



# WINONA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2022 CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

## Legislature

Gene Pelowski, Jr. - House of Representatives Seat 26A

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

To pass a Tax Bill that includes removing the tax on Social Security that had been agreed to in Conference CommiNee last Session. Then to adresss the problem facing the Home & Community Options Community and their inability to sustain their programs and support restoring Personal Care Attendants.

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

I encouraged my students to go into Public Service as a responsibility of a thriving Democratic Republic. I decided to take the advice I was giving my students. I thank the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce for their Endorsement this election as a vindication of that Public Service.

**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.**

Be as specific as possible. The 1/3rd Tax Cuts, 1/3rd Invest in Needs, 1/3rd Budget Reserve Agreement of last Session is still a good approach.

**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?**

I chaired the Legislative Subcommittee on Legislative Reform this past Session. COVID restrictions prevented any reforms other than those needed to address the Pandemic. However, reforms such as prohibiting consolidating multiple subjects into a single omnibus bill, limiting the number of bills introduced, setting budget targets early in Session, focus hearings on Budgets not on the avalanche of bills introduced by members so members understand the ramifications of their bills on the Budget. These are all being considered. The only Conference Committee to complete it work this Session was

the one chaired by Representative Pelowski and Senator Pratt. It paid back the Federal Government \$2.7 billion Minnesota owed to the Unemployment Insurance Fund avoiding increasing taxes on Minnesota's Businesses. Working in a bipartisan manner is possible.

- 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?**

Two bills sponsored by Representative Julie Sandstede, who is a member of the Legislative Reform Subcommittee, are potential ways to address these problems. These bills could be introduced this coming Session.

- 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?**

As a result of the hearing held in Winona during the Minnesota House of Representatives Mini-Session in October 2019, legislation was introduced and passed into law during the June 2021 Special Session that restores the Licensure and Certification of what was called Vocational Education Teachers in Minnesota's High Schools in a 2 plus 2 program at MN State College Southeast and Winona State University. This is a first step in restoring hands on learning in Minnesota's Public Schools. Every Minnesota High School Senior should have the option of graduating not only with a traditional diploma but with an employable skill set. To address the workforce shortage a return to Employable Skilled High School Graduates would be offer a new pool of potential employees.

- 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?**

See the answer to number 6.

- 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?**

Minnesota does not have the resources to support government-run health care. This is only possible at the Federal Level of government.

**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?**

When the bill was offered as a stand alone bill in 2020, 2021 and 2022, I voted against this mandate due to its excessive cost and increase in government bureaucracy.

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

Electric Vehicles and Gas Cars getting greater miles per gallon are making the gas tax not a sustainable way to fund roads and bridges. Using the Bonding Bill and General Revenue Appropriations will have to be used to maintain funding for roads and bridges.

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

Market forces are sufficient and will continue to dictate the renewable energy requirements of the public. Electric Cooperatives are leading the way in providing renewable energy as the public is willing to support it and pay for it.

**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?**

Every effort needs to be made to offer incentives for increases in law enforcement in Minnesota. Free tuition should be offered for anyone going into law enforcement and for current law enforcement officers when they take courses to address the requirements of their jobs. I offered this legislation in the last legislative session. I also appreciate the endorsement of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association for working on this legislation.

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