



2020 CANDIDATE SURVEY

CANDIDATE NAME: **GREG FERCH**

OFFICE SOUGHT: **HOUSE 21B**

PARTY: **REPUBLICAN**

Q1. The K-12 Education budget is the state's largest by far, yet some people still believe that we are not spending enough. What would you do to help Idaho's K-12 students receive a stellar education?

Simplifying a complex issue by suggesting that parents have a choice over the disposition over their tax dollars when it comes to their kids' education. For instance, vouchers to drive competition. Pay teachers well but eliminate public education waste and bureaucracy. Attaining some random amount of spending per pupil to move up on a list, in no way necessarily suggests better outcomes. In my 26 years, I have probably seen well over a thousand resumes. I would suggest that we need to focus on core subjects that add to the future employability of the students.

Q2. Graduation rates at Idaho's four-year universities are stagnant while tuition continues to increase (with the exception of the one-year tuition freeze). What would you do to bring down the cost of higher education and help students graduate with less debt?

Continue programs that allow for dual high school and college credits. I think the seemingly endless supply of "free" government money is helping drive tuition faster than inflation. Limit it. No more 6,7,8 years at the taxpayer-subsidized expense for a degree that likely will not have an adequate return on investment. Encourage the trades. No more unnecessary Taj Mahal building projects, especially those that require aggressive eminent domain procedures. For instance, if some students want fancy workout centers they should be allowed to join private gyms like the rest of us.

Q3. Idaho has both an income tax and a sales tax, while five of our six neighbors have only one or the other. Idaho also has high property taxes. What changes do you suggest, if any, to Idaho's state tax structure?

"I am in favor of low, simple and fair taxation. Taxation that does not violate equal

protection concepts. No tax policy that picks winners or offers advantages to some at the expense of others. Obviously, the devil is in the details. That said, a simple sales tax at a level just enough to pay for the bare necessities to run the State Government, ween dependence from the Federal Government and maintain a modest rainy-day fund if, let's say, there is a pandemic and portion of our citizens are suddenly unemployed.

Q4. The grocery sales tax has long been debated in Idaho. Should Idaho repeal the tax on groceries? If yes, when?

I would have voted to repeal this round. However, see #3.

Q5. Urban renewal districts receive all the increases in property tax revenue within their borders, which forces other property owners to fund increased service requirements. Should Idaho end urban renewal? If not, should state lawmakers change urban renewal law?

Yes

Q6. Healthcare is a significant expense in Idaho's state budget, rivaling education in total appropriations. How would you tackle ever-increasing state Medicaid costs? More broadly, what ideas do you propose to help make quality healthcare more affordable for all?

First, you cannot finance your way out of problems you behaved your way into. I think the question should actually be, how do you make healthcare intervention less necessary in the first place. The way to do that is to have a healthier population. The way to have a healthier population is for individuals to make better lifestyle decisions. I think people will make healthier decisions if they have more financial skin in the game. One program is called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We could start by having a program with nutrition in the name pay for things that are actually nutritious and not mini doughnuts and soda.

Q7. Criminal justice reform has become a bipartisan issue in recent years. Should Idaho explore further reforms? If so, which reforms would you support?

I attended the IFF showing of Just Mercy. People were in tears over the injustice. That being said, I am not wholly versed in this subject but I would suggest a few things. Promote family values. Intact families have fewer delinquent children. Promote personal responsibility in homes, schools, churches and civic organizations. Regain the pre-pandemic economy employment levels. I would also suggest that judges have more latitude to consider circumstances before sentencing. Innovative penalties such as restitution and public service should be considered, when appropriate, over-incarceration.

Q8. In 2020, Idaho saw some reduction in occupational licensing mandates. Should

Idaho continue to identify and implement alternatives to licensure burdens? If yes, which licenses should be reviewed or repealed?

After dealing with the BOL, Health and Welfare, and the multiple departments of the city building department, I have long thought that not everything needs to be blessed by some governmental agency. That was made even more clear when I read the IFF publication "Lockdown To Liberty". I kept it in my file and reviewed it for this question. If it is not considered cheating, I would say that I could sign onto the recommendations contained therein.

Q9. Federal dollars always come with strings, yet a significant portion of Idaho's annual state budget is funded with federal money. Should Idaho work to reduce its dependence on federal funding? If yes, how?

Yes. Promote Idaho prosperity in its own right. Be wary of new programs like the state exchange that are sold as appropriate because of supposed Federal support. Another simple answer to a complex situation.

Q10. Education choice allows parents and students to choose the education that best suits their needs. What policies would you support to strengthen education choice in Idaho?

Please see # 1 & 2.

Q11. What is the proper role of state government?

Follow the State Constitution and be minimally involved in the affairs of individuals.