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Legislator Education Survey 2010

Response for: heathercarter@me.com

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1 In an effort to balance our state budget, legislators have recently reduced Arizona’s K-12 and university/community school budgets by more than \$2 billion during the past two years. During this next session, legislators still need to address the structural budget deficit that remains. Which of the following best describes your approach to balancing the budget?

Answer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enact further cuts to K-12 and higher education funding as they make up a large share of the overall budget.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stabilize funding to education at existing levels until our economy recovers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Find ways to recover the \$2.2 billion that was cut. Examine how state revenues are spent and whether the state collects enough revenue to meet its needs.

Comment: Education is a key component to our economic recovery in Arizona. We need a strong education system to attract and retain businesses in our state. Both small businesses and large corporations want an educated work force. We need to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prepare the next generation in Arizona!

2 Do you support efforts to readdress Arizona’s tax structure to alleviate the reliance on fluctuating sales tax?

Answer	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Comment: In Arizona, from the outside looking in, there seem to have been two tax strategies: What ever you can convince the legislature to do and then the ballot referendums passes by the voters.

This has created a hodgepodge of tax policy with no long term strategic view of what will create a sustainable tax system or generate new business in Arizona so we can fund the basic functions of government, of which a crucial component is a strong public education system.

3 Arizona’s current budget was devised using a series of cuts, borrowing, financial deferrals and the voter-approved temporary sales tax increase. Which of the following fiscal measures would you consider supporting this year? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An effort to close existing tax loopholes
Increase personal income tax
Enact a flat tax on corporate/individual income
Increase property tax
Eliminate tax credits (please specify)
Expand the sales tax to services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> End tax exempt status for mining, etc.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Simplify the state tax code
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporate tax cuts
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensure corporate tax parity (large companies to pay same share as small businesses; tax exemption via out-of-state holding companies prohibited, etc.)
I think the only effective budget solution would be to introduce further tax cuts.
I think our current tax structure is adequate and we just need to wait until the economy rebounds.
Other

4 A number of national surveys rank Arizona among the last in K-12 per-pupil funding. Arizona invests \$61 less per student than it did more than 20 years ago, according to the American Legislative Exchange Council. What do you think of this level of investment?

Answer
Arizona spends too much on K-12 education. We need to enact further cuts.
This is an adequate level of investment. I do not think we need to invest more in K-12 funding.
Although I do not think this funding is adequate, I do not think we can increase funding for K-12 education at this time.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is embarrassing to be among the last in the nation in K-12 education funding. As a legislator, I will work this fiscal year (2010-2011) to increase funding for K-12 public schools.

Comment: We need an efficient and effective school system. We need to create a school finance system that is built on ensuring there is a quality teacher in every classroom, led by a quality principal, in a quality school where we are preparing students for jobs in the 21st century. All funding conversations need to use this as the foundation.

To do this, we need a state-wide data management system so we know the impact of the additional revenue on student learning.

5 Each year, more than \$60 million in Arizona taxpayer dollars are directed to School Tuition Organizations (STOs) for private school tuition through the tax credit program. What do you think about the current private school tax credit program? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
More tax dollars should be allocated to expand the private school tuition program.

<input type="checkbox"/>	The private school tuition program should be maintained as-is.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The amount of tax dollars allocated to the private school tuition tax credit program should be reduced.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The private school tax credit program should be repealed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The 10% processing fee that STOs are allowed to keep from donations for expenses should be reduced to a lower percentage. (Processing fees in Florida are capped at 3%.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	There should be income limits on the families who benefit from the private school tax credit program. The original intent of the program was to provide access to private schools for poor children.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I think any Arizona family should be able to take advantage of the tax-funded tuition benefits.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't believe we should be using tax dollars for private school tuition assistance.

Comment: Any tax payer dollars that are used for educational purposes must be held to the same transparency and accountability standard of other publically-funded schools. We do not currently have these important checks and balances in place and I doubt that the private schools want to open up their books for public review and they don't want to require their students to take the AIMS test. Without that, I will not support public funds being used in schools that don't meet these requirements.

