



# WINONA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2022 CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

## Legislature

### Jeremy Miller - Senate District 26

**1. Top priority:** If elected, what is your top priority for the 2023 Legislature?

As I visit with folks around the district, people have made it very clear. Record inflation is crushing family budgets and it's time to put more money back in the pockets of hardworking Minnesota and senior citizens by cutting taxes and eliminating the tax on Social Security benefits.

At a time when too many kids are falling behind in the classroom, we need to ensure every student has the opportunity to be successful by getting back basics of reading, math, science, and American history. We also need to give parents more opportunities to be partners their child's education.

And at a time when crime rates are at record highs, it's time to provide funding for more police officers and it's time to get tough on crime by holding criminals accountable.

At a time when things were moving in the wrong direction, I led efforts in the Minnesota Senate to pass the largest tax cut in our state's history. We passed legislation to provide students with more opportunities to be successful in the classroom, and we passed legislation to support police officers and get tough on crime. While these priorities passed the Senate with bipartisan support, they were rejected by the governor and House leadership. I will continue to pursue them along with other issues facing the great state of Minnesota.

**2. Why are you running for office?**

We are blessed with a quality of life in Minnesota that few states can rival. I ran for office to help make a difference and ensure future generations have the same opportunities for success as I enjoyed—and we do that by listening and working together. I'm running for office so we can continue working together to help make southeastern Minnesota an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

**3. Budget:** The Legislature will be tasked with adopting a two-year budget in 2023 with a surplus. The surplus may grow, but that is uncertain. There has been discussion to use this surplus to increase budget, but is this

**sustainable? What will be your approach to balancing the budget in terms of reducing spending and/or raising taxes and fees? Be as specific as possible.**

Minnesota has a budget surplus of over \$9 billion. This is after the legislature passed a bipartisan, 2-year budget to fund state government. This means the state is over collecting from taxpayers. In addition to the Senate's bipartisan tax relief package that would have eliminated Social Security taxes and put more money into the pockets of working Minnesotans, the Senate passed additional investments to meet critical needs across the state. This included more funding for nursing homes, personal care attendants, and disability service providers. We also passed more funding for police officers, and literacy funding to help kids learn to read. While these ideas were rejected by the governor and House leadership, the reality is, even with a 2-year budget, and additional investments to meet critical needs across the state, there are plenty of opportunities to give money back to taxpayers to help folks afford life, especially during a time of record inflation.

- 4. Gridlock: What specific measures do you support to reduce the increasing partisanship of the lawmaking process and resulting gridlock? Do you support reforms that would prohibit consolidating multiple subjects into a single omnibus bill?**

My philosophy is simple: put the partisanship aside, listen to the people, and get things done. I'm proud of what we've accomplished together—results that come with the experience and relationships I've built locally and at the State Capitol.

- 5. Mandates: During the COVID-19 crisis, the Governor initiated several mandates to address and attempt to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. Time will tell whether those mandates accomplished their goals. Nevertheless, the Governor, non-related to the pandemic, has bypassed the legislature and adopted the California Clean Car's act here in MN. What are your thoughts on these actions and how do they represent the voice of the people and businesses? What steps do you believe need to be taken to ensure that regulations of such magnitude are heard and decided by the legislature first?**

During times of crisis, it's more important than ever for elected officials to work together. During the covid pandemic, I encouraged the governor on multiple occasions to work together with the legislature, but unfortunately, he continually made decisions without input from Democrats or Republicans in the legislature. Because of his unwillingness to work together, I voted multiple times to terminate the governor's emergency powers. Additionally, the governor and his administration proceeded with the California cars mandate without approval from the legislature. This mandate from Governor Walz is expected to increase the cost of every car sold in Minnesota. The Minnesota Senate voted to stop the mandate, but the Minnesota House did not concur.

