



CANDIDATE FOR LT. GOVERNOR SURVEY

- 1. Counsel:** When making decisions regarding services, programs and laws that could impact people with disabilities, who do you turn to for advice and counsel?

Presently, none of the members of my staff have a disability that I am aware of. But I will be both filling key positions in my administration, and assembling informal advisors, if I am honored to serve as Lt Governor. My commitment will be to ensure there are Texans with disabilities around me, on both my professional staff and among my informal advisors. And we will meet from time to time, build trust, and that way I will have the insight I need to provide the kind of leadership Texans with disabilities expect and deserve.

- 2. Legacy:** What legacy and/or contribution do you hope the disability community remembers you for?

I'd like to be known by the disability community as a tireless champion for their cause. The state of Texas can do so much more in terms of access and equality, and as Lt. Governor, I will fight every day to make our state the best in America for everyone.

- 3. Emergency Preparedness:** What can the state do to improve emergency management and preparedness for people with disabilities?

First responders need the equipment and training to be able to quickly identify and deal with emergency situations regarding disabled Texans. We also need a system of communicating quickly and accurately the specifics of Texans with disabilities in case of emergency. I can assure my friends with disabilities that I will work with them to make sure their voices are heard, their ideas followed-up on, and their concerns addressed.

- 4. Transportation:** What steps should the State of Texas take to increase access to public transportation for Texans with disabilities who live in rural areas? What about for urban areas?

I believe it's appropriate to use state resources to support local authorities as they provide transportation options for the disabled in both rural and urban settings. I also believe the state should work with rideshare companies that find new and innovative ways to address the transportation challenge. It's in everyone's best interest to help disabled Texans live and work with as much independence as possible.



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5. Community

Integration: In the

Olmstead v. L.C. decision, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that requires states to eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. What more, if anything, can the State of Texas do to implement this requirement?

I share the disabled community's aspiration of living as independently as possible, and relying less on institutional arrangements. Many disabled Texans have much higher quality of life and are better able to work and contribute to society when they are active members of the community. It takes money, infrastructure, and public awareness. I am committed to all three. I believe Texans are very generous people and will rally behind me on this.

6. Families & Caregivers: What, if anything, do you think the State of Texas should do to assist families and caregivers of Texans with disabilities?

We need to hold providers to the very highest standard of care, period. We also need to expand our cadre of skilled caregivers, and we need to improve their pay and training. Community colleges can be a big part of this. Fact is, wait times for services are way too long. It will take financial support from the state, and I am committed to working hard on this. Texas can do so much better.

7. Housing: What action, if any, would you take to increase access to affordable, accessible, integrated housing for Texans with disabilities? Do you support increased funding for the Housing Trust Fund?

I support increased state funding to support affordable, quality, integrated housing. I support increased funding for the Housing Trust Fund. The state must plan a role in helping disabled Texans live comfortably, happily, independently. Texans are generous people and will support me on this.

8. Voting: What steps would you take to ensure that Texans with disabilities have the same access to voting (registering and casting a ballot) as Texans without disabilities?

The right to vote is the most precious right we have as Americans. I will spare no expense to make sure disabled Texans can participate fully in our cherished democracy. For example, I would support reforming vote-by-mail eligibility to increase ballot access. I would also support improvements to infrastructure, training and staffing at polling locations.



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9. Special Education:

Texas implemented a limit on the number of children receiving special education services, which lead to tens of thousands of children with disabilities not receiving the services for which they were eligible. Do you support or oppose increased funding to ensure that Texas public schools and teachers have the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities?

My reaction to the Houston Chronicle's investigative report that TEA was limiting enrollment special education was fury. Suzanne and I have very close friends whose daughter needs special assistance, and we saw what they went through. Now we know, and I am committed to reform! I support increased funding and training to make sure all Texas children can achieve their full potential.

10. Employment First: As an Employment First state, it is the policy of the state that earning a living wage through competitive employment in the general workforce is the priority and preferred outcome for working-age individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. What steps can the State take to strengthen the goals of Employment First?

Public awareness is a big part of the solution. When we support disabled Texans by enabling them to make a living, not only do they live more fulfilling lives, but society benefits from their talent, innovation, energy. To put it in pure accounting terms, we get a wonderful return on our investment when help people help themselves! The return is not purely financial. It's also the wonderful feeling of knowing we are making our communities stronger.