6 Do you believe reform is needed in our public education system? If so, which reforms do you support? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	No, reform is not needed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes, reform is needed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes, reform is needed but we need to establish adequate funding first.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support the participation in a national standards program, i.e. NAEP.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support increased charter school funding.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support more teacher accountability.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support the Common Core Standards created by the National Governors' Association and the state superintendents of education.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support linking teacher pay to student test scores.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support moving quickly to shut down failing schools.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support creating more charter schools.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I support restructuring the "equalized funding" formula

Comment: Our greatest challenge is in schools, it is trying to prepare our students for 21st century jobs with 20th century mentality and systems. Government needs to support this transformation and not hamper progress.

I support linking teacher pay to a broad-assessment including professional development and observation, as well as student achievement. Furthermore, want student achievement measured by more than a single test score.

It's about accountability and transparency for tax money.

7 Some argue that we should move away from traditional public schools and transition to a system with more students attending state funded, privately-run charter schools and private schools with the aid of tax credits and/or vouchers. Do you support this plan?

Answer
Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Comment: Being that almost 90% of all parents in Arizona CHOOSE traditional public schools when they already have a CHOICE to choose a different school system, why would we take that CHOICE away from those parents? I think the market demonstrates that there is still a demand for traditional public schools. People who continue to advocate for more choice are sorely lacking innovative ideas to help education in Arizona.

8 This year, legislators referred to voters a ballot measure to repeal First Things First, an early childhood education program with a dedicated funding source approved by voters in 2006. What do you support?

Answer
First Things First funding should be repealed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> First Things First funding should be maintained in accordance with the original voter mandate.

Comment: We predict future need for jails based upon 3rd grade reading levels. We need to do EVERYTHING we can to ensure that children are reading by 3rd grade and this includes adequate funding for early childhood education.

9 Arizona currently has some of the largest K-12 classroom sizes in the nation. Please check the statements you agree with below. (Please check all that apply.)

Answer
Classroom size isn't a crucial factor for student success--many other factors are much more important and we should focus our priorities elsewhere.
I think it would be more efficient if we increased classroom size along with teacher pay. This would attract better teachers and decrease the cost of running the school.
I think classroom size is an important factor for student success, but I don't think we can currently afford to increase funding to pay for the additional teachers and/or school facilities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classroom size is one of the most important factors for student success--we should be working to reduce class size as one of our top priorities.
If parents believe that classroom size is important for their child, they should consider enrolling their children in a private school with a classroom enrollment cap.

Comment: The big correlation with class size is drop-out rate. If we are serious about the drop-out rate in Arizona we will reduce class size.

10 Arizona has one of the highest high school drop-out rates in the country. In the last budget, all state aid for adult GED (General Education Diploma) funding was eliminated. Please check the statement you agree with below.

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GEDs should be funded by individuals.
The state should provide funding for GED programs.
I will work to restore funding for adult GED services.

Comment: GEDs should be part of the public education system.

This is a low level investment to ensure that people are able to be contributing member of our society.

11 **The Arizona Constitution has many sections impacting the state budget and education. If elected, which of the following articles do you most identify with? (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall provide by law for an annual tax sufficient, with other sources of revenue, to defray the necessary ordinary expenses of the state for each fiscal year. (Article IX, Section 3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No tax shall be laid or appropriation of public money made in aid of any church, or private or sectarian school, or any public service corporation. (Article IX, Section 10)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The university and all other state educational institutions shall be open to students of both sexes, and the instruction shall be nearly as free as possible. (Article XI, Section 6: paragraph one)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The legislature shall make appropriations, to be met by taxation, as shall insure the proper maintenance of all state educational institutions & shall make such special appropriations as shall provide for their development & improvement. (Article XI, Sec10)

Comment: A student who achieves academically should be afford a university education as 'nearly free as possible,' but I have concerns about adequate funding for a quality state university system.

12 **If you have children, what type of school(s) did they/do they attend? (Please check all that apply.)**

Answer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional Public School
Charter School
Private School
Home School
University/Community College/Higher Education
N/A I have no children.

Comment: I am confident we can continue to build a quality public school system for Arizona. I am a graduate of our Arizona university system (undergraduate, masters and doctorate). I am a clinical associate professor working to prepare great teachers and leaders at ASU. I was a 7th grade teacher in our Paradise Valley Unified School District. I know we have the ability to be a top-notch education system if we are adequately supported by our state government, in terms of policy and funding issues.