- 6. Education, K-12: COVID-19 caused dramatic changes to the delivery of education. What weaknesses in the system were highlighted by distance learning? Did we identify any best practices that should be incorporated in the post-pandemic era? What are your thoughts on current PSEO funding, and should it be increased? Finally, there has been a recent push for "School Choice" and creating an ESA or school voucher program, what is your position on these policies?**

Simply put, too many kids are falling behind. First, students need to be in the classroom. Next, we need to make sure kids learn to read. A recent study showed that 40% of students can't read at grade level, which is why the Senate put a strong focus on literacy this past session. When a student has trouble reading, it makes every other subject that much more difficult. Therefore, I'm laser-focused on literacy efforts to provide teachers the tools they need to teach students the skills they need to be successful in the classroom and beyond. I'm also hearing from parents who feel like they are getting shutout of their child's education. I support efforts to ensure more transparency to what is being taught in the classroom and more opportunities for parents to be involved in their son or daughter's education.

Finally, all families should have the option to choose a school that best fits their needs, so kids have the best opportunities to be successful in the classroom and beyond.

- 7. Education, higher ed: Businesses are now facing greater workforce shortages than before the pandemic. Lack of qualified workers is one of the largest burdens that we hear from business owners in our community. What steps do you believe need to be taken to assist our higher education system in producing a qualified workforce?**

I'm a strong believer in public-private partnerships and other initiatives to promote careers in high demand industries. A good example of this is the REACH INITIATIVE, which is designed to provide quality on-the-job training for students in high school to prepare them for local in demand careers. I also believe that the cost of higher education is too high and it's important for colleges and universities to find ways to lower tuition costs.

- 8. Health care: Health care costs are continuing to rise, and affordable health care remains a concern to many Minnesotans. Do you support expansion of government-run health insurance plans? If so, what should that look like? If not, what options do you support to stabilize health insurance premiums?**

Our region is fortunate to be home to the nation's best medical providers. To help stabilize the health insurance market and lower rates, the Senate passed a successful 'reinsurance' program in Minnesota. We passed a series of bills that made reforms to pharmacy benefit managers by increasing transparency, so Minnesotans see more savings at the point-of-sale. We also passed a bill to make hospital billing more transparent and easier to understand. We are making progress at the state level, but ultimately the federal government needs to reform the Affordable Care Act to see major improvements. I do not support government run healthcare because it will lead to inefficiencies, more government spending, higher taxes, and longer wait times.

- 9. Workplace regulations: Mandated paid family and medical leave for all Minnesota employers was debated in 2020. It passed the House but failed in the Senate. Do you support such a mandate? Why or why not?**

I do not support a mandate, but I do support private sector solutions that expand the availability of paid family and medical leave to provide more options to families across the state.

- 10. Transportation: What is your preference for raising additional money for roads and bridges? Or is current funding sufficient?**

I do not support raising the gas tax. I do support more funding for roads and bridges by dedicating 100% of the auto parts sales tax to transportation related projects.

- 11. Energy: Should Minnesota increase its renewable energy mandates on utilities? Or are market forces sufficient to promote sustainability?**

The market forces have proved that mandates are not necessary. We need a balanced approach to ensure clean, reliable, and affordable energy options for consumers. When we flip the switch, we expect the lights to turn on. And when we adjust the thermostat, we expect the temperature to change.

- 12. Police reform: Police reform has become center stage since George Floyd's death and prompted passage of legislation. Did the laws go far enough or too far? Today, many communities across the state have seen many public safety officers leave or retire early from their positions. These same communities are having difficulty re-filling these positions due to negative public perceptions and lack of funding. What steps do you believe**

**need to be taken to ensure that our state and communities' law enforcement are adequately funded and supported so that our Minnesota communities remain safe and healthy?**

The 'defund the police' movement and anti-police rhetoric has demoralized the law enforcement profession resulting in police officers leaving at a faster rate and younger age than ever before. To make matters worse, fewer people are pursuing the profession. Law enforcement is an honorable career and one of the most important things public officials can do is show police officers the respect and appreciation they deserve for the work they do to help keep us safe. I will continue to support the men and women of law enforcement and oppose any attempts to further defund, dismantle, or demoralize police officers' ability to keep our communities safe.

**13. Other issues: Are there other issues you want to address?**

It's truly an honor to serve the people of southeastern Minnesota. We have accomplished great things by working together and I ask for your vote so we can continue working together to help make southeastern Minnesota an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.