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General Legislative Questions:

1. Please list your top three priorities if elected to the State Legislature.

If re-elected to the State Legislature, my first priority will be to serve with honesty, integrity, and compassion. The greatest accomplishment that I could achieve as a legislator would be to have my family, friends, neighbors, the people of District 22, and the entire state of Idaho proud of my service. I will consider my legislative career a failure, regardless of what bills I get passed, if I don't serve with honesty and integrity. My second priority is to serve the people of District 22 and to represent them and their interests. My third priority is why I chose to run for office, to preserve our freedoms. The recent Coronavirus pandemic has shown me just how fragile our liberties and freedoms are.

2. In your view, what are the top three challenges currently facing the Meridian community?

The greatest challenge currently facing Meridian is the current Coronavirus pandemic. Some people are afraid that they or their loved ones will get sick. Others are afraid that their economic livelihood will be destroyed, and others are afraid that we have given up and lost our unalienable and inherent rights. And, frankly, all are justified in their fears. Second, the massive growth in the Treasure Valley and, in particular, Meridian, was one of the top challenges we've faced over the last couple of years and most likely will continue to be a problem once the Coronavirus problem subsides. Third, another major challenge for Meridian has been related to our infrastructure and transportation-related needs.

3. What would you do to address those issues?

Although many of the policy questions related to Coronavirus will be resolved before the Legislature reconvenes next January, I believe that some changes to Idaho code need to be made. During the entire crisis, the Legislative branch of Idaho's government has not been involved in the decision-making process. Nationally, Congress and the President worked together to make resources available to the states. I believe that the Idaho Legislature should be part of the process if and when another pandemic or state emergency occurs.

The growth we have experienced in Idaho is, in part, related to the policies that the Legislature has enacted over the years. It is important for the Legislature to maintain a business-friendly environment with low and consistent tax policy and minimal regulations. Most of the roads in Meridian are controlled and maintained by ACHD and, as a result, the bulk of the responsibility falls on their shoulders. Notwithstanding, the Legislature needs to make additional funds available to local highway districts. Last year, I sponsored 3 bills that would have made additional funds available to highway districts including ACHD. I will continue to fight for transportation funds that will be available to ACHD.

4. Please describe your philosophy on education and how you interpret the state's role as outlined in the Idaho State Constitution "to establish and maintain a general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools"?

Establishing and maintaining a "general, uniform and thorough system of public, free common schools" is literally one of the only requirements of the Legislature as specified in Idaho's constitution. My philosophy on education is probably similar to the individuals who drafted Idaho's constitution. Our constitution says that "The stability of a republican form of government depend(s) mainly on the intelligence of the people...". Unless we can learn from the past, we are doomed to repeat it. This is why the Legislature appropriates more than 62% of all of its funds to education. I also believe that it is incumbent upon the Legislature to make sure that funds are fairly distributed. Historically, students in Meridian (West Ada School District) receive less money per student than many other school districts across the state. I believe that we need to revise our funding formula and, instead of a school unit (or classroom) system, we need to change to a funding formula that is based on students.

5. Please rank in order from 1-8 the priority you would place on the following legislative issues:

- 5 Economic Development
- 2 Education
- 6 Healthcare Policy
- 7 Local Government
- 8 State Operations
- 3 Tax Policy
- 4 Transportation
- 1 Other - Rebuilding our economy after our response to the Coronavirus

6. What separates you from other candidates running for the State Legislature?

I believe my background and experiences have prepared me for the Legislature. As an adult, I have worked in construction, the high-tech corporate world, and I am currently a small business owner. My work experiences have provided me with knowledge about many aspects of our economy. As a parent of 4 married kids who all excelled in school and all went on to college and now, as an adoptive parent of 4 additional special needs kids, I have gained a perspective regarding educational needs and the foster program that few individuals can match. My community involvement as a coach of more than 30 different sports teams including 8 years as a high school coach has exposed me to a variety of experience that helps me be a better legislator. I was also fortunate enough to be elected to attend The State Legislative Leaders Foundation's Emerging Legislative Leaders program (only 50 individuals across the country are invited to attend). Last year, I was selected to attend the Henry Toll fellowship program through The Council on State Governments. Only 48 individuals from all three branches of government are selected to attend each year. These experiences have helped me to be elected to a leadership position in the Legislature every year I have served. I am currently serving as the third-ranking member of the House of Representatives as the Assistant Majority Leader.

Specific Legislative Issue Questions:

7. What are your thoughts to bring a solution to the high rise in property taxes?

Property taxes are not created, collected or distributed by the state. All property taxes come from locally-elected officials and from locally-approved bonds and levies. I find it interesting that the Legislature has to step in to help alleviate exploding property taxes. The overall tax rate is primarily determined by city and county budgets. If their budgets increase, the amount of property taxes must increase to cover the expanding budgets. As long as cities and counties can increase their budgets by double digits, then the amount of taxes collected from property taxes will also increase by double digits. Short term, cities and counties need to rein in their budgets to slow the massive increases property owners are experiencing. Long term, I would like to completely eliminate or at least reduce the funds that can be collected from property taxes. I would like to see a shift to more consumption and income taxes as opposed to more property taxes. Property taxes are the most egregious form of tax in my opinion because property taxes ultimately prohibit individuals from owning property.

