

**Davis Education Association
2010 Utah State House of Representatives
Candidate Questionnaire**

Name: Roger E. Barrus
District: 18
Street Address: 322 East 500 North
City: Centerville
Zip: 84014
Phone: 801-292-2266
Email: rogerbarrus@utah.gov
Website: www.rogerbarrus.com

1. Please tell us about yourself and why you have decided to run for the Utah House of Representatives.

I have served in the House for five terms. Seems like a long time, but time has flown by quickly. I just turned 60 years old. I liked 59 much better. I am retired and able to devote much of my time to public service. I serve in a variety of local, regional and national leadership positions that will enable me to impact our state's ability to access and develop the energy resources needed to improve Utah's economy and fund education. My four children are all grown and married. They all live in Davis County and my grandchildren attend our great Davis District schools (I'm invested in their education). I decided to run for office for one more term because I have the desire, time, knowledge, experience, skill sets and leadership positions to actually get something done to improve funding opportunities for our state and for education. I'll go into more detail as I answer the next question.

2. Do you believe that public schools are adequately funded? If you do not believe they are adequately funded, what changes should be made to provide appropriate financial support for quality public schools?

Public schools are not adequately funded and it won't change by staying on the same path we have been travelling. Our demographics have much to do with student growth. That's not going to change for a long time. It's unlikely that taxes will ever be raised to a level that could significantly impact greater funding. All of our income tax currently goes to education and at least 2/3 of our property tax assessments. Education is always the highest funding priority of the Legislature, accounting for 40% of the State budget. A robust economy does help education funding, demonstrated by the salary adjustments made for our teachers and significant funding

increases to education just a few years ago when Utah's economy was booming. So what can we do to shore up our economy to help fund education? I do have an answer, but I need your help to be successful. Here's how we take a different path. Two-thirds of Utah's land mass is under federal control. That's one of the reasons we struggle funding education. The federal government pays no property tax on that land. Payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) are sometimes made, but not enough to even come close to what we lose in property taxes. In 1976, the federal government changed its policy of allowing federal public lands to be sold. The new policy is called FLPMA or the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. It primarily affected only the Western States because most federal lands in states east of the Rockies had already been sold into private ownership. Since the enactment of FLPMA, the federal approach has been to manage public lands in perpetuity using a "multiple use" management policy. That means public lands can be developed for multiple uses to generate revenue for federal and state governments from energy, mining, recreation, grazing, ranching, etc. However, restrictive federal regulations have been heaped on the states since 1976 that have nearly crippled our ability to benefit from the natural resources within our state borders, including our own School and Institutional Trust Lands (SITLA lands). These lands were set aside at statehood for the benefit of educating our children. Even though the administrators of our SITLA lands have done a phenomenal job growing the SITLA fund over the last decade, it is a fraction of what it could be if it were not encumbered by federal regulations restricting access to and optimum development of those lands.

I have been comparing our SITLA fund to that of Wyoming. As of Oct 2009, 563,273 students were registered in Utah public schools. The October 2009 student enrollment count in Wyoming was 87,494 (about 15.5% of Utah's enrollment). However, Wyoming's fund (nearly \$2 billion) is twice as large as Utah's fund (nearly \$1 billion), primarily funded from energy and mineral royalties. You can connect the dots from there. Energy development on and off Trust Lands in Wyoming is a cash cow for education. Wyoming has no income tax because of the amount of severance tax received from mineral and energy extraction. A great deal of revenue that typically would go to the general fund is allocated to education there.

So what do we have going for us in Utah? There is a trillion dollars of coal off limits now in Utah because, with the stroke of a pen, President Clinton created the Grand Escalante Staircase National Monument. That's a whole other story to tell about abuse of the Antiquities Act in declaring such a large area a national monument. The coal reserves did not need to be in it. Recently, the Obama administration was thinking of naming two more national monuments in Utah, coincidentally near some of our state's energy

resources. Hopefully that has been brought to a halt due to those of us who have been crying "foul". Oil shale development would be another cash cow for Utah. There are more barrels of shale oil in Utah, Wyoming and Colorado than all the crude oil in the Middle East. But these energy opportunities are continually being suppressed by an over-reaching federal government reacting to, what I consider, extreme environmental activism.

