

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

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

I grew up attending Davis County Schools. They prepared me to succeed, first at Northwestern University (BA, Biology 2001) and later as a law student at Case Western Reserve University School of Law (JD, 2006) where I was named a Law-Medicine Scholar and worked for the Cleveland Clinic. Currently, I am employed as an attorney and analyst at Cardinal Intellectual Property, Inc. I owe a much of my success to great teachers.

I'm also involved in charitable and educational organizations to benefit youth and children. I am especially proud of my role in The Governor Cal Rampton Memorial Constitutional Education Foundation, which works with the Davis School District to conduct an annual essay contest for Davis County eighth graders, and in which over 240 students participated this year. I care deeply about the future of our children and youth, and have a great desire to give them the tools they need to succeed.

I'm running for the Utah Legislature in large part because I'm concerned that we're falling behind on our commitment to the rising generation and to their teachers. Utah is dead last in adjusted per pupil spending. Utah teachers are chronically underpaid. As a state, we lack programs to reduce or limit class size and improve working conditions for teachers. Our commitment to the teaching profession, unsurprisingly, ranks us 36th in the nation, with a grade of D+ from Education Week's Quality Counts 2010 report card.<sup>1</sup>

My mother works at South Clearfield Elementary School. My father is a college professor. Many of those I admire and love most are educators. I am passionate about following through on our commitment to them.

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<sup>1</sup> "Utah—State Highlights 2010: A special supplement to Education Week's Quality Counts 2010 Fresh Course, Swift Current: Momentum and Challenges in the New Surge Toward Common Standards"

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?

As indicated above, with per-pupil spending at the lowest level in the nation, I am convinced that our schools are not adequately funded. I am particularly troubled at our legislature's exclusive focus on cutting services to meet funding shortfalls. Notwithstanding the Legislature's approach, surveys show that a majority of Utahns reject service and funding cuts and actually support proposals to generate greater revenues and increase funding.<sup>2</sup>

An frequently discussed area for change to generate increased revenue is in school trust lands (SITLA) management. Based on an analysis of Western trust lands management from the Lincoln Institute<sup>3</sup>, I agree that Utah can increase long-term, sustainable returns on our trust lands, making us more competitive with our neighbors. However, diverting schools funds to pay for a costly, losing battle with the federal government over states rights is not the answer. We should instead work with the federal government and our Congressional delegation (as we have in past) on land swaps to convert Utah trust lands to uses with higher returns. I also believe that targeted service tax increases, similar to those proposed by former Governor Huntsman, as well as targeted sales taxes, based on outdoors recreational activities, can help increase revenues otherwise lost by virtue of the checkerboard of federal-state land ownership. I believe we can find other innovative ways to generate trust lands revenues by working with the recreational and environmental communities and by improving statutory and legislative oversight of SITLA.<sup>4</sup>

I also believe that other revenue sources should be explored, including taxes on coal, oil and natural gas. Unfortunately, moderate, bipartisan proposals to raise revenues are too often dead on arrival in the legislature.

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?

I strongly opposed the voucher movement and would oppose any similar effort to divert public funds to private schools. I am heartened that former voucher supporters seem to have heard the voices of Utahns who soundly rejected voucher proposals. However, I believe it is vitally important to guard against future attempts to re-distribute public funds to private schools. As a representative, I will be far more interested in finding ways to increase revenues to fund our schools than in ways to transfer public dollars to private interests.

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<sup>2</sup> " Poll: 53% of Utahns pick higher taxes instead of budget cuts" Deseret News Jan. 21, 2010. Downloaded from <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705359974/Poll-53-of-Utahns-pick-higher-taxes-instead-of-budget-cuts.html>

<sup>3</sup> "State Trust Lands in the West: Fiduciary Duty in a Changing Landscape" Downloaded from <http://www.lincolninstitute.edu/subcenters/managing-state-trust-lands/publications/trustlands-management.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Everitt, David. "Regulation Redemption: An Argument for the Revision of Utah's Oil, Gas and Mining Regulations" J. Land, Resources, & Envtl. Law 27(2): 387

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

Recent surveys indicate that one of the best ways to retain quality educators is to provide them with supportive leadership, a high quality curriculum and supportive working conditions.<sup>5</sup> I would also work to ensure that Utah teachers receive more competitive salaries and benefits. I am unconvinced that many teacher accountability and pay for performance measures actually work,<sup>6</sup> and would strongly support funding research to identify proven strategies to retain quality educators. Most importantly, I commit to communicating and working closely with the education community to understand and meet their needs.

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?

As indicated above, I believe that providing teachers with supportive leadership, quality curriculum, and enriching workplace conditions will attract quality new teachers. I would also work to raise salaries and restore competitive benefits for Utah teachers, and to find ways to identify, recruit and incentivize top talent in our universities to become educators.

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

Thanks to grassroots efforts, the legislature did enact some ethical reforms this session. Unfortunately, too many legislators aimed their proposals and rhetoric at attacking and fighting off citizen initiatives.

Real ethical reforms should include tight limits on individual and corporate campaign donations, as well as strict limits on how campaign donations may be used. The process to file and review ethics complaints should also be reformed to increase transparency and truly hold offenders accountable.

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

Overall, I would grade the legislature's performance at a C+. While our leaders didn't pull the plug on education funding, they failed to find solutions to the larger, fundamental problems with our revenue structure necessary to get us off life support and on to a path to long-term, sustainable, competitive education funding. Similarly, while there were some overtures to ethical reform, I believe much more needs to be done to restore public confidence in the integrity of our politics. Utahns want leaders who will make tough decisions to increase funding for education. Too many of our current legislators are falling short.

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<sup>5</sup> Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools" Downloaded from:  
[http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/pdfs/scholastic\\_gates\\_0310.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/pdfs/scholastic_gates_0310.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> See "Building a Better Teacher" New York Times Magazine. March 2, 2010. Downloaded from  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/magazine/07Teachers-t.html>