

QUESTIONS FOR GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES

Prepared by Members of STAND CNJ



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Stand and Take Action Now for Democracy in Central New Jersey

www.standcnj.org

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, Gubernatorial Candidates! Thank you for announcing that you wish to represent the people of New Jersey as our next Governor.

STAND CNJ is a grassroots organization in Central New Jersey focused on taking back power through taking local action. We have over 1,000 volunteer members (and growing daily) primarily from six counties — Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Somerset. Our mission is to support our democracy by fighting for social justice, economic opportunity and human rights for all, starting from the ground up in New Jersey.

In line with this mission, our members compiled a list of questions important to us as constituents, and we gratefully request your thorough answers to these issues. To better educate the voters on your beliefs and intents, we will display your answers, as well as those from the other candidates, on our website and social media.

Please begin this survey by entering your name:

When finished, simply save this form and email it to standcnj@gmail.com. Thank you!

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

ECONOMY AND TAXES

How do you plan to deal with the state's economic mess, including school funding, tax fairness (property, income, sales, estate), pension funding, and infrastructure?

What do you think of property tax caps, and is there any scenario where you would either increase or hamstring them on a state level?

How do you plan to bring more business and industry to our state in order to grow jobs and increase the tax base?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

Given the many needs of the state and the complex factors that go into making our property taxes so high, it can be argued that cutting expenses is not enough, and increasing revenue generation will be necessary. How do you propose to increase revenue to cover our expenses and thereby decrease taxes?

Should New Jersey raise the minimum-wage? What is a fair wage, given our high cost of living?

NJ currently offers paid family and medical leave. However, it does not provide leave for the employee's own serious health condition. Should we add state-mandated paid sick leave for our workers?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

EDUCATION

Currently, there are a number of efforts to establish charter schools in high-performing districts despite opposition from community members, who say that charters are not needed to properly serve district students and would take away funds from public schools, leading to higher class sizes and programming cuts. What changes would you make to the approval process for charters in order to address the wishes of host communities in solidly performing districts who may not want a charter in the community?

Some charter schools in underperforming districts seem to be showing promising results, but data shows that they may be serving a disproportionately lower percentage of ESL, special education, and lowest-income students. How would you address the inequity in some districts between the percentage of highest-needs students served by public vs. charter schools, given that this creates not only an opportunity gap but also skewed performance results, which artificially inflate the relative performance statistics of the charters?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

The needs of our inner city schools are tremendous, and the quality of education and services especially for kids with special needs in these areas is often horrifying. Schools lack the budget to provide appropriate transportation to students. There are not enough aids in the classrooms. Extended school year and specialist services (speech, OT, PT) are insufficient to student needs. Advocacy groups to help parents (who often lack literacy, knowledge and time due to long work hours) are unfunded. Lack of compliance with IDEA regulations often goes unaddressed. What is your plan for addressing these very important issues for our most vulnerable students?

Chris Christie has proposed a so-called "Fairness Formula" for school funding, which would give equal state funds for every child regardless of need, effectively demolishing the funding of poorer school districts in the name of reducing property taxes. What is your take on Christie's proposal? If you oppose it, then how would you respond to voters who are in favor of it because it would lower their property taxes?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

ENVIRONMENT

In the face of a weak, lazy, and ignorant federal government with no plan to combat climate change, the task is left up to states and cities. How will NJ play a role? Do you see NJ working with other US states and cities that want to address climate change? Is there room for international cooperation?

It is estimated that a fourth of our trash is actually food waste and other organic matter. In an effort to divert such organic waste to a municipal compost facility rather than a landfill, at least 2 cities in NJ (Princeton and Lawrenceville) have implemented pilot Curbside Organics programs which have succeeded in reducing methane release. However, due to exorbitant permitting fees, there is not a single municipal compost facility within the state of New Jersey, and all of this food waste is currently transported to Pennsylvania. Do you support removing the restrictions so that new compost facilities can be developed within our state? What can we do to bring Curbside Organic programs to other municipalities?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

Recently, the Pinelands Commission voted in favor of South Jersey Gas Pipeline, while PennEast is still under consideration and a new pipeline, Southern Reliability Link, is reportedly in the works. This is shocking given that two-thirds of us want to see investment in renewables, not fossil fuels. Do you support a moratorium on new pipelines within the state?

