

Candidate Questionnaire on Disability Issues

Fourteen Missouri organizations – Governor's Council on Disability, Missouri Association of County Developmental Disability Services, Missouri Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, Missouri Coalition for Community Behavioral Healthcare, Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Missouri Council of the Blind, Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Missouri Recovery Network, Paraquad, People First of Missouri, Services for Independent Living, Southwest Council for Independent Living, St. Louis Arc and The Whole Person – partnered to ask candidates for statewide office in Missouri about issues important to us.

General

Please share any connections or experience (professional or personal) you have with people with disabilities and/or the disability community in Missouri.

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - There are many people who have disabilities who daily impact my life, including Brenton, Bill, Greg, Katie, Dillan, Eli, Rudina and Jennai (employees, former student, relative and friends). My heart is moved for these people because I have seen their struggles. Whether operating heavy equipment as an amputee, being self-sufficient as a four-time traumatic brain injury victim or just trying to communicate a single word through a voice output communication aid because of cerebral palsy, I have seen their hard work span success. My friends are not bound by their disabilities, and that is motivating. My former Sunday school student traveled across the globe to share the love of Jesus with foreign children. The limited capabilities of his arms did not prohibit him from fulfilling his dream as a missionary. These are among the most recent of my connections.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - While in the U.S. Congress, I was the founder of the Congressional MS Caucus, a bipartisan caucus comprised of dedicated members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate who raise awareness about multiple sclerosis on Capitol Hill. I lost a close family member to multiple sclerosis when she was only 44, so I am personally committed to the awareness of this issue. My wife, Judge Debra Carnahan, also served on the board of the American Association of People with Disabilities as co-chair of the National Gala.

When I conducted my numerous rural and urban round tables around the state for this campaign, I met with children with disabilities and their parents and adults with disabilities and their advocates, and they told me their own particular stories about the challenges they face.

The recurring theme from all was that our state government and our public policy makers and legislators have to do a better job of listening to what is actually happening to the citizens they are supposed to serve. The best public policy is one that is developed, not only by experts in their particular field, but learning from the very people who pay for and receive the services that come from such policies.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - As Cass County prosecutor, we handled a significant amount of sexual assault cases which included victims with mental health disabilities. These are difficult because they are "he said, she said" cases. We made those cases a priority and worked with victim advocates because those people with mental disabilities were still required to go into court. While these cases added another layer of care, and were particularly difficult to make, we did not shy away from them. We sought justice for our victims and punishment for those who abused them – and we were successful.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - My stepfather is partially paralyzed due to a severe stroke. The family home has been modified for wheelchair access and other accommodations. A modified van was also purchased for transport. This was all accomplished with private funds.

Robin Smith, Democrat - For more than two decades during my time as a television reporter and news anchor, I worked with children from varying abilities involved with the Variety Club Telethon. Sammy Davis Jr. brought me into the Variety family as one of the anchors for the event in St. Louis. Over the years, we raised millions of dollars to help purchase medical items to help improve the lives of children that would have otherwise been out of reach for their families – prosthetic limbs, wheelchair and voice augmentations for growing children. Variety also arranged the contribution of almost a dozen vans every year, specially equipped for children with disabilities. I still treasure the personal relationships with developed with parents, families and children – many of whom are now adults.

As your next secretary of state, I will be dedicated to protecting the voting rights of the Missourians with disabilities. I have been a forceful opponent of Amendment 6 and its associated photo ID proposals. Taken together, the measures would limit the right to vote for 220,000 residents in Missouri. Many of them are voters with differing abilities who do not drive and do not currently have a state-issued driver's license or ID.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Serving and the understanding the specific needs of the diverse disabled community has been lifelong mission. My faith informs my commitment to equality and dignity. Our family has several members who live with thrive with debilitating mental health issues from anxiety to schizophrenia. As a 25-year health care professional, I am fully aware of the challenges that affect the communities and the families involved. As a policymaker and legislator, I have developed close friendships with constituents who have taught me much about the needs of the people with disabilities.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - I have a deep, personal connection with the disability community, as my son, Stephen, is on the autism spectrum, has epilepsy and is non-verbal. Stephen has been a blessing to my wife, Jaime, and me, and he has taught us so much. I entered public service to be a voice for people like Stephen, to stand up for their rights and their needs, which can often be overlooked.

In my time in the legislature, I worked on autism insurance coverage, cannabidiol treatment for epilepsy, funds for treatment and services for developmental disabilities and Achieving a Better Life Experience Act accounts for individuals with disabilities for their futures, among other things.

In the last eight years, I have been the go-to legislator in the General Assembly on disability issues. I will be a statewide champion if elected.

