

#84

COMPLETE

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Q1

Candidate Information

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Name | Tiff Bluemle |
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| Phone Number | 802 369-3135 |

Q2

Office you are seeking (e.g. House, Senate, Governor):

State Representative

Q3

Legislative District (e.g. Chittenden, Senate, Addison-1):

Chittenden 6-5

Q4

No

Incumbent (select one):

Q5

Yes

Would you be interested in visiting a school in your district and meeting with local educators?

Page 2

Q6

Agree

On resisting austerity, do you

Q7

Yes

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on resisting austerity?

Q8

Anything you want to add on resisting austerity?

Resisting austerity - which requires meeting the intersectional challenges you've described creatively and expansively - is at the heart of the work I have done for over two decades: running programs for women in predominantly male fields like construction and public safety; championing workforce investments in existing Vermonters (as opposed to paying people to move here); advocating for paid family leave and universal access to childcare; and championing changes in corrections that would reduce our reliance on prisons and punishment. I embrace and relish the work of resisting austerity; indeed, this is why I am running for office at this time.

Page 3

Q9

Agree

On institutional racism, do you

Q10

Anything you want to add on institutional racism?

I have long been active in social justice work, in advocating for better data that is broken down by race and gender, and arguing for systemic reforms in the criminal justice system. As I wrote in an op-ed in VTD, I believe that Vermont's future hinges upon attracting diversity, which we will not do until we can learn how to better support it.

What I hadn't recognized until about five years ago is how the feminist movement itself has been racist and exclusionary. It has been painful to recognize the ways in which our organizations and our collective work have contributed to and been complicit in perpetuating white supremacy. It took a couple of long, hard talks with women of color for me to engage in ongoing work to examine my blind spots and biases and pursue becoming an anti-racist.

The challenge of this moment - and its opportunity - is to shoulder the anti-racism the anti-racist work many of us have been too happy to kick down the road.

As a lesbian, I have witnessed significant shifts in culture and policy I'd not imagined enjoying when our boys were born. I want to do all I can, as an individual and a legislator, to be active in pursuing similar shifts in racial equity and justice here.

Page 4

Q11

Agree

On community schools, do you

Q12

No

Do you wish to sponsor legislation establishing community schools?

Q13

Anything you want to add on community schools?

This is just basic common sense; community members and organizations that are connected to schools in meaningful ways become stakeholders - and engaged in its success. Educating the next generation is a shared responsibility. But the connections need to be real and they need to be nourished and integrated into the school fabric - which requires community support, time, and, ultimately, money. I have spent a lifetime trying to understand the ways in which issues are connected and to take a holistic approach to solving problems. The community school approach offers a holistic means of meeting the growing needs of educators and the children they teach.

But as a new legislator I would want to work with the NEA and educators to explore models elsewhere and the work that is currently being piloted in Vermont before I could commit to sponsoring community school legislation.

Page 5

Q14

Agree

On universal school meals, do you

Q15

Yes

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on universal school meals?

Q16

Anything you want to add on universal school meals?

This is basic and important to safeguarding the dignity of all students.

Page 6

Q17

Agree

On student and staff safety, do you

Q18

No

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on student and staff safety?

Q19

Anything you want to add on student and staff safety?

When I say I would sponsor legislation I am saying that I would at the very least sign onto and promote a bill that I support.

I very much support teacher training in these areas, as our understanding of best practice in meeting the needs of students who are prone to violent behavior is constantly evolving. That said, teachers cannot be expected to possess the skills of a behavioral therapist. This is where a community school approach could particularly support teachers and administrators.

I would need time to understand the nature of the training that is desired and what is regarded as best practice in the field to be able to commit to sponsoring legislation on this issue.

Page 7

Q20

Agree

On para-educators, do you

Q21

No

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on para-educators?

Q22

Anything you want to add on para-educators?

In principle, I support the NEA position, though I would need more context to understand the need to assert local control of such decisions. I absolutely agree that paraeducators are essential to supporting schools and would assume that decisions about using paraeducators are best made at the local level.

Page 8

Q23

Agree

On school finance, do you

Q24

No

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on school finance?

Q25

Anything you want to add on school finance?

I would support this legislative change, as it would increase the share of Vermonters who contribute to the education fund based on their ability to pay. In spite of the fact that I have discussed this issue with a number of people, what I understand about the nuances in education financing is a fraction of what I would need to know to champion this change.

Page 9

Q26 **Don't Know**

On public funded and provided Pre-K, do you

Q27 **No**

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on public funded and provided Pre-K?

Q28

Anything you want to add on public funded and provided Pre-K?

This is an issue about which I would need to do far more research. I am concerned that such legislation would reduce the overall number of Pre-K slots available to parents and penalize providers who have done much to elevate pre-K standards, establish best practices and advocate for investing in early childhood education. I believe strongly in ensuring equity within the system, but would want to understand how support to providers outside the local public schools would lead to inequities in the student population. I would need to understand why we would want to limit public investments in private early childhood providers when demand for slots far outstrips supply. I am open to this discussion, but feel it important to be candid about my concerns.

Page 10

Q29 **Agree**

On health reform, do you

Q30 **Yes**

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on health care reform?

Q31

Anything you want to add on health care reform?

Health care is, I believe, a fundamental right and eight years have passed since abandoning plans to pursue a single payer system. I am not an expert in health care policy and am committed to putting significant time and energy into exploring how we can provide Vermonters with access to universal health care.

Page 11

Q32 **Agree**

On the right to strike, do you

Q33

Anything you want to add on the right to strike?

I believe that the right to strike must be protected if all other means of reaching an agreement have been exhausted.

Page 12

Q34

Agree

On teachers rights and professional growth, do you

Q35

Yes

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on teachers right and professional growth?

Q36

Anything you want to add on teachers right and professional growth?

The current practice does not make sense to me and runs counter to what is common practice in other sectors (as you state). I believe it runs counter to what I believe are basic employee rights.

Page 13

Q37

Don't Know

On retirement security for teachers, do you

Q38

Anything you want to add on retirement security for teachers?

I am aware of the terms of the current plan to commit annually to the pension fund and would certainly support reducing debt service costs by committing a portion of a budget surplus to the fund. That said, it is hard to imagine that we will enjoy a surplus next year or anytime soon in the current climate, nor where the greatest need will lie. I would be interested in knowing how much we might actually save in interest costs should we commit more funding than is currently obligated.

Page 14

Q39

Agree

On good cause employment, do you

Q40

Yes

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on good cause employment?

Q41

Anything you want to add on good cause employment?

This is an important issue. I would be open to sponsoring legislation on good cause employment.
