

NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2026



Joe Johnson – LD 41

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 local school districts and school boards are best positioned to determine what resources, training, or alternative educational settings are most effective for their communities. The state can play a supportive role, but solutions should respect local control and be implemented with fiscal discipline.

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?

The State of Nebraska is spending approximately \$2.7 billion on education and property tax relief, about \$1 billion school aid, \$500 million in special education aid and roughly \$1.2 billion in property tax credits that are delivered back to taxpayers in the form of state income tax credits. While well-intended, this approach is indirect and has not delivered the level of property tax relief Nebraskans expect. Instead of giving a portion of it back through the income tax system, we should realign these dollars to directly fund education on a per-student basis. By shifting a greater share of education funding to the state, we can reduce the reliance on local property taxes and deliver meaningful, structural relief, to potentially reduce property taxes by up to 30 percent. This would also help rebalance local levies so that schools are no longer the highest property tax burden within our communities. A key component of this approach is establishing a stable, dedicated state funding source for education. One option is allocating a portion of state sales tax collections specifically for K–12 education. This would create a more predictable and transparent funding stream while ensuring that education is supported broadly across the economy, not primarily by property owners.

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?

Education is an essential public service as provided for in the Nebraska Constitution. It is a foundational function of government that prepares the next generation of leaders, develops a skilled workforce, fosters an informed citizenry, supports long-term

economic growth, and contributes to the strength and prosperity of Nebraska's communities.

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?

Attracting and retaining high-quality teachers is critical to the success of Nebraska's communities. While compensation is an important part of the conversation, recruitment and retention challenges are not driven by salary alone. Working conditions, community engagement, leadership, and opportunities for advancement also play significant roles in keeping talented educators and support staff in schools. I believe the best solutions come from empowering local school districts and school boards to recruit and retain teachers and staff in ways that reflect the needs of their communities.

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?

Nebraska operates under Dillon's Rule, whereby local governments, including school districts, derive their authority from the state. Consequently, the state is responsible for establishing the policy, funding framework, and oversight necessary to ensure all students have access to equitable educational opportunities and are prepared for future careers. Fulfilling this responsibility is fundamental to the state's role in providing essential public services.

Final Thoughts

As a father of three boys currently being educated in Nebraska, I am committed to advancing policies that support students, empower parents, and ensure every child in Nebraska has access to a high-quality education.

How can voters contact you?

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