I have been honored to have received awards from various groups for my work in the disability community, including the Autism Society of America, Developmental Disability Services of Jackson County, Down Syndrome Association of Greater St. Louis, Easter Seals Outstanding Advocate, Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, St. Louis ARC Superhero for Kids, St. Louis Children's Hospital State Advocate of the Year, Touchpoint Autism Services Social Impact and Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance.

Administrative

What do you see as the role of government – local, state and federal – affecting the lives of people with disabilities, and what efforts will you make to ensure state agencies serving Missourians with disabilities have the resources and manpower to carry out their functions?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - My heart's desire is to serve God and to serve people. I am willing to listen, learn and then lead to help. My faith informs me of those in need and gives me the wisdom to assist. Government should ensure that all agencies are properly serving our Missourians with disabilities. This requires listening and then examining issues that are directly affecting you.

The areas that need improvement will get attention first. I would also like to gather creative and knowledgeable people to help solve difficult issues. Likewise, we must fund programs that are working and ensure them the adequate manpower. As a leader, it's vital to communicate the value and importance of policy for it to be followed.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We need to continue to build on past efforts, both at a public policy level and in the private sector, by continuing to remove barriers that hurt people with disabilities who desire to live in their own home. We also need to embrace universal design in public housing and facilities.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Government must ensure equal access for people with disabilities and work to make reasonable accommodations and alternative formats available to ensure Missourians with disabilities are able to interact appropriately and effectively with employees and customers. I will also enforce the Missouri Human Rights Act and Commission to develop, recommend and implement ways to prevent and eliminate discrimination.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - Libertarians in general seek to limit the role of government in people's lives. The government should strive to ensure that public buildings and jobs are accessible to persons with disabilities. Private businesses and persons, however, should not be forced to make any changes that they disagree with.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - People with disabilities interact with the government more than any other group in our nation. Obviously, there are federal, state and local programs that are funded to assist people with disabilities to live and work in our communities and be fully functioning and valued members of our

society. I've always supported these vital programs and will continue to do so as state treasurer. We also need to fully fund the agencies, like the Missouri Human Rights Commission, that are in charge of protecting the civil rights of our citizens with disabilities.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Government can help make treatments and services available to our most vulnerable citizens. When the legislature passed autism insurance reform, we had a direct impact on thousands of Missourians who now have coverage when they needed it the most, and this coverage will help individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential.

I passed the Missouri ABLE program, which will be overseen by the state treasurer's office. As treasurer, I will be able to run the ABLE program to ensure all individuals know the benefits of having a tax deferred ABLE account and the impact it can have on their future. I will continue to advocate for the necessary resources being available to programs that directly help people with disabilities.

How will you include the voice of people with disabilities, their families and those who provide services to them in your administration?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - I am a family man, an entrepreneur and a man of faith. Not being a politician, I will definitely provide the freshest view on issues that are necessary to serving you. It would be my goal to inform myself by forming an alliance (using Paraquad and disabled citizens) to become more familiar with all issues. I would then like to promote some from this group into the Governor's Council on Disability. A friendly 24-hour phone or internet suggestion line should be set up so that the Governor's Council on Disability is always aware of needs.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - As lieutenant governor, I will serve on the Missouri Housing Development Commission, and I will ensure that body has representation from the disability community, such as representatives from the Missouri Disability Determination Services, ADA centers and those who have served on the Governor's Council on Disability.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - I will serve as the people's attorney. That means an open door and an open ear. It also means my office staffing will be reflective of the people of the state of Missouri.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - As secretary of state, I would strive to hire the best person for the job, regardless of disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc.

Robin Smith, Democrat - We will work with Paraquad, similar organizations and citizens of varying abilities to ensure that our elections, state library and securities divisions are accessible to those with special needs.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Over my career in public service, especially when I was regional director of Health and Human Services, I've worked directly with many people with disabilities, their families and the organizations that serve them. I will maintain and enhance those relationships as your next treasurer.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - My son, Stephen, inspired me to run for the Senate and make a difference, to be a voice for people like him. I have carried that inspiration with me every day. I understand the struggles that families of people with disabilities face every day.

As the treasurer's office runs ABLE, I will work tirelessly to make that program one that is accessible to all people with disabilities and truly works to improve their lives. A well-run ABLE program will be a strong indication that the state treasurer's office is committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities. I intend to use the state treasurer's office as a statewide platform to promote awareness and acceptance of disability issues.

