



Ohio Governor and State Legislator Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate:

The Cleveland Heights Democrats will hold its endorsement meeting at 7 PM on April 7, 2022 via Zoom. We invite you to participate in our endorsement process.

Prerequisites for participation:

- (1) The candidate must be a registered Democrat.
- (2) Per our Bylaws, the candidate must confirm agreement with the “purpose statement/conditions to endorsement” set out below.
- (3) **Deadline: The candidate must submit a completed copy of this questionnaire not later than 5 PM on Saturday, March 26 by email to president@clevelandheightsdems@gmail.com.** Receipt of your questionnaire will be acknowledged; if you do not receive an acknowledgment promptly, please text Linda Striefsky at 216-533-6941.

We request that you insert responses in this Word Document. (The document will allow you to expand the space if needed.) In addition to your contact information, you also may provide a telephone number or email for a staff member, but we will need your email address for purposes of sending you a link to participate in the endorsement meeting. Candidates’ answers to the questionnaire will be shared with our members prior to the meeting.

You are encouraged to attend the virtual endorsement meeting via Zoom, but attendance is *not* mandatory for endorsement. If you choose to attend, you will be given an opportunity to speak to the Club for 2 minutes prior to the endorsement vote. Each candidate also will be given 5 minutes to respond to questions from the Zoom audience.

With respect to the endorsement meeting, only Club members in good standing and on the official membership roster for thirty or more consecutive days prior to April 7 may vote on the endorsements. An endorsement requires the vote of 60% of those members in good standing present and voting.

Name: Kent Smith

Candidate for: ___ Governor ___ Ohio House **XX** Ohio Senate

Candidate Mobile Tel: 216-509-7600

Candidate Email: StateRepKentSmith@Gmail.com

Campaign Website: www.kentsmith.org

Optional - Mobile Tel and Email for staff:

Purpose statement/conditions to endorsement: By completing and returning this Candidate Questionnaire, I affirm the following:

- A. I am a registered Democrat. **XX** Yes ___ No
- B. I agree to comply with the purpose of the Club as stated in Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution, that is:

The purpose of this organization shall be to provide a means by which residents of Cleveland Heights can organize to promote and develop the highest principles of the Democratic Party, to improve the administration of government, and to work for the good of all citizens. This organization shall endorse and support for public office all candidates whose election will, in the judgment of the membership, best advance the Purpose. In pursuing its Purpose, this organization may also cooperate with the National, State, and County Democratic Committees, and pursue other programs of benefit to the community.

XX Yes ___ No

- C. I agree not to openly oppose any Democratic nominee in a general partisan election. **XX** Yes ___ No
- D. I agree not to openly support any opponent of a Democratic nominee in a general partisan election. **XX** Yes ___ No
- E. I have not violated the above A through and including D during the past five (5) years. **XX** Yes ___ No

If you cannot affirm as to items B, C and D above, please explain your reasoning here:

Per the Club Bylaws, the Screening Committee may require candidates to sign an agreement to comply with those conditions during the candidate's term in the office for which the endorsement is given.

Please answer each of the following questions. Please note that certain questions below are posed only to candidates for Governor and others are posed only to candidates for the Ohio legislature. Most of the questions are posed to both categories of candidates. Some require only a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. For others, you may take a few sentences to express your response. Out of respect for your time, we are not asking for lengthy answers.

1. **[For Candidates for Ohio Legislature]** Briefly describe the major reasons why you would be of value as a member of the Ohio Legislature representing the Senate or House District that includes Cleveland Heights.

I believe I have the work ethic and policy knowledge to be immediately effective as a Cuyahoga County State Senator. Now is not the time for lazy or uninformed legislators. We are outnumbered in the Ohio House and it's worse in the Ohio Senate. We can't waste any seats, the stakes are too high.

This State Senate District needs to send someone to Columbus who will not just vote the right way, but who will fight for those who they are supposed to represent. As an example, let me share the following. We are currently in the 134th Ohio General Assembly, during my last term (in the 133rd General Assembly), there were 421 votes cast on the Ohio House Floor. I was present for and cast my vote on behalf of the 8th House District for every single vote. I also never missed a vote during my entire first term and I haven't missed a vote during this term.

2. **[For Candidates for Ohio Legislature]** Please list what you regard as the three most urgent problems of the Senate or House District that includes Cleveland Heights. What legislative efforts will you make to address those problems?

