

BUSINESS COMMITTEE SENDS QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL OKLAHOMA GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES

Each candidate who will be on the ballot for the primary election for Governor of the State of Oklahoma was sent a questionnaire by the Business Committee of the Sac and Fox Nation and given an opportunity to respond. Four candidates responded and the Business Committee is happy to share their answers with you. The following candidates submitted answers to the questionnaire:

Democrat:

Drew Edmondson

Libertarian:

Rex L. Lawhorn

Chris Powell

Republican:

Christopher Barnett (*please note that Mr. Barnett responded, but due to a technical difficulty with the form, we were unable to view his answers. When he resubmits his answers, we will publish them here*).

There are a total of 15 candidates for Governor. The statewide primary election is on Tuesday, June 26, 2018. If you need additional information or have questions about voting, please contact the Oklahoma State Election Board at (405) 521-2391.

Each response was limited to approximately 150 words. The responses were not edited for spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

The Business Committee does not endorse candidates; these questions and responses are for informational purposes only.

RESPONSES FROM DREW EDMONDSON:

Do you have experience working with tribes?

Yes. As District Attorney in Muskogee County from 1982-1992, I worked with the Cherokees and the Creeks on cross-deputizing agreements. As Attorney General, from 1995 to 2011, I stayed in contact with tribes on issues of mutual importance, including gaming and tobacco. I also participated in a number of sovereignty symposiums as either a panel member or moderator.

If elected, how will you and your staff interact with tribes?

As Governor I will work with the tribes in recognition of the sovereign nations that they are. Our relationship will be a partnership, because together the state and tribal authorities can accomplish much more than working alone or against each other. My door will always be open to tribal leaders.

If elected, how will you work to protect and preserve Oklahoma's natural resources?

I have a long history of protecting Oklahoma's great natural resources, and