



2016 Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN BY 9/27/16

NAME: Jim Gordon
Campaign Website: VoteJimGordon.com
Legislative District: #25
Occupation: Attorney and Mediator

Please provide additional pertinent biographical information:

I have deep roots in our community. My paternal grandfather settled in Lincoln more than 130 years ago. My father, Merle Gordon, lived here his entire life and operated a business here. My mother, Sally Gordon, served two Nebraska governors as their Administrative Secretary, and later served the Nebraska Legislature as a Sergeant-at-Arms for 27 years – until she chose to retire at age 102.

I was born in Lincoln, raised my family here, and have been involved in many civic and charitable organizations.

I served in the United States Army's First Air Cavalry Division. I participated in more than 30 combat assaults. I was wounded in Vietnam in 1967, and spent 17 months in the hospital recovering from those wounds. While surgeons were able to save my right leg, the injuries have required me to walk with a cane since 1967.

I am a Lincoln High School and UNL graduate, earning my Bachelor's Degree in 1972 and a law degree in 1974. I entered the private practice of law as a certified senior law student in 1973. I am a practicing mediator and attorney.

I has been active in many civic and charitable organizations, among them the Child Advocacy Center, Nebraska Mediation Association, The Mediation Center, Lincoln's Children's Zoo, Leadership Lincoln, Domestic Violence Coalition, Legal Aid of Nebraska, Nebraska State Bar Association, Lincoln Bar Association, Nebraskans for Public Television, America's Charities, and several veterans organizations. I was honored to serve as president of the Nebraska Chapter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation before being tapped to serve as national president and chair of the board of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America.

I served as a member of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce's Streets, Highways & Surface Transportation Committee from 1986 – 1990; and as Chair of the Transportation Committee from 1987 – 1990.

1. Please list the top 5 issues you believe the Legislature needs to address in 2017.

I will support a common sense budget and property tax relief; work to eliminate the state tax on Social Security retirement benefits; promote strong pre-K-12 schools and efforts to make postsecondary education more affordable; advocate for policies to encourage economic growth, good jobs and workforce development. It is essential that the state invest in good roads, good schools, and a skilled workforce. However, we must make those investments carefully to ensure a balanced budget and a balanced tax system which are fair to all Nebraskans.

- Support Property Tax Relief and a Common Sense Budget
- Expand opportunities for Economic Growth, Good Jobs & Workforce Development
- Eliminate the Tax on Social Security Retirement Income
- Promote Strong Schools and College Affordability
- Maintain Essential Infrastructure and Good Roads
- Support law enforcement to keep our neighborhoods and communities safe

2. Do you support protecting the Build Nebraska Act (enacted in 2011), which will direct a small portion of state sales tax revenues to road needs through July 1, 2033?

YES

NO

3. If elected, what is the #1 priority you would try to accomplish in 2017?

I have three #1 priorities: Support property tax relief and a common sense budget; Eliminate the state tax on Social Security retirement income; Expand opportunities for Economic Growth, Good Jobs & Workforce Development.

4. Several state senators have worked closely in a bi-partisan effort with Governor Ricketts to keep state spending in check and reduce taxes. Their efforts have strengthened our economy, improved our national tax rankings, and set a more disciplined course for prioritized state spending. In the 2016 Session lawmakers focused efforts on property tax relief via shifting significant state revenues to the state's property tax relief fund that gets distributed back property owners residing inside and outside of the state. If elected, would state tax (income tax/and or sales tax) relief be a priority issue for you in 2017?

First, the Legislature must evaluate state spending to eliminate unnecessary or unsuccessful programs and adequately support necessary state responsibilities. Once such a budget has been created, we next need to evaluate Nebraska's three primary sources of tax revenue (property, sales and income taxes) as a whole. Piecemeal approaches do not work and risk creating unfair burdens and/or uncertainty for businesses, professionals, individuals and families. The goal should be to develop a tax system that adequately funds necessary state responsibilities and is fair to all individuals and entities subject to taxation.

5. Please check ***ONE*** characterization under each of the following categories of key issues that best represents your general view. **We also encourage you to provide additional comments that clarify and define your views.**

5a. Taxes

I believe any discussion of state taxes must begin with an evaluation of our state budget. Every budget potentially contains funding for unnecessary or unsuccessful programs and potentially underfunds other programs essential to the future success of our state. Taxation is the process by which we ultimately fund a rational and pragmatic state budget. From the many conversations I have had with individual and business taxpayers, I believe our state and local tax burden is currently too high. I favor responsible budgeting as the principle means of ultimately lowering the tax burden on Nebraska's citizens and business entities.

5b. State Spending

As I said above, I believe the state's budget is the lynchpin to tax relief for Nebraska's citizens and businesses. Before a rocket blew up my leg in Vietnam, I was going to be a surgeon. As a patient, I appreciated a surgeon who didn't cut until they knew *where* to cut. I do not presume to have all of the answers to these serious questions. Therefore, as I evaluate any proposed budget I would welcome the insight and suggestions of representatives of the business community on where a budget might be cut. I look forward to a productive discussion and action.

I do believe we can make reductions in the growth of state spending. I believe program spending can be reduced and we should work to make government programs more accountable for their spending. This will require tough decisions about the size and scope of state government, but I believe we must address these issues if we want significant tax relief.

5c. Government Mergers/Consolidation

I believe our current state and local government structure can be improved and efficiencies realized by requiring or encouraging consolidations. The efficient delivery of services to taxpayers is a major goal of mine.

5d. Build Nebraska Act - Road Funding

I am a strong supporter of the Build NE Act and would actively oppose efforts to repeal it. From 1986 - 1990, I served as a member of and then chair of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee.

6. What are your ideas for encouraging strong job and investment growth?

We have to recruit and retain businesses. Leverage technology, support small startups – and frankly, advertise our state and the work ethic of its people and quality of life here to businesses nationally.

I would be interested in hearing more about what has worked thus far to promote economic growth and how our changing world and economy may present new opportunities. I believe we need a continued focus on and support of: diversification; value-added agriculture; entrepreneurship by providing access to seed capital, by using online networks and other technology to connect entrepreneurs with needed information; promotion of tourism in Nebraska.

I also believe the state must promote and support programs that train our youth to perform the skills required by the businesses of today and tomorrow.

Economic incentives that help to create good jobs make sense to me and I look forward to working with the business community to ensure the state is on the cutting edge in providing those type of incentives – which are an important investment to make. I can promise you this: I will listen closely to your concerns and work with you and others to develop solutions to address those concerns. I am not a lock-step member of either political party. I believe we must work toward the same goal – making Nebraska a great place to live, work, build a business and raise and family.

7. If elected, do you have a preference as to which legislative committees you would want to serve on?

I believe all of the legislative committees are important and I would be honored to serve on any one of them. I have listed four that would be of particular interest to me:

- a. Judiciary Committee – because of my work with the courts and my career as an attorney and mediator;
- b. Transportation and Telecommunications Committee – I have always been interested in transportation and infrastructure issues. I believe they are crucial to an economically healthy state. In fact, I also worked for the railroad in my late teens and twenties;
- c. Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee – because of my service in the U.S. Army, my longtime involvement in Veterans organizations and issues affecting veterans, and because of my work at the local level as a member of various city and county government citizen advisory committees;
- d. Health and Human Services – my involvement with numerous civic organizations brought me into close contact with health and human services-related issues and the importance of ensuring that the public and private sectors work together to best serve the public in these areas.

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Lincoln Chamber of Commerce

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