Democrats in the Ohio State Senate will be playing more defense than offense. In other words, we are often trying to protect Democratic priorities and stopping really bad GOP policies. To that end, I would suggest that the three most pressing priorities for Cleveland Heights residents and the East side of Cuyahoga County would be: 1. Health Care, 2. Public Education and 3. Gun Violence

1. Protecting the ObamaCare Medicaid expansion is a central priority every single budget cycle. Pre-pandemic approximately 526,000 Ohioans were using the Medicaid expansion. That represents a 46% reduction in the uninsured rate when compared to 2010. There is a faction of the GOP that always wants to end ObamaCare in Ohio and we can't let that happen.
2. We also need to keep the recently passed Fair School Funding Plan in place to adequately fund public education in Ohio. Like the Medicaid expansion, this will be a fight every budget cycle. We will learn over time if this is, in fact, an effective "Fix" to the school funding formula, but it represents the best solution since the DeRolph decisions of the 1990s and Democrats need to fight to keep it.
3. Gun Violence. The strength of the gun lobby in Columbus is breathtaking, widespread and ridiculous. That being said, if we could enact meaningful background check legislation, we might be able to keep firearms out of the hands of the most dangerous members of society. Even if we cannot win this fight, it is still worth having because the only way we are going to pass substantial gun safety legislation is to keep the GOP answering questions as to why they refuse to enact such popular, sensible legislation.

3. **[For Candidates for Governor] Jobs and the Ohio Economy** – Voters in Cleveland Heights are concerned about both the local and the state economy and availability of good jobs, jobs that can support a family.
- A. What are your top 3 policies designed to attract businesses and provide opportunities for good jobs in Ohio?
 - B. We know that while big splash business decisions like Intel locating a new facility in Ohio get a lot of press, our small businesses are a critical part of the Ohio economy. Small businesses not only provide jobs, but also tend to spend their money in the local economy. At the same time, we know that the pandemic has been very tough on small business, especially those in more disadvantaged areas. Please describe your top 3 policies to support Ohio’s small businesses.
 - C. Urban city centers have also been hit hard by the pandemic. As many businesses switched to remote work, many restaurants and other service businesses have closed and suffered serious economic losses, with job losses. This all translates into less tax revenue for cities. What policies would you pursue to help the urban centers to recover?
 - D. Ohio tax law now allows people working remotely to avoid paying taxes to the city in which their employer is located. This threatens a significant loss of revenue to Ohio cities, not only large cities like Cleveland, but also cities in the suburbs. What is your position on this policy change?

4. **Right to Make HealthCare Decisions** - Do you believe everyone has the right to access abortion care legally in their community without stigma, shame, delay or medically unnecessary barriers, and without regard to ability to pay?
XX Yes ___No
 In fact, I have been the lead Democratic sponsor of legislation to end the 24-hour waiting period to receive an abortion.

If you previously held a different position on this question, what caused you to change your mind?

5. **Voting Rights** –

A. If elected, will you strongly oppose Republican efforts to discourage voting, and work to remove existing obstacles to election participation?
XX Yes ___No

- B. What measures for facilitating voter participation in elections do you support – same day registration and voting, expansion of early voting polling locations and hours, providing voters with absentee ballot applications, voting by mail, or something else?

I support reducing the voter registration deadline from 30-days prior to an election to 10-days. I am strongly opposed to the voter purges currently being enacted by the GOP Secretary of State for nonparticipation in elections. I also support increased ballot drop boxes, vote by mail and making Election Day a holiday.

- C. In order to encourage voting, would you implement an ongoing program to provide voter registration forms and related information at all state offices open to the public?

XX Yes ___ No

- D. In 2015 and 2018, a significant majority of Ohio voter approved amendments to Ohio's Constitution to reform redistricting practices. The goals included banning partisan gerrymandering and requiring public input and transparency. These requirements have been ignored by Republican members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. Do you support further reforms to Ohio's legislative redistricting process?

XX Yes ___ No

If yes, what specific reforms?

It seems like we need a new method where future Ohio maps are drawn by an independent commission. Without Maureen O'Connor and three Democrats the redistricting reforms approved by voters in 2015 and 2018 would have been completely meaningless.