Health Care Access

Do you support covering people in the health insurance gap by increasing eligibility for MO HealthNet to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL)? Do you think some reforms are necessary to ensure coverage? If so, what kind of reforms?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - I do believe that the health insurance gap must be covered. During my travel across Missouri, I have met Missourians who are not covered and are suffering. This is about helping people. I agree with policy points and reforms of the Paragard's legislative priorities.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - Yes, I support expansion of Medicaid in our state.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Yes. Include adult dental services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and necessary durable medical equipment for individuals with disabilities accessing MO HealthNet.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has only a very limited role in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any kind of public funding for health care services.
Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - I wholeheartedly support covering people in the MO HealthNet to 138 percent of the federal poverty level. Currently, we expect people to survive on 85 percent of the federal poverty level, which keeps people trapped in severe poverty simply because they need the type of health care coverage that only Medicaid provides. Medicaid is the only health insurance program that covers daily attendant care services. In terms of reforms, we need to also make it easier for people who need this health insurance coverage to be able to work, save money and be married to a spouse who can also go to work without losing coverage.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Reforms are needed to increase efficiencies in health care delivery and provide better outcomes for people who need it most. Higher premiums and reduced access help no one. We must continue to make health care more transparent, accessible and affordable. I have supported numerous health care reforms such as telehealth and added consumer transparency options, among other things.

Further, I supported increasing the asset limit to specifically aid individuals with disabilities and have fought for funding for programs that help people with disabilities.

Currently, the Aged, Blind and Disabled category of MO HealthNet recipients are NOT included in managed care.

What is your position on managed care for this population and individuals with severe mental illness and addiction disorders? What about the inclusion of long-term supports and services (like Medicaid waiver services or Consumer Directed Services)?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - To protect the health care for our community of disabled, we should keep the fee-for-services as it is now. I am in favor of offering in-home and community care when available through Consumer Directed Services. It saves money and allows individuals independence they choose.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - I will support these initiatives.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Increase the eligibility for the "Aged, Blind and Disabled" category of MO HealthNet to 138 percent of the FPL to mirror the expansion category and support adequate funding so they are included in the Consumer Directed Services program.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has only a very limited role, if any, in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any kind of public funding for social services.
Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - As a former health care professional, my advocacy on this issue through the state treasurer's office will be useful. I will work with the disability community and their providers to ensure needs are met in a fiscally responsible manner for all.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Managed care serves a growing and critical role in healthcare for many Missourians. As I am committed to ensuring the best health care delivery for people with disabilities, more study and debate is needed on issues of health care delivery for this specific population before any action is taken. I look forward to continuing to advocate for individuals with disabilities in this context.

Housing

The availability of affordable, accessible and safe housing is a major barrier for some individuals with disabilities to full community inclusion. What will your administration do to further housing options for persons with disabilities? And how will it do this?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - Having experience in real estate and construction, I do believe that we can work with housing developers to create new affordable, safe housing. There are many possibilities and options for accomplishing this. It will require some incentive to be given to builders. Likewise, much of the affordability will depend on finding great locations.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We should have policies that integrate people with the community at large, meaning living in individual homes in various neighborhoods. Universal design has made this possible. This is a first step in making this happen and become the norm.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - As attorney general, I will sit on the Missouri Housing Development Commission, which administers and provides funding for the construction of affordable housing. From that position, I will advocate to see that all Missourians have equal justice under the law and equal access to housing opportunities in our state and support their adopted universal design approach that will provide more affordable accessible housing.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has only a very limited role, if any, in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any kind of public funding for social services.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - The state treasurer serves on the Missouri Housing Development Council, and in that capacity, I will strongly support the development of more affordable, accessible housing as well as the new rule requiring all developments to utilize universal design principles. I will advocate for onsite child care and social services.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - The state treasurer serves on various state boards, including the Missouri Housing Development Commission. On this board, I can advocate for the quality housing needs of individuals with disabilities. Community-based housing needs to be more available and affordable, and I will work tirelessly to that end.

The ABLE program allows individuals with disabilities to save for their future needs, including housing. I will work to educate individuals of the benefits of saving and ensure the ABLE program is managed well.

Employment and Economic Equality and Independence

People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty, and have the lowest employment rate, compared to any other minority population. Often, people with disabilities who need to access supports and services only public programs provide (personal attendant services, Medicaid waiver services, etc.) fear losing their services if they make too much money. How will you improve employment and economic outcomes for people with disabilities while allowing people to retain necessary benefits?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - We should not punish people with disabilities by restricting or removing benefits if they are working. Missouri should offer incentives to work when possible, not discourage it. I will work the Department of Labor and use their expertise and in-depth knowledge in this area to assist in making this progressive decision.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We need to look at in offering incentives to employers who may have never hired an employee with a disability. People with disabilities have great employment track records. We already offer incentives for employers to hire people from various underrepresented groups in our country and state, why not examine ways in which we can make it easier for businesses, especially small businesses, to hire.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Medicaid is the only health insurance program that provides for personal attendant care services for people that need it, but people have to live at 85 percent of the federal poverty level. If they get married, their spousal income is factored in. No other health insurance plan will pay for daily attendant care services. We need to allow people to make more money, work and pay taxes without losing their health care. I support, and will continue the work with, the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council to increase opportunities for independence, productivity and integration into communities.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has only a very limited role, if any, in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any kind of public funding for social services.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Because of our failure to expand Medicaid, we are keeping people trapped in poverty. First, we need to bring back the billions of Missouri tax dollars we've already paid into Washington, D.C., to create 24,000 good paying health care jobs and keep our rural hospitals open.