11. Engagement: A key slogan of the disability community is "nothing about us without us." What do you think the disability community can do to more effectively engage decision makers and participate in the policy decisions that affect their lives?

The disabled community has made a very big impression on me. You are aggressive, and got my attention, but in a very positive way. I know so much more now than I did a few months ago, and I am much more determined to be your number one advocate.

12. Access to Services: There are approximately 130,000 unduplicated Texans with disabilities waiting for services in their communities. These people are on waiting lists, which are also referred to as interest lists. Some people will wait as long as a decade or more to receive



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services. What steps would you take to reduce, at a reasonable pace, the number of people on the waiting lists for home and community services?

Much like with schools, there is not enough funding for disability services. There also isn't enough personnel. We need to fund these services and invest in our capability to serve those in need. Texans simply don't know. If they did, they would rally. We are far more generous than one might think looking just at the policies (and the consequences) of today's top leaders.

13. SSLCs: Approximately 3,100 Texans with disabilities reside in the state's 13 State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs). While SSLC residents account for only 0.2% of Texas' disability population, nearly 40% of the money used to fund services for people with disabilities goes to SSLCs. Would you support or oppose creating a plan to consolidate or close SSLCs and to use those funds to expand community integration for Texans with disabilities?

The most important goal is to help Texans with disabilities live fulfilling lives, and live where they are happiest. Some may prefer SSLC's and others living independently in the community and we should work hard to do what's right for them and their families. If we have excess space in SSLC's because we improve our ability to help people live within the community, then we need to find ways to use the extra space wisely. While we should optimize financially, I don't believe financial goals are primary. Texas is a very prosperous state, and we are very generous people. Let's do right by our fellow Texans first.

14. Institutions: While many people wait years to receive services in their community, there is no wait to enter an institution. This is sometimes referred to as institutional bias. Would you support creating a plan to eliminate the institutional bias in the provision of Long Term Services and Support (LTSS)? If so, how would you do so?

I do support eliminating institutional bias. And I am realistic. It will take money. But I believe Texans have the political will to do right by our fellow Texans. Our top leaders today do not reflect our generosity as Texans. I often boil down to compassion! It's simple, but unbelievably powerful. When we look at public policy through the lens of compassion, we see the great reward that will come from helping members of the community. The money is there! We just need new leaders.

15. Community Attendants: The Texas Workforce Commission predicts a critical shortage of community attendants to provide services to Texans with disabilities who are living in their homes. What steps would you take to alleviate this shortage? Many people believe that the



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current base wage of \$8 per hour is a major

reason for both the growing shortage of community attendants and the high turnover rate for these workers. What, if anything, would you do to help raise wages and benefits?

Higher pay, retirement security, and better training. Simple as that. It will take money. Good thing Texas is a prosperous, generous state! See above.

16. Medicaid: Do you support or oppose turning Medicaid into a system of block grants? If you support it, how would you implement such a program? If you oppose it, are there improvements you would support?

I do not support block grants until Democrats are firmly in charge! I simply don't trust Republicans to be compassionate; greed has overwhelmed them. That said, the state has a say in how Medicaid is designed and implemented. Not only to I advocate expanding Medicaid, it's time we took a comprehensive look at Medicaid and reformed it where needed to make sure it is serving our needs.

17. Pre-Existing Conditions: If elected, would you support or oppose legislation prohibiting insurance companies conducting business in Texas from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions?

I will fight for the withdrawal of Texas' lawsuit to end pre-existing coverage protection. I will then fight for state law that provides absolute assurance that Texans with pre-existing conditions are fully protected.

18. Technology & Equipment: What steps should the State take to ensure that Texans with disabilities have access to, and are informed of, new innovations in assistive technology and durable medical equipment?

We need to increase our use of technology and equipment to improve results. As Lt. Governor, I would propose and enact a patient bill of rights that would guarantee both financial protection and increased availability of all state-of-the-art technology.



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19.ADA: If elected, would you support or oppose legislation that would waive sovereign immunity in cases involving violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act?

Those who are harmed due to violation of ADA should have access to the courts and a path to compensation for their injury and loss.

20.Cannabis: Would you support or oppose expanding the legal use of medical cannabis in Texas to cover more medical conditions?

I support medical cannabis.