- E. **[For Candidates for Governor]** As Governor of Ohio, and a member of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, would you refuse to approve a legislative district or Congressional map that was arrived upon by any process that did not satisfy the requirements of the Ohio Constitution?

___ Yes ___ No

6. Racial Justice –

- A. People of color across this country are the targets of escalating levels of racially motivated threats and violence. What would you do to address this?

Racial inequity can often drive violence. That means that any strategy to advance safety must advance equity as well.

Among policies Ohio could adopt are: Higher maximum penalties for racially motivated crimes; the establishment of new advisory bodies on matters relevant to combating racism and intolerance; the launching and implementation public awareness campaigns intended to prevent racial discrimination and increase tolerance.

We need to ensure that people of color enjoy the fundamental right to equality, both in written legislation and in society at large. Police, prosecutors and judges need to be more aware of what constitutes racial discrimination and racially

motivated crimes. Changing the composition of police forces to better reflect the multi-ethnic communities they serve is a goal worth pursuing. Other public policy considerations that relate to curbing racial violence could include monitoring hate speech and promoting equality through education.

- B. Will you fight to ensure that school curricula include the accurate and honest teaching of the history of Black Americans and other American people of color and that works by Black authors and other authors of color be made readily available to students?

XX Yes ___No

- C. If elected, will you advocate for reparations for descendants of Black people who were enslaved in the U.S.?

XX Yes ___No

Please elaborate if you wish.

I see this as more of a federal issue than a state issue – and that’s a good thing. Frankly, if it was a state issue, reparations wouldn’t have a chance. The Statehouse Democrats tried to ban the confederate flag from county fairs during my last term and the GOP defeated it. If the legislature of a Union state is not willing to ban the confederate battle flag, then reparations don’t have a prayer.

7. Equality – Do you oppose all discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity?

XX Yes ___No

In 2007, as the Euclid School Board President, I was able to include sexual orientation in our non-discrimination language to protect our LGBTQA students and staff.

8. Education - About one hundred Ohio public school systems have joined a legal complaint against the Ohio EdChoice voucher mechanism that diverts tax based public school financial support to fund private school tuition. Generally, nonminority students use these tuition vouchers. The suit alleges that this program, with recently increased voucher allowances, has contributed to an effective resegregation of some public school systems.

- A. Do you support increased State funding for public schools, and elimination of State funding for all privately operated charter schools and all other private schools – religious or not - and any other measures that divert public money away from public schools and/or contribute to public school resegregation?

XX Yes ___No

- B. Do you oppose efforts to require presentation of religious concepts as alternative theories in the public school science curriculum?
XX Yes ___No

- B. Republicans in Ohio's legislature have jumped on the misguided band wagon that mischaracterizes teaching in our K through 12 public schools regarding our country's history as to people of color and women. These measures seek to undermine policies that support diversity, inclusion and honest education of our students. The proposed bills, such as HB 327, further impose punitive and overreaching measures, including fines and other penalties, aimed at intimidating and harassing public school teachers and public school districts. What is your policy to support our hard-working public school teachers and school districts from these overreaching measures?

Qualified, professional educators should be empowered to teach appropriate, historically accurate subject matter. I would support legislation that prohibits local districts from adopting curriculum that would require district instructional staff to lie to their students.

- D. What other legislative effort would you make to better enable Ohio's public schools to attract and retain qualified teachers?
XX Yes ___No

The first and best thing we can do for Ohio's public schools would be to continue to fund the Fair School Funding Plan. I would reform the state report card system and end state takeovers of public school districts.

9. Labor Rights -

- A. The labor shortage in some service, retail, and transport job sectors is expected by economists to persist through 2022. In your view, what effect has the Ohio minimum wage of \$9.30 per hour contributed to the shortage of applicants for these jobs?

\$9.30 still isn't enough to provide a living wage so it's hard to motivate workers to invest their time for something that will not provide them with a meaningful future. The public understands that if jobs do not pay enough wages, taxpayers have to make up the difference through social programs like Medicaid or CHIP. Raising the minimum wage is good for workers, families, children and taxpayers.

- B. Do you favor raising the Ohio minimum wage from \$9.30 per hour?
XX Yes ___No

If yes, to what value? In a single increment, or incrementally over what period of time?

I would increase Ohio's minimum wage immediately to \$11.00 an hour and increase it a dollar a year till it reaches \$15.00.

