

II. EDUCATION

A. EDUCATIONAL REFORM

HOME-BASED EDUCATION (2008). We support the option of home-based education, as long as the testing of these students occurs and is equal to the testing of public school students.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (2007). We favor local encouragement of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in the classroom on a daily basis and retaining the words “under God.”

B. FINANCING EDUCATION

BOND ISSUE VOTING (2010). We oppose the current state statute limiting voting on school bond resolutions to only residents residing within the school district. We believe property owners of all real property within a school district should have the opportunity to vote on a bond issue. We support efforts to study alternatives to allow all real property owners to vote on school bond issues.

SCHOOL LANDS (2010). We favor the sale of school lands as leases expire and in an orderly fashion. We support school lands paying regular taxes in the county where they are located, same as all privately owned lands, instead of in-lieu-of taxes. When school lands are sold, the minimum bid should be no higher than 70 percent of the assessed value, the highest bid of the day of sale should be the selling price, and the bidder of record at the time should be the buyer. State agencies should not be able to purchase land until it has been offered to the general public. State school lands should be subject to the same rights-of-way and easement laws as privately owned land.

We oppose the Board of Educational Lands and Funds enrolling school lands into a carbon credit program. If the Board enrolls such lands, lessees should be fairly compensated by the Board for changes in management practices necessary to qualify such acres in a carbon credit program.

STATE AID (2008). The goals of funding public education should be to provide an equal opportunity for the children of Nebraska to get a basic education, to more equitably distribute the burden of providing that opportunity and to provide uniform and stable resources for public schools statewide.

Support of public schools should come from a balanced and equitable combination of income, sales and property taxes. To achieve balance and equity, the over reliance on property taxes to support schools must be reduced. Support of public schools should come from a balanced and equitable combination of 1/3 income, 1/3 sales, and 1/3 property taxes. We support property tax levy limits on schools of \$1.00 per \$100 value and oppose any effort to remove or relax them. School systems should be provided the means to levy a local income tax to raise additional revenues if it determines additional local resources are needed beyond what can be raised at the \$1.00 levy.

The state aid formula should take into account school systems’ enrollment, property and income wealth, sparsity and other factors that measure costs of providing an education. Higher costs for transportation, poverty, special education or other programs that can be unique to a district

should be considered independent of other cost factors. Factors must be included to protect rural districts against declining enrollments. We do not support the inclusion of factors that would reduce state aid due to system size. If such factors are included, we believe local taxpayers should be allowed to freehold from the affected systems in the event of a levy override or provisions implemented to equalize among local taxpayers the burden of supporting the affected system.

We believe efficiency cannot be defined by cost per student alone. We support legislative studies in efficiency that take into account programs and curriculum provided.

We propose that school districts have a vote of the patrons for major capital expenditures. We support a reinstatement of the income tax provision providing that 20 percent of the state income taxes collected from district residents be returned to the local school districts and considered in the state aid formula. Since a school district's property tax revenues are based on actual assessed valuations, not adjusted valuations; the state aid formula should also be based on assessed valuations.

C. HIGHER EDUCATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGES (2010). Inasmuch as the community colleges increasingly serve students' educational needs throughout the state, we believe property tax funds for community colleges should be replaced with state general funds. If this is not attainable, the state should fully fund community colleges according to the formula established by current state law. We believe the Legislature should place a constitutional amendment before the Nebraska voters to remove the authority of community colleges to levy a property tax. We support local representation and control on community college boards.

IANR (2009). We support the restoration of adequate funding to insure quality programs for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. We strongly support the research and extension work performed by the IANR because of the value and benefits it provides production agriculture and rural communities in Nebraska. We urge the University of Nebraska, UNL, and the Legislature to prioritize its support and funding for IANR because of its significant role in carrying out the land-grant mission of the university. Emphasis should be made to maintain and enhance the ag research priorities that are being pursued at the Research and Extension centers outside of Lincoln because of the direct benefits they provide for production agriculture in those areas of the state.

NCTA (2007). We believe the legislature should make a long-term commitment to keep the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) open. If duplication of total programs exists, the program should remain at NCTA.

D. SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION

ANNEXATION (2008). Existing school district and/or learning community boundaries should not be changed by annexation unless the affected districts meet in good faith and both agree to change those boundaries.

CLASS I SCHOOLS (2007). We believe former Class I school districts should be allowed to be reestablished upon a local vote of citizens in the former Class I district. Transition aid should be provided by the state to K-12 and Class I districts financially harmed by the recreation of a Class I district.

E. TEACHERS

TEACHER HEALTH BENEFIT FUNDING (2009). We support legislative efforts to fund all or part of public school teachers' health insurance costs through state/local cost-share programs, de-coupling teachers' health insurance from locally negotiated agreements and moving the teachers' health insurance program to the state employee health insurance pool, or some other effort that will result in both a cost-savings on premiums and local property tax relief.

TENURE (2009). We support the original intent of teacher tenure to protect teachers against political abuse. We favor professional standards of competency and proficiency for teachers.

We oppose tenure, as it exists today and exhort those in the teaching profession and the respective boards of education to develop a means whereby stability and responsibility can be restored.