8. How do you propose to manage the growth that our state is experiencing?

I don't like the idea that government should "manage" growth. I believe that government's job is to provide fair and consistent rules and regulations and taxes and to allow the free market to work. Every time the free market is allowed to work without government interference, it produces a far superior result. Look at the most heavily-regulated industries and you will see problems. I am not advocating for anarchy, but I don't want to see the government try to manage aspects of our society that the free market will address on its own.

9. With that growth comes challenges for our transportation infrastructure to keep pace, how do propose we approach the transportation issues?

Most of the roads in Meridian are controlled and maintained by ACHD and, as a result, the bulk of the responsibility falls on their shoulders. Notwithstanding, the Legislature needs to make additional funds available to the local highway district. Last year I sponsored 3 bills that would have made additional funds available to highway districts including ACHD. I will continue to fight for transportation funds that will be available to ACHD.

10. Do you support the Tax Reimbursement Incentive as a tool to stimulate economic development?

Yes. In 2014, I co-sponsored HB546 to create the Tax Reimbursement Incentive. Normally I would advocate for low tax rates for all business and simplified and less burdensome regulations to attract and retain business in Idaho. And if we operated in a vacuum, that would be the best policy in my mind. Unfortunately, Idaho has to compete with 49 other states and most of them offer some kind of tax reimbursement or tax breaks if they choose their state. As a result, Idaho needs the tools to be able to compete with other states.

11. Do you support Local Option Tax authority for cities and counties?

Yes

If yes, for what purposes would you support it and what, if any, specific requirements do you feel should be in place? If no, why not?

I support local government's ability to explore various funding options for specific projects such as infrastructure. Any new taxes would have to be voter-approved by a super majority and only for a limited project and duration. It is critical that sufficient sideboards are in place to ensure that larger communities can't override the will of the people and the needs of the smaller communities. For example, I would not support the idea that a new taxing district that covers multiple communities such as Boise and Meridian wherein the larger population of Boise could force a new tax on Meridian. I am also concerned with the economic impact on businesses if a single community elected to increase their taxes because it would give businesses in the surrounding area an advantage. The devil is always in the details and local funding options would require an extremely heightened scrutiny.

12. Do you believe the Idaho's tax structure is competitive with other states?

Yes

If no, what specific changes do you support to making it more competitive?

Just because we are competitive doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to make it better. Idaho's income tax rate is one of the highest west of the Mississippi. I also believe that Idaho's property taxes need to be re-visited. Over the last couple of years, property taxes, specifically in the Treasure Valley, have become unreasonable.

13. Do you support the building of needed K-12 schools by bonds or other mechanisms related to growth?

Other

I would like to see the state take on the responsibility of building and maintaining school buildings. Currently, we have some kids who attend school in dilapidated and unsafe buildings, while other students in Idaho are in state-of-the-art facilities. Idaho's Constitution requires a uniform education and I'm sure that a lot of students would agree that they are not being treated fairly in terms of access to resources. If the State is responsible for building and maintaining school buildings, it should also take some pressure off of homeowners' property taxes.

14. How do you feel about the State of Idaho's response to the pandemic and the closure of non-essential businesses?

I support the idea of educating the public in regard to the risks and precautions associated with COVID-19. Individuals who are most at risk can and should take any and all precautions to protect themselves. But I have not, nor do I now, support the idea of mandatory restrictions on the good people of Idaho, as I believe they can be trusted to do the right thing by protecting themselves and protecting each other.

15. What do you see as the greatest challenge the coronavirus pandemic has created for Meridian?

The destruction of Meridian's and Idaho's economy will be felt for years to come. The economic devastation has hurt families, individuals, and businesses. In addition to the immediate effect that this crisis has had on businesses, we will also need to deal with the lasting effect that the crisis is having on consumers. Many of us are worried about our jobs, our savings accounts, the stock market, our retirement fund, and our future. Although we are living under a cloud of uncertainty, we must do everything we can to re-instill consumer confidence. Idahoans need to feel a greater sense of economic certainty so they are willing to spend and contribute to the local economy. Some will also struggle with fear and they need to feel that it is safe to go back out in public and patronize businesses.

16. How can the legislature help Meridian businesses recover from the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic?

Although the decisions that have been made in response to COVID-19 thus far have not involved the Legislature, we are all committed to helping businesses recover in any way we can. I am available as a resource to help any business in Meridian with their reopening plans or with navigating the programs that are available in the recovery process. Next session, we'll formulate and discuss a number of policy ideas to continue to aid businesses in their recovery, although we will almost certainly have to balance these ideas with addressing a revenue shortfall that will require significant budget cuts.