- C. Do you support the right of workers to collective bargaining, and their right to form or join labor unions?
XX Yes ___No

10. Public Health -

- A. Do you oppose Ohio Senate bill S215, which proposes to eliminate Ohio's permit requirement for concealed carrying of firearms?

XX Yes ___No

- B. What reforms do you support to reduce the epidemic of gun violence in Ohio?___

The first and best policy to reduce gun violence in Ohio would be mandatory background checks prior to all sales. Federal law requires that no gun can be sold by a licensed gun dealer without a criminal background check. But thousands of guns are sold by unlicensed sellers at gun shows and through Internet vendors with no background checks. This is dangerous and absurd and needs to be corrected.

- C. **[For Candidates for Ohio Legislature]** As an elected legislator, would you oppose legislative efforts that countermand the advice of scientists and directives of knowledgeable public health officials during an ongoing epidemic of infectious disease?

YES. The Ohio General Assembly is terrible at map drawing and providing sound medical advice.

- D. **[For Candidates for Governor]** As Governor of Ohio, would you veto legislation described under Question C immediately above?

- E. The pandemic has exposed the underfunding of Ohio's public health system. Do you support increased funding and other support for Ohio's public health system?

XX Yes ___No

11. Green Energy Transition –

- A. Do you support legislative and regulatory measures that facilitate development of utility scale solar and wind electrical power generation projects across Ohio, including (for State legislature candidates) in your district? **XX** Yes ___No

- B. In 2014, Ohio adopted wind turbine setback requirements that effectively eliminated development of utility scale wind generation projects. Do you support

legislation to restore reasonable setback requirements and other measures to encourage wind electrical generation in Ohio? **XX Yes** ___No

I am the Democratic lead sponsor of House Bill 302 (with Rep. Skindell) which would do just that.

C. Do you support legislative measures to enable owners of homes and commercial buildings to install small - scale photovoltaic arrays, and to sell any excess electrical power from those projects? **XX Yes** ___No

D. **[For Candidates for Governor]** Ohio law provides that the Ohio Public Utilities Commission board of directors may consist of no more than three members of one political party. The present board consists of four Republicans and one Democrat. Decisions of the PUCO during the last 10 years have consistently protected the interests of fossil fuel and nuclear power plant operators at the expense of utility customers. If elected Governor, would you replace PUCO board members as opportunities for that arise with individuals with genuine interest in consumer protection and vision for green energy transition in Ohio? ___ Yes ___No

12. Green Transportation Transition –

A. Do you support meaningfully increased State expenditures for public transportation in urban and in rural areas? **XX Yes** ___No

When I was in House Leadership during my third term, Democrats were able to get public transit dollars doubled during the transportation budget negotiations.

B. Do you favor any legislation or regulatory measures to encourage adoption of electric vehicles in Ohio? **XX Yes** ___No

If yes, what measures - tax incentives, construction of charging infrastructure, modifications to state building codes to require installation of EV charging station outlets, or something else?

I have introduced pro-EV legislation in each of my last three terms. There is much that can be done in this policy space. Rep. Casey Weinstein and I are currently working on legislation to transition the state-owned fleet to become electric by 2030. I have also supported better planning efforts that the DeWine administration has adopted.

C. Do you support legislative effort and public expenditure to facilitate and improve safety of bicycle and pedestrian commuter movement in urban and suburban areas?

YES.

13. Traffic cameras –

A. Do you favor or oppose expanded use of traffic cameras by Ohio municipalities?

Yes No **NEITHER**

D. What limits on their use would you require or accept?

This is a local government decision. The State should not dictate these matters which are decisions that local law enforcement and elected officials should be making for their communities.

14. Campaign Finance - Do you confirm that you have not, and will not, accept financial support from any corporate PAC or the NRA? Yes **No**

From the NRA – No, Never have, never will.

Corporate PACs – Yes. I am a well-known critic of FirstEnergy and have introduced legislation to grow the Clean Energy sector in Ohio. These are principles I believe and will continue to champion if elected to the Ohio Senate. For those reasons, Clean Energy interests have often contributed to my campaign and I have accepted those donations.

15. Democratic Solidarity - If you are not the winner of the Democratic primary election, do you commit to supporting the winner and to urging your supporters to support the winner? **Yes** No