

NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2026



Shay Smith – LD 32

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?

My district has a number of different school districts that play very different roles in their communities. I know that the way Nebraska can “right-size” education and personalize it to the communities we serve is by empowering local school boards to make decisions on personnel, policies, budgets, and salaries. The State’s role should be more hands-off - providing meaningful financial support and guidance (and advocating at the federal level to provide more resources for local school districts) - but not dictating every portion of the school’s operations and budget.

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?

I think the entire state, from school districts to massive, billion-dollar departments, struggles with the unpredictability of the state budget process. The Legislature needs to think 5, 10, and 15 years down the road rather than take budgetary discussions from a biennium to biennium approach. I want to hear more from your organization and its members on how we can provide school districts with consistent, reliable projections and guidance as a state.

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?

I think PK-12 education plays a big role in the success of our state and District 32. We cannot establish the futures of our children and our state/nation without providing meaningful support towards that future, and PK-12 education is the place to start. I don’t want schools to turn down opportunities to invest; I want schools to be able to thrive and provide a nation-leading public education.

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?

Rural Nebraska is no stranger to workforce challenges. In my roles across my community, I've worked to develop and expand economic development programs that have brought new jobs and investments into our communities. I know that every dollar that we spend on recruitment and retention efforts brings a substantial return on our state's future, so I'm supportive of measures that provide meaningful and measurable improvements in recruitment and retention.

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 am not in support of additional unfunded mandates. While the State sets the responsibilities of school districts, I think that the Legislature should play a bigger role in funding these mandates. We cannot expect schools to do more with less.

Final Thoughts

Education is the silver bullet of our state and nation's future. I cannot emphasize enough the role that robust education played in my professional and personal success, and I recognize our State's duty in ensuring that the next generation, and the ones that will come after it, have access to the same level of robust, high-quality education that brought me where I am today. I look forward to hearing from your organization and its members.

How can voters contact you?

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