

NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2026



Dean Helmick – LD 2

1. **Local Control** - With so many decisions from the legislature impacting local boards, NASB is interested in your view of local control. Regarding education, what decisions do you feel are best made at the school board level vs. the State level?

I believe that less government is good government and the best government is the one closest to the people. With this I believe in local control of our schools. The Nebraska Constitution (Article VII), Statutes (Chapter 79) and Administrative Codes (Title 92 and 93) lay out the State and Local roles in our education system. I believe the State sets the standards for our schools in a way that ensures consistency and local boards ensure local responsiveness and community involvement. At the local level this includes levying property taxes, approving budgets, and designing curriculum to meet the standards.

2. **School Funding** - Every year the legislature makes decisions about the way schools are funded, making predictability of funding a challenge. What changes and/or adjustments, if any, do you think the Legislature should address?

In the past year, I attended at least two school board meetings in each Cass County school district and met with several superintendents in Cass and Lancaster Counties. When I talked with school board members and superintendents, I heard that schools need consistency. The TEEOSA formula is complicated and difficult to use as a financial forecasting tool. Additionally, each new mandate coming down from the State adds additional / un-forecast costs – either financial or time. While both of these issues should be addressed, we must avoid is trying to control schools from the Unicameral. To help avoid surprises, one District 2 Superintendent suggested setting up a Zoom meeting early in the legislative session, to allow schools to voice concerns on pending legislation. I am willing to consider this idea. The required periodicity of this type of meeting would largely depend on my committee assignments. However, you don't have to wait for a scheduled meeting to talk with me. Reach out to my Administrative Assistant to schedule time and I'll always listen to NASB and School Administrator concerns.

3. **Role of Education in the State** - What role do you think PK-12 Education plays in the future success of the State and your community?

Thomas Jefferson said this well “Above all things I hope education of the common people will be attended to ...” I believe education is the foundation upon which both Nebraska’s and America’s future will be built. We must always make educating our children a top priority.

4. **Educational Workforce** - Educational workforce continues to be a challenge across the State from teachers to bus drivers. What would be your plan to address this challenge?

Recruiting and retaining talented employees are ongoing challenges for every state agency. They are also challenges I faced throughout my career with both the Air Force and Northrop Grumman. Success in recruitment and retention requires a competitive compensation package, strong benefits, and a workplace where employees feel respected and valued. Even when those elements are in place, you’ll still lose some employees. The goal should be to create an environment that attracts high-quality teachers and gives them compelling reasons to stay. The legislature can help with these issues by providing a stable system where education professionals are confident that their pay and benefits are always going to be there. Other state agencies have instituted a variety of recruitment and retention programs; I would be interested to hear NASB’s recommendations.

5. **Mandates** - School districts continue to be challenged by the increasing unfunded mandates put upon them by the State and Federal government. What is your response to mandates and the State’s role in them?

I do not like un-funded or un-resourced mandates passed to any local agency. I’ll pay attention to the effect of mandates, whether the requirement is on someone’s time or a school’s budget.

Final Thoughts

Since entering the Legislature race, I’ve knocked on approximately 8K doors and the #1 thing I’ve heard on the doorstep is that their property taxes are out of control and the legislature is not doing anything about it. Most Nebraskans don’t realize that property taxes are levied and spent locally and for the last 2 years, approximately 20% of the State’s \$5.4B budget has gone to property tax relief. In the Legislature I look forward to working with NASB and other stakeholders to find ways to provide meaningful tax relief while maintaining local control of our schools.

How can voters contact you?

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