Second, we need to allow people to make more than 85 percent of the FPL to be able to work and do more with the Ticket to Work program to give people with disabilities the opportunity to go to work and provide for themselves and their family without losing their health care.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - The ABLE program can have a profound impact on the lives of people with disabilities. Under ABLE, individuals with disabilities can have more income and assets available to them before eligibility for other programs is impacted.

While in the legislature, I chaired the Senate Economic Development Committee and worked on tax reform and establishing a strong economy statewide. I have a track record of supporting a strong economy and Missouri has a better economic and business climate now that will help all people. I was also the first Republican senator in state history to file and push for the earned income tax credit that would help individuals with disabilities.

In the last three years, the U.S. Department of Justice has taken over 50 legal actions in 25 states including federal lawsuits and court settlements enforcing the civil rights of persons with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which states people with disabilities have a right to live and work in integrated community settings. This past July, a new federal law – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – went into effect. This law creates new standards for transitions from school to integrated work in the community for persons with disabilities. School and other community agencies are charged with focusing on integrated work before exploring sheltered work options. Given these mandates, what can Missouri do to move forward to be in compliance and be leaders in this area?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - Again, I would have to get advice from a commission of people including disability experts who best understand these problems and what the possible solutions are.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We should have a balance approach in not only integrating persons with disabilities in the workforce but also continue to support programs that have provided a niche and an important need in giving people in the community the opportunity to have the chance to experience the dignity of work.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Missouri subsidizes shelter workshops and today they legally are paying disabled workers a subminimum wage – under \$2 an hour. Workers deserve to be paid minimum wage and we should work to find more community employment options and supports.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has only a very limited role, if any, in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any kind of public funding for social services.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - First, we need to close the front door to sheltered workshops and work to help transition workers into integrated competitive employment. I support the administration's proposal to eliminate the subminimum wages that in the state of Missouri legally allow employers to pay people with disabilities on average less than \$2 an hour. Other states have led the way and it's time we catch up.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Missouri always needs to look at improving the living and working situations of individuals with disabilities. If an individual can live and work independently, that should be the preferred situation. Good programs exist now, and individuals always need options that suit them best. Again, the MO ABLE program is in place to help individuals save for the future needs, including, transportation, education and housing. An ABLE account could help an individual live and work independently, and we must continue to make numerous options available for individuals to live and work independently. Moving forward, initiatives like the earned income tax credit can help as well. As treasurer, I also intend to use the statewide platform to work with agencies and employers to connect them with individuals seeking meaningful employment. We are fortunate there are some great examples in our state now, like Schnucks. However, we can and we must continue to do better.

Education

Please outline the steps your administration would take to ensure that students with disabilities in our public schools are educated in their neighborhood schools and included in classrooms with students without disabilities. These students would be provided equal access to the curriculum, and are able to obtain assistive technologies and other related educational supports that adequately prepare them to become productive members of our communities.

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - Students with disabilities should be offered the equal access to curriculum and have assistive technology. Our students deserve the best education and teachers. We must fully fund our schools. We need more emphasis on co-teaching so that our students can remain in the classroom and have the exposure to equal curriculum standards.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - I will emphasize the importance of inclusion for all school districts in Missouri and work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in making this a priority. This can be made possible by not only fully funding the foundation formula but also building diverse coalitions of a common interest to effectively advocate for such an initiative both here in Missouri and in Washington D.C.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - As attorney general, it will be my responsibility to enforce the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Missouri Human Rights Act to ensure every individual with a disability has equal access to educational opportunities.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - All public facilities should be accessible to persons with disabilities. Beyond that, the secretary of state's office has little exposure to education policy.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Similar to the last question, we still have vestiges of the past with segregated schools for children with disabilities. Segregation is never equal, and we need to close the state Schools for the Severely Handicapped and mainstream those children in to their own neighborhood schools with appropriate staffing and support. All children can learn, and we need to give every child the opportunity to learn in the same integrated environment.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Our public schools do a good job of educating our children. Students with disabilities need the same access to education and opportunity to succeed. We must strive to provide the assistance they need to receive a world-class education.

I supported millions of dollars in increases to public school funding while in the legislature. It is critically important that we give all educators the resources they need to teach our children. The MOST 529 and ABLE programs provide excellent resources for individuals and parents to save for higher education.

