prop 123 will restore 72% of the funding withheld by the legislature, providing approximately \$300 additional dollars per pupil, per year, for 10 years. The source of these funds is the state land trust, which was created to fund education in perpetuity.

There are genuine concerns. Prop 123 contains a number of variables that would allow the legislature to withhold funding if economic growth slows or if K-12 education funding becomes 49 or 50 percent of the overall state budget. It also caps funding at a level that prevents Arizona from moving above the bottom tier nationally for overall funding.

Yet Prop 123 represents the only viable option for immediately increasing funds to our desperate schools and teachers. It must be the first step, with more to follow, because it does not go far enough. Much more must be done to address the serious problems facing our public schools, especially our state-wide teacher retention crisis, overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating buildings, and outdated technology.

The next steps must include the restoration and stabilization of funding for our public schools. We should allocate a portion of the general fund's current \$600 million revenue surplus to address critical one-time investments and also develop a strategic long-term plan that will provide the stability schools need to budget for the future.

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. *300 words or less*

Empowerment Scholarship Accounts were originally established to allow students with special needs to use public funds to attend specialized private schools or to create unique educational options. For students with very specialized needs, the ESA program makes sense. However, we have expanded ESA eligibility every year since its inception, and the program is now well beyond the scope of its original intent. There are currently too many classifications of eligible students. We should return the ESA program to its original limits and purpose.

In 2015-16, ESAs took nearly \$27 million from public schools and were utilized by 2,175 students. There was a failed attempt this legislative session to expand eligibility to all 1.1 million public school students, then a second effort to expand the program to all students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, estimated to be over a half million students. These proposed expansions are irresponsible; at current utilization levels there are already documented cases of blatant fraud and misuse of ESA funds. It is difficult to imagine how there could be acceptable levels of financial

oversight and accountability with further expanded ESA eligibility. The current program requires no accountability requirements for student achievement and progress. There is also no oversight of the programs receiving the ESA funds. ESAs redirect our tax dollars from our public school budgets without enough accountability and oversight, and their use should be minimized.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in *your* legislative district (specifically as it relates to their co-existence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? *300 words or less*

Legislative District 28 is home to a number of high-performing district and charter schools; in fact, several high schools within our district were ranked among the top schools in the nation. We have a variety of excellent educational options, with the vast majority of families choosing their traditional public school.

The choices offered by charter schools and traditional school districts' magnet programs allow parents the option to research and investigate the best options for their children and gives parents greater control over their education.

There are concerns about charter schools in already high achieving districts. With charter and district schools all drawing from the same population of students, it becomes very difficult for district and charter schools to determine demand and create long-range plans. There are duplicate facilities created when charter schools open in close proximity to district schools. Public tax dollars are being used to purchase land, new buildings, even athletic facilities for charter schools, right down the street from district schools already paid for with tax dollars. There are duplicative administrators and support staff, technology, and equipment.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? *yes or no only please*

Yes

Mary Hamway (R) – mhamway@cox.net

1. Why are you running for election (or re-election)? *100 words or less*

Over the past few years, I've met with hundreds of voters from our district, and overwhelmingly, they want the state government to spend its time improving education, protecting at-risk children, attracting more businesses and growing our economy. I am running because I believe that my many years of community service, as well as being a member of the Town of Paradise Valley Town Council for 10 years, gives me the experience and understanding to represent the voters of legislative district 28. I feel that I am the right leader to run for the open seat vacated by Kate Brophy McGee.

2. Select one success and one failure of the current legislative session. *Explain each in 100 words or less*

Reinstating the funding for JTED (Joint Technical Education Districts) is a success. The failure is the lack of discussion and attention for KidsCare. At this writing, the budget has still not been adopted, and things may change.

3. What is the biggest challenge facing K-12 education in our state today? *100 words or less*

Without a doubt it is funding. We have created a hostile education environment where it has become impossible to talk about new funding options or anything resembling changing the current formula. Everything should be on the table including oversight (or elimination) of STOs, narrowing the focus for ESAs, breaking down the administrative bloat of district public schools, small school weights, how we serve students with special needs and equalizing the amount of money for each student. It is our obligation to figure this out and with every passing year, we lose the opportunity to do what is best for the students of Arizona.

4. In your own words, explain Prop 123 to someone who has never heard of it. Include your ideas on the next steps to address K-12 education funding needs in our state. *300 words or less*

Proposition 123 is an opportunity to increase funding to our public district and charter schools by about \$300 per student, starting next year and continuing for the next 10 years. The money comes from the interest earned from state land sales. At statehood, Arizona was given 10.9 million acres of by the federal government. Each year some of the land is sold or leased and the proceeds from those land transactions goes into the State Land Trust. The trust earns interest and K-12 education, and 18 smaller funds, receive money each year from the trust. The current distribution, defined in the state constitution, is 2.3% of the interest earned, with K-12 education being the largest recipient. For the past several years, the trust has earned about 6.9% on average, and many would argue that schools have been short-changed for years. Prop 123 changes the allocation amount defined in state constitution from 2.3% to 6.9%. Prop 123 is an important first step, but by no means provides a total solution. We must continue to find ways to cut administrative costs, pay our teachers more and put more dollars in the classroom.

5. Should Arizona Empowerment Scholarship Accounts be scaled back, stay the same, or expanded? Please explain. *300 words or less*

Empowerment Scholarships were originally created to provide options for students whose needs could not be met in the school where they were enrolled. ESAs provide money that can be used to attend private schools. Originally ESAs were available students with learning disabilities, and I believe that ESAs are still an important tool as we continue to refine how public schools provide special education services. Over the years the program has been expanded to include students attending schools with a D or F rating, children in foster care, children living on a Native American reservation or dependents and orphans of military personnel. Each year there are attempts to expand the program even further. I feel ESAs should be scaled back or at least kept where they are. The focus should be on meeting the needs of the child, not on the occupation or nationality of the parents. We should work to improve all schools, especially those that are failing, so that every student has access to a good education.

6. What are the pros and cons of the existence of charter schools in *your* legislative district (specifically as it relates to their coexistence with nearby high-achieving district schools)? *300 words or less*

Public charter schools and school choice are a part of Arizona's educational landscape. In Legislative District 28, there are several high performing public schools both district and charter. The obvious advantage is that parents have many good options and can find the best school for their children. The disadvantage is that it is becoming increasingly harder for districts to fund operations, including building maintenance and transportation, so bonds must be passed that increase local taxes. As more and more charter schools are established, the pool of residents interested in funding the district's high administrative costs through local tax increases diminishes each year.

7. Should teacher certification be required for all teachers in public schools (district and charter)? *yes or no only please*

Yes.

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No response

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No response

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No response