I've been focusing my effort on growing our Schools and Institutional Trust Lands fund. I have chaired our Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Committee in the House for six years and I chair or serve on several national and regional organizations that can impact accessibility to our state's energy and mineral resources on public lands. I spend a great deal of my time in the Legislature also promoting renewable energy. There is no one in the Legislature who focuses more on energy development in our state than I do. I intend to spend the remainder of my days in the Legislature working to improve education funding and our state's economy through development of all our State's energy resources and technologies. It is my niche and an area I believe I can impact. I need your help to be a louder voice against environmental extremism and advocates for development of the energy resources on public and SITLA lands. Education, educators and our kids will be the benefactors of your effort. This can and will be done in an environmentally responsible fashion. The resources on this earth are for our sustenance. We can be draw upon them and still be good stewards at the same time.

3. If another voucher or tuition tax credit bill is introduced in the legislature would you support another such effort, or would you oppose it?

A decade ago, the writing was on the wall that our public school system would be on overload due to student growth. The kids were already born. I supported vouchers because it was a way to stretch our public education dollars. Those who oppose vouchers had good reasons. Those who support vouchers had good reasons. One reason to support vouchers, in my opinion, is not that we don't have a good public education system or excellent teachers in Utah. We do!! There just haven't been the resources in our state (as described in the answer to question 2) to keep up with the growing demands on public education by staying on the path we are now travelling. This question about vouchers would not even need to be asked if our revenue stream to fund public education had adequate capacity.

4. What would you do to retain quality educators in Utah?

I think there are two answers to this question. First, the teaching profession is market driven just like any other profession. Utah is somewhat unique in

that those who want to live here are often willing to take lower pay in exchange for a preferred lifestyle or family ties. When I graduated from college 3 1/2 decades ago, I had five job offers in my discipline. Only one was in Utah. It happened to pay significantly less than the other four offers, but it was the one I accepted for the very same reasons I stated above. Is that fair? Perhaps not, but that was the market then for me. Educators know going into their profession that they may face the same decision I had to make based on market factors. That paradigm is a changing, however. In today's market, we have an increasing need for professional teachers to be compensated equivalent to other professions that require similar preparation and higher education. So how do we do that? Again, not by staying on the path we're now travelling. Perhaps it's a long shot, but I still think my vision of using our energy resources to fund public education would take care of many of the questions asked in this questionnaire, including how to attract and retain good teachers.

5. What would you do to attract new teachers in Utah, considering the fact that the legislature this year significantly reduced the retirement benefit for future teachers?

A compensation package needs to be competitive with other professions. Public employees have had one of the richest benefit packages out there, but lower salaries. Private industry has already made the adjustment to their pension programs to sustain retirement benefits. The legislature had to do the same to "save your retirement". But future employees will be impacted. A salary adjustment has to be made in lieu of benefits to keep the education profession competitive. The best way I can see to do that is the same answer I gave above.

6. Did the legislature go far enough in enacting ethical reforms this session? If not, what is left to be done?

A package of ethics reform bills were passed that will help sustain the integrity of the institution of the legislature. I am personally pleased to see this done. Most men and women with whom I serve are very honorable, but politics can corrupt if there are not checks and balances. Those we represent deserve nothing less than for their elected representatives to uphold the public trust. I will say, however, that I am concerned with the citizens' ethics initiative that is circulating. It places a lot of power with a handful of individuals who themselves are not accountable to the citizenry because they are not elected public officials who can be removed from their positions through the vote of the people. I believe you will find that the ethics issues that are of public concern have been addressed thoroughly in the ethics package passed by the legislature. One of the bills even provides that Utah's

Constitution be amended to include an ethics commission responsible to address ethics complaints against legislators.

7. How would you evaluate the Utah State legislature's overall performance and leadership this year?

Given the economic condition of our country and state, I felt this was a remarkable session having achieved a balanced budget that covered the priorities of public and higher education, public safety, and health and human services. There were significant cuts made to all other state agencies and services to achieve the balanced budget. We deferred \$113 million in road projects and took advantage of low construction costs to fund construction of several higher education buildings. The only tax increase passed was an increased tax of one dollar on each pack of cigarettes sold. Survey results from my online survey this year showed that a cigarette tax was the most widely accepted tax increase, if one were imposed this year. I did vote to increase the cigarette tax not to just increase revenue, but primarily as an incentive for smokers to stop smoking and for kids to not get started. It is doubtful that the economy will jump right back next year so we have saved some funding options for a later date, if needed. We still have over \$200 million in the rainy day fund and the option of raising \$100 million in one-time funds by implementing an accelerated quarterly business income tax payment schedule rather than continuing the annual payment system. Businesses already have to pay quarterly payments on federal income tax.

We appreciated the calls, emails and visits from our teachers which do have a significant influence on many of our decisions.