I supported First Steps, and also passed the Parents' Bill of Rights so parents know what to ask for in an Individualized Education Program. I also fought for additional due process for parents during IEP planning. Further, I also fought school administrators who didn't stand up for students with disabilities being bullied and passed meaningful anti-bullying legislation to protect our most vulnerable.

When we invest in the education of all children, including those with disabilities, we're investing in a strong economy. What steps would your administration take to ensure that students with disabilities are adequately prepared to transition to competitive employment and/or post-secondary education?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - We must ensure we have standards for our students with disabilities so they are adequately prepared for their future. We can improve and assist the writing of transitional goals in IEPs that give students who are working on necessary goals for the post-secondary goals they have for themselves. It is also important to implement the highest level of assistive technology to allow the student the most complete educational experience.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - Mainstreaming all can greatly help all students with and without disabilities learn from each other. I would push for fair opportunities related to job training and job readiness programs.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - As attorney general, it will be my responsibility to enforce the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Missouri Human Rights Act to ensure every individual with a disability has equal access to educational opportunities.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little exposure to education policy.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Students with disabilities have more rights in our K-12 system than they do in our post-secondary systems. We need to work with our trade schools, our community colleges and our four-year institutions to educate them and assist them in understanding the needs of these young adults with disabilities and help to successfully transition into the next chapter of their lives.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - We must always make sure all students have access to a world-class education. We have to support our teachers and parents to make sure all students are taught well so they are prepared for success in higher education and the workforce.

I will continue to support the MOST 529 and ABLÉ programs to make sure they support individuals with disabilities as they pursue their dreams. These programs can ensure students are prepared to achieve success in whatever they pursue. My record is clear: I will always stand up for individuals with disabilities in any and every context, including in educational institutions.

Rights

Following the events of Ferguson, Police Officer Standards Training (POST) requirements were increased. Missouri has Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) and CIT councils in a number of areas in the state whose focus is to help improve interaction between law enforcement and persons with mental illness. In addition, First Responder Disability Awareness Training (FRDAT) for each first responder discipline (law enforcement, fire/EMS and 911 dispatchers) will be implemented in Missouri. These trainings are vital given the number of people with disabilities who are not properly identified or understood, which has led to ongoing victimization of persons with disabilities, inappropriate interactions, false arrests, unjust incarcerations or even death. What would your administration do to continue and expand this much needed education for law enforcement officers and other first responders?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - I believe in equipping our police officers with every type of training that will benefit them in serving and protecting our public. It is necessary for them to understand the people and situations they may encounter for everyone's safety.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - My office will make sure education and training in such areas are an integral part of law enforcement training. It will be treated as important as other issues we mandate that help officers enforce the law in a just manner that reflects the diversity of our state.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - More than half of the police killings of citizens are people with disabilities, and people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence than the general population. Police need training to identify people with disabilities in encounters and understand how to assist them appropriately.

As Cass County prosecutor, I proactively worked with law enforcement, nurses and first responders to ensure that victims were treated with the care they deserved. For example, I worked to bring into the Cass Regional Medical Center Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) nurses for victims of sexual assault examinations because it was imperative that there was a hospital closer to victims than requiring them to drive into the city from Cass County when they have been victimized. I also worked with the nurses of St. Luke's Hospital in their annual forensic investigation seminar, presenting a program to nurses discussing how to handle the disclosure by a child that they have been sexually abused in order to keep those statements admissible in trial. Programs and trainings are effective.

As attorney general, I will work to continue funding for the Strengthening Mental Health Initiative, which ensures Missourians with mental illness and substance use disorders get timely, effective treatment in their communities, as well as support continued funding to help educate and train more teachers, law enforcement, clergy, employers and families on how to recognize, respond to and care for those with mental illness through crisis intervention and Mental Health First Aid training.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in law enforcement.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - More than half of the people killed in officer involved shootings are people with disabilities, and often, interactions wouldn't turn violent if the officers had proper training in dealing with people with mental illness, autism, deafness or other conditions. I support the new efforts to provide more disability awareness training of POST officers. I also know that people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of crime than other populations, and we need law enforcement and other agencies to be partners in trying to prevent these heinous crimes.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - I championed municipal court and policing reforms in Senate Bill 5 and Senate Bill 572. The goal of these reforms is restore trust between citizens and those who govern them. Police officers in Missouri continue to serve their communities with distinction, and we must continue to ensure they have the resources and training they need. I will continue to be a voice for the disabilities community and advocate for positive reforms making our communities safer. St. Louis County has an accredited police department, and I will continue to advocate other departments to become accredited. I have already worked with police and first responders on this issue and will continue to push for the best training possible.

Having the Fraternal Order of Police and Missouri State Council of Fire Fighters endorsement also puts me in a unique position of building this important bridge to a better future.

In 2015, for individuals determined "incapacitated/disabled," courts awarded over 2,400 full guardianships and only 63 limited guardianships. Missouri courts disproportionately award full guardianship, which strips a person with a disability of all their rights, even though there are less restrictive options available. How will you support the reform of Missouri's 30+-year-old guardianship statute to better support Missourians and assist them in retaining and restoring more of their rights as they are able?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - I agree Missouri should continue to reforming the guardianship statute to better serve our citizens. Those who are disabled should always retain their rights when possible, and the court should always investigate less restrictive options.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - Missouri needs have balanced approach to appreciate there are different

degrees of individual choice and guardianship. We also need to make schools and parents more aware when dealing with guardianship options.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Missouri was a leader in passing the current law, but unfortunately that was in 1983. Currently, I support reform through recommendations from national experts and advocates in Missouri. Missouri Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (MO-WINGS) has compiled updates for our law, which I support to modernize Missouri's guardianship statutes.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in guardianship statutes.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Our guardianship laws, like other items in this questionnaire, are relics of the past, and we need to rethink the rights of all citizens with disabilities to be in more control of their own destinies. This includes making sure that their voting rights aren't stripped away through a variety of tactics, including inappropriate guardians or photo ID laws. We also need to education our public administrators about the rights of people with disabilities and the Olmstead decision that people have the right to live in their own communities and not be unnecessarily institutionalized.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - ABLE is in place to give individuals with disabilities more opportunities to live independently. If an individual can live alone and has the resources available to do so, we should always promote independent living. Fewer restrictions and more savings will lead to more independent living, which will be a much better situation for many people with disabilities.

Funding and Access to Services

A history of inconsistent and underfunded rates has led to a system that no longer covers the cost of doing business for community provider organizations. Providers are experiencing a workforce crisis hampered by low wages, a lack of health insurance, high turnover, and a shortage of staff. Demand for these workers from private industry and other human services sectors compete for these workers. In addition, nearly 65 percent of the 95,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are not connected with the service system and many live at home with aging parents, representing a significant future demand on the system. How will you ensure a robust service system for Missourians with developmental disabilities now and in the future?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - My plan is to bring foreign manufacturing back to domestic production here in Missouri. I believe that individuals with developmental disabilities would be the major component for success in this endeavor. One of my first entrepreneurial experiences was working with a sheltered workshop staff in Franklin County. I see great potential in this plan.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We need to make investments in those who provide the services and expertise that can help us fill the need of those who are currently not in the system. They need to find the right avenue for them instead of automatically putting people into institutions that may not be the right service for them and may be too costly.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - As attorney general, I will support increases to these vital services.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in social services. However, I philosophically oppose almost any use of public funds for social services.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Too often, we have asked our state employees and contractors to do too much for too less. Our state employees are the lowest paid in the nation, resulting in high turnover, burnout and low morale. That extends to the contractors who are providing direct services to our citizens with disabilities. As the former regional director of HHS, I saw firsthand the negative impact and consequences of underfunding these vital services and will support efforts to provide the necessary budgets to appropriately compensate these valuable workers.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - All Missourians with disabilities should be able to live at home if they are able to do so. We must continue to make sure that option is available, and that includes making the community provider industry a robust one. The legislature can address some of these issues so individuals with disabilities have access to the care of their choosing. I have supported increased funding for this, but the governor has withheld the money. I will leverage my position as a statewide officeholder to advocate for better services.

Many rural Centers for Independent Living (CILs) have catchment areas of 4,000 square miles and nine counties and urban centers have extremely high population densities to serve. How would you make sure all CILs have capacity to serve people with disabilities in their catchment areas?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - For those who were willing to relocate into a rural area would be easiest solution. Understandably, not everyone wants to move nor should they have to. This would be an issue that I would have to consult with disability group leaders for the best solutions.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - We should look at developing a transportation program, like OATS, that could be developed for those who need to get to a nearby CIL.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Urge an increase in the state's grant for independent living centers in Missouri.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in social services. However, I am philosophically opposed to almost any use of public funds for social services.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Our CILs have been vital in providing a wide array of valuable services that are cross-disability for the last generation. However, they've seen very little in terms of increases even though their service numbers are up dramatically. I'll support increasing the general revenue they need to reach out to the unserved and underserved population in our state.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - Each Center for Independent Living has different resource needs, and I would continue to advocate that professionals and facilities have the resources they need. I understand the

needs of these facilities and the roles they serve in their communities, and we must be committed to helping them succeed.

