



2010 Questionnaire

In order to be *considered* for endorsement, the candidate must complete this questionnaire.

Name: _____

Office Sought: _____

INTRODUCTION

Empower Texans PAC will make endorsements during the 2010 election cycle, in both the primary and general elections. We will not necessarily endorse a candidate in every race.

Our endorsement of a candidate is based on our belief that the candidate will adhere to the best practices and highest principles of limited government conservatism and stewardship of the taxpayers' resources. Our endorsement of any particular candidate does not represent a criticism of any other candidate in the race.

Men and women of goodwill can – and often will – disagree on the solutions to the issues facing Texas; that debate is healthy and necessary in a democracy.

It is our intention to recommend solutions that are practical in the context of protecting taxpayers, well-stewarding the people's resources, limiting the size of government, and meeting public needs with greater efficiency and accountability.

We welcome your comments, questions and thoughts on these and other issues. It is acceptable to leave fields blank or add comments.

This page and the following six must be submitted to be considered for endorsement.

Topics Covered In The Questionnaire:

- Reforming the Budget
- Taxes in Texas
- Government Transparency
- Government Reform
- Transportation

REFORMING THE BUDGET

1. To control government spending at the state and local level, Texas should reform the current constitutional spending limit. Lawmakers should biennially be required to adopt the lower of either the sum of inflation-plus-population-growth or the change in the gross state product.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

- A. Such a spending limit may only be exceeded at the **state level** by a 3/4th super-majority, recorded vote of both bodies, the signature of the governor, and a fiscal impact statement clearly outlining why the increase is necessary

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

- B. Such a spending limit may only be exceeded at the **local level** through a majority vote in an election held on one of the state's uniform election dates.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

2. All state agencies should begin their budgets with a "zero" base rather than additional growth over the previous biennial budget.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

3. Every expenditure category must include a clear taxpayer impact statement that includes the intended outcomes expected to be attained; and when those goals are not met, then the legislature must eliminate those expenditures.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

4. An independent commission should be established to identify expenditures that do not reflect intended outcomes, and measure the public benefits against such expenditures. This commission would also seek to identify and eliminate waste, fraud and abuse in government spending. Both the House and Senate must give each proposal a recorded vote, without amendment, within the first 45 days of the legislative session.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

5. A constitutional amendment should be adopted requiring Rainy Day Fund monies be used only to balance the budget in times of revenue shortfalls. Additionally, once the

Rainy Day Fund is full, surplus revenues beyond the spending limit should be used for tax relief.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

6. While governors in Texas have long had the “line-item” veto as a way to control pork spending, the Legislature has developed a process to circumvent this important “check” on spending. The budget should be presented in a way that ensures future governors can fully exercise the line-item veto.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

7. Please recommend a program, commission or agency you might be willing to cut or eliminate:

8. If health care nationalization passes Congress with a state opt-out provision, would you, in principle, support Texas opting out?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

TAXES IN TEXAS

1. Will you oppose every effort to increase the overall tax burden in Texas?

YES: _____ NO: _____

2. The method by which property taxes are calculated and levied should be reformed, including (a) limitations on the revenue growth generated from any single piece of property year-over-year, and (b) making members of the appraisal review boards answerable to the public through direct election rather than the taxing entities which appoint them.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

3. The “gross margins tax” on Texas business, which has been labeled a business income tax by the Federal Accounting Standards Board, should be eliminated.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

4. End-user consumption taxes have been demonstrated to be the least economically harmful, and most efficient and transparent way to generate government revenue. Tax incidence analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and others has conclusively demonstrated that consumption taxes are also fair. Texas should phase out property taxes in favor of end-user consumption taxes. *Tax swaps, phase-outs or trade-offs are not considered tax increases unless the total tax burden is increased.*

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

5. Would you support a constitutional amendment requiring a three-fourths vote of the Legislature before state tax rates could be raised in Texas?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

6. Would you support a constitutional amendment requiring a majority popular vote before state tax rates could be raised in Texas?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

1. The Texas Legislature has mandated that all state expenditures, contracts and grants be made available to the public in a single online database. This provides taxpayers with the ability to hold their elected officials accountable. In the next legislative session, the law should be expanded to include all counties, cities and schools.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

2. While the current transparency database includes all contracts awarded, it does not provide taxpayers with the ability to compare the contract with other qualified bids. In the next legislative session, the qualified bids that were not selected should be made available for review in the same database.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

3. Some specific state taxes and fees are diverted from their intended purpose. A levy should either used for its intended purpose or abolished.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

4. Unfunded mandates should be prohibited. If a city, county or school district believes the Legislature has imposed upon them an unfunded mandate, they should be able to appeal to the offices of the Attorney General and Comptroller, which in turn would investigate the claim and would have the authority to suspend implementation of the mandate pending further action or clarification by the Legislature.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

GOVERNMENT REFORM

1. Before the Legislature adopts a statute or an agency adopts a rule that regulates economic activity, the Legislative Budget Board in the case of a statute, or the agency or the Comptroller in the case of a rule, shall be required to estimate and publish the projected cost of complying with that regulation that will be incurred by businesses and individuals, including costs to consumers in higher prices for products and services.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

2. Taxing entities in Texas currently spending millions of dollars with hired lobbyists, often working to oppose taxpayer-led efforts at reform and burden relief. State law should directly prohibit all taxing entities from using tax dollars to hire lobbyists.

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

3. Texas currently regulates and licenses more than one-third of our workforce – higher than the national average. Very often, trade associations and others argue for these licenses as a way to limit competition by raising barriers of entry into the profession or trade. For example, the Legislature recently voted to license interior designers at their association’s behest. Would you restrict new licensing only to occupations that have a direct impact on public health and physical safety?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

4. In light of recent abuses at the Texas Youth Commission facilities and Child Protective Services, do you support more stringent oversight and accountability for public employees for the death and harm of those individuals in their care?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

TRANSPORTATION

Texas' transportation funding systems are antiquated, and over-congestion represents a threat to economic competitiveness. At the same time, light rail and similar mass transit programs neither reduce congestion nor have yet to be operated profitably, and must be further subsidized.

1. Do you support increasing the fiscal transparency of local and regional transit agencies receiving state transportation dollars by requiring them to post their expenditures online in real-time, much as every state agency currently does?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

2. Nearly 40 percent of the current gasoline tax is diverted to uses that have nothing to do with road construction and maintenance. Will you support legislation that ends diversions of gas-tax dollars except those specified in the constitution?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

3. Currently transportation dollars do not necessarily have to be used for projects that demonstrably reduce congestion. Will you support efforts to require greater accountability in the use of state tax dollars to ensure maximum congestion relief rather than allocating road projects politically?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

4. Private equity is responsible for the abundance of wealth and prosperity in the United States, and created the most common tools of commerce and transportation. That some might believe private equity financing of roads construction has not been accomplished well in the recent past does not mean the policy is inherently flawed. Do you support exploring ways in which private equity can be leveraged to meet the state's infrastructure needs?

Support: _____ Oppose: _____

Please sign and return the completed questionnaire.

Signature of Candidate

Date

We will not consider for endorsement any candidate who does not complete and sign this questionnaire.

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