There is currently no active fracking in our state. However, since experts know there are natural gas reserves under the state, the future is uncertain. Furthermore, Governor Christie repeatedly vetoed bills to prevent the dumping of fracking waste in our state. What can we do to ensure fracking stays out of our state? Will you support passage of fracking waste laws in NJ?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

GUNS AND GUN SAFETY

NJ is an exception state, which means that if you are found transporting a gun in your car, you are automatically guilty of a Felony, unless you are either going directly to, or coming from the range or moving. This seems to lack commonsense and is a cause for many to reflexively vote Republican in NJ. Do you support common sense gun legislation that would appeal to gun hobbyists? If so, what would that look like?

New Jersey is fairly unusual in requiring a Firearms Purchaser's ID (FPID) card for rifle/shotgun purchases for any handgun purchase, subject to a background check at applicant's expense. However, the FPID does not require renewal unless you move. So if you move every year, you have to go through the process and expense every year. If you buy a house at 25 and are literally demented at age 85, your original FPID stays valid. What kind of common sense gun legislation would you support that would address this issue?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

Many countries around the world mandate gun use and safety courses for ownership, but that is not the case in NJ. Would you support a mandatory safety course for gun ownership?

NJ's inheritance law allows you to inherit a massive gun collection from a relative's estate. Furthermore, unless you've never been involuntarily committed or meet another exclusion, those guns become yours without any registration or check. Would you support legislation to close this loophole?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

HEALTHCARE

One of the GOP health care policy proposals would involve cutting federal healthcare spending by giving Medicaid block grants to the states, ultimately placing burden, risk and impossible choices with states. These would include cutting coverage to children and people with disabilities, withholding certain services such as mental health, cutting provider payment, and creating long waiting lists for services. States would also bear the risk burden of unanticipated changes or crises such as population increases, aging populations, economic downturns, natural disasters, and disease epidemics. How would you handle the burden of choice that would fall to the state of NJ in administering block grants? What would you tell parents of a child who relies on Medicaid disability payments for crucial care? How would you balance the need to maintain services to Medicaid recipients, even as needs increase, with an already high tax burden to NJ citizens?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

Do you believe the allowed uses of medical marijuana should be expanded? If so, what conditions would you include?

To date, seven states have passed laws legalizing recreational marijuana and in the state of Colorado, \$135 million in taxes and fees flowed into the state budget in just one year. Not only do these changes make financial sense, but they would also decriminalize common teenager behavior. Do you support the legalization of marijuana for recreation?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

IMMIGRATION

About 6% of the NJ population -- 525,000 people -- are unauthorized immigrants. Should we follow California's lead and declare New Jersey to be a Sanctuary state?

There are more than 23,000 immigrants living in New Jersey who have been protected from deportation by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. How can we ensure their protection continues?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

LGBTQ RIGHTS

It is expected that “religious protection” laws will be coming from the federal government which would permit discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. How would you address this on the state level?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

POLICE AND PRISONS

Last year, Gov. Christie signed a bill and the NJ Attorney General issued a directive, both of which require statewide training of police officers to raise cultural diversity awareness, improve community relations, and prevent fatal police shootings. What else do you think can, and should be done, to improve race relations between our police officers and the communities they serve?

Many of the children that are enter the criminal justice system at a young age have learning disabilities or have endured poverty, abuse and/or neglect. What kind of educational and counseling services can the state of NJ provide for these children, in an effort to end this “school to prison” pipeline?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

Given that the federal government is refusing to phase out private, for-profit prisons, how can the state respond?

How can non-violent felons be reintegrated into the workforce?

This year, Governor Christie vetoed a bill that would limit solitary confinement in prisons. Do you support such restrictions on isolated confinement?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

PUBLIC PLANNING

Past and current development patterns are colliding with economic and demographic changes. Residents are looking for walkable communities and car-free living, while sprawl-driven office parks and malls go vacant and decay. How can we redirect public planning to remediate today's mismatches and return to high-quality development?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Please tell us how each of the positions you have held in your career would influence the work that you would do as governor. What skills did you learn from each position and what wisdom did you gain?

It is 2030 and you have served two terms as governor of NJ. What are people saying about your legacy? What are your biggest concrete accomplishments?

Questions for Gubernatorial Candidates

What do you think will be your #1 biggest obstacle in accomplishing your goals as governor, and how do you plan to address that obstacle?

If you do not win the Democratic nomination, what are your plans in terms of ensuring the Republican Candidate does not win the election?