Hearing loss can be a significant impediment to seniors wanting to stay connected to, and remain independent in, their community. Over 600,000 Missourians, including seniors, have hearing loss and 90 percent of them are not sign language users. Instead they rely on hearing aids. This group often cannot afford hearing aids (they are not covered by MO HealthNet). What will your administration do to ensure access to hearing aids?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - Hearing aids should be affordable to everyone. It would be best to offer free hearing aids to the citizens at the lowest poverty levels with a sliding scale based on income.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - I will work with the executive and legislative branches to embrace Medicaid expansion and putting these options back into Medicaid.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Fight to expand access to Medicaid to include hearing aids.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in social services. However, you would be hard pressed to find any libertarian who believes it is the government's job to provide hearing aids to citizens.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - As state treasurer, I will advocate for health care choices that help people that function to their highest capacity.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - While there is no direct impact the state treasurer's office can have on this issue, I would recommend individuals access MO ABLE. This program can help all individuals with disabilities and could go a long way towards ensuring people have access to hearing aids. If there is more to do, I am eager for more input from the community.

Behavioral Health

What would you do to improve the opioid epidemic facing our state?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - I have met with a chief state drug task force agent and become aware of the seriousness of this issue. Likewise, for several years I served as a youth mentor for troubled youth in the public school system, and I discovered how young people were abusing prescription drugs. I do believe in a limited prescription drug monitoring program for opioids. I am against adding Missouri citizens to a nationalized list.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - I will support the creation of a statewide prescription drug monitoring program that is modeled after what has already been done in the city of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Missouri is now the only state without a drug monitoring program. Enacting one would be a tool to combat the epidemic.

Missouri is experiencing a growing epidemic of accidental and preventable deaths associated with overdoses of heroin. More prevalent among women and the middle class, many heroin users first become addicted to prescription opiate drugs. Today in Missouri, first responders are allowed to administer naloxone to reverse heroin overdoses. However, peers or family members of overdose victims are most often the actual first responders best positioned to intervene.

Putting naloxone in the hands of more Missourians will mean fewer heroin users in the morgue and more in treatment programs. I've seen firsthand that any family can be touched by an accidental overdose. Missouri has a known meth problem, but heroin is, in some ways, now more of a concern for law enforcement officials than meth. As overdose rates dramatically increase, this is a step towards stemming the tide of fatal heroin overdoses.

I was pleased that a bill was signed into law this year that would allow more Missourians the ability to buy naloxone through a licensed pharmacist to block the effects of a heroin overdose and put more Missourians into treatment programs instead of the morgue.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in health insurance or drug policy. However, like most libertarians, I favor the legalization of nearly all drugs and oppose any law requiring tracking of opioid prescriptions.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with

disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Missouri is the only state that does not have a prescription drug monitoring database. This allows addicts to doctor shop and pharmacy shop, which results in more prescription opioids on our streets. Then when people can't get those, they turn to heroin.

We need to provide law enforcement and our first responders with opioid-reversing drugs and training so they can save lives immediately when they arrive on the scene. We also need to provide more drug treatment programs and treat this like an illness and public health threat as opposed to asking the criminal justice and prison systems to solve the problem.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - The opioid epidemic facing Missouri is a difficult one. We must ensure individuals who need treatment can receive it, and we need to eliminate improper access and abuse. In the state treasurer's office, raising awareness and providing education is key. Also, the linked deposit program in the state treasurer's office is an efficient means to reinvest in our communities. Stronger families and stronger communities can go a long way in preventing the opioid epidemic.

What will be your plan to address the leading cause of disability (behavioral health) in the nation? And for those in recovery, what would you do to help access recovery supports (such as employment, housing, education, etc.) for individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders?

Governor

Chris Koster, Democrat - Letter provided by campaign on pages 26-27.

Les Turilli Jr., Independent - My wife is a counselor, and we have seen the lack of mental health treatment facilities in our state. I want to introduce 12 new centers to accommodate those who desperately need them. We believe in working with counseling centers, hospitals, jails and courts to promote recovery support. Insurance companies have shortened lengths of stay, thus potentially harming treatment. Addressing this issue along with the affordability of medication is also essential.

Lieutenant Governor

Russ Carnahan, Democrat - First, housing is the number one priority – this is the greatest stabilizer. And as a member of the Missouri Housing Development Commission, I will advocate for this crucial recovery support. Once this is accomplished, other social and health care needs can be addressed more effectively.

Attorney General

Teresa Hensley, Democrat - Expand Medicaid. Doing so will help those living with mental illness get services, stay healthy and contribute to their communities, and maybe most importantly, get and keep work so they can achieve independence. We can't incarcerate our way out of the addiction problem. Addiction is a disease, and we need to treat it as such with drug courts and money for recovery. It's less expensive than building more jails.

During my decade as Cass County's top prosecutor, I was tough on crime and had a strong law enforcement background, but also utilized innovative rehabilitative measures like alternative courts for drug crimes and successful treatment programs. I also support special courts for veterans and people with mental health needs. I have sought alternative programs in order to protect tax dollars by not filling our prisons with needless incarceration of nonviolent crimes.

Secretary of State

Chris Morrill, Libertarian - The secretary of state's office has little role in disability determination or providing social services pertaining to behavioral health. However, it is widely thought that there is widespread fraud in the awarding of disability benefits solely due to alleged mental issues. Like most libertarians, I philosophically oppose the use of public funds for nearly any kind of social service.

Robin Smith, Democrat - I believe in the equal protection of all citizens of Missouri. Therefore, I believe that state, local and federal governments should use resources to enhance the lives of those with disabilities. However, I would not be voting on legislation that would provide resources or staffing to carry out the policy implementation here.

State Treasurer

Judy Baker, Democrat - Once again, we've used our court and prison systems to try and solve a public health crisis. We need to invest in treatment, counseling and community supports to assist people with behavioral and addiction issues to heal within their communities instead of incarcerating them.

Eric Schmitt, Republican - I have consistently supported funding for mental health services. I will continue to be an advocate for such funding and services, as they play a critical role throughout our state. I also will work to connect to community organizations that can help as well.



Paraquad
5240 Oakland Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63110
By Email

To the leaders of Paraquad:

Missouri is at its strongest when it is inclusive and accessible to everyone, and right now, there is more we can be doing to support Missourians with disabilities. Improving our healthcare system, schools, and policing, while enforcing existing nondiscrimination laws, will create a more comprehensive infrastructure to aid this community.

A primary objective in my campaign is to finally bring Medicaid expansion to Missouri. With every year that passes, our healthcare system's resources are stretched thinner and thinner. Hospitals and health centers are less equipped to deal with their patients and fewer Missourians receive the individualized attention they require. The lack of state and federal resources committed to health facilities has yielded high turnover rates among nurses. Many of the positions remain vacant. This shortage leaves existing nurses stretched thin, doing more with less -- potentially threatening the quality of care all patients receive. And when quality in care drops, it disproportionately affects those with disabilities.

Perhaps most importantly, Medicaid expansion will bring coverage to 300,000 Missourians who currently have no insurance. Among this group are 91,000 people suffering from a mental illness or drug addiction. These are the people who need our attention, but are falling through the cracks. The spread of opioid use is closely tied to how effectively we manage mental illness in this state. Instituting a prescription drug monitoring program and getting coverage to those with mental illnesses or an existing addiction will go a long way towards combatting the epidemic.

Fully funding our schools is also vital in supporting Missourians with disabilities. Just like in the healthcare sector, schools have been forced to make deep cuts to programming. And just like healthcare workers, dwindling resources burden our educators. Students with disabilities often require more individualized attention to succeed in the classroom, but with student-teacher ratios on the rise, it becomes harder to make sure they get the support they deserve. Education is our best tool to help Missourians with disabilities successfully transition into the workforce or on to higher education. When 18 school districts in this can only afford to

go to school four days a week, our budgetary priorities are clearly out of balance. As Governor, I will work to bring schools the resources they need to effectively educate all of our students.

As the state's chief law enforcement official, I have seen first hand how improved training for police can help more effectively serve and protect citizens with disabilities. The law enforcement community has made strides in educating officers about how to deescalate situations when encountering Missourians with mental illnesses. I applaud these efforts and would like to see them continue. By cutting health and education services, we ultimately force police to perform more and more functions within society. The very least we can do is give them the tools and support they need.

My career in public service has always been about fighting for fairness and equality for all Missourians. I am particularly proud of the advocacy work I did on behalf of the Second Injury Fund. Every Missourian who wants to work, should be able to. Keeping the Second Injury Fund solvent preserves a level of protection for workers who aggravate a previous disability while on the job. Supporting this fund, along with strictly enforcing our nondiscrimination laws, is how we can begin to work on bringing down the unemployment rate for people living with disabilities, which is higher than many other minority communities.

Helping our citizens with disabilities requires a multifaceted strategy and comprehensive effort. Each individual faces a unique set of challenges. There is no silver bullet for everyone. The better we enable our schools and hospitals to provide individualized attention and care, the more effective they will be. Proactively tackling mental illness and addiction reduces the burdens we place on law enforcement and ensure we do not treat the innocent like criminals. And providing support for people with disabilities in the workforce will allow all Missourians to live with the dignity they deserve.

Every Missourian must feel free to pursue their ambitions. No disability should stand in their way. As Governor, I look forward to approaching these issue with the seriousness they demand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Koster", with a stylized flourish at the end.

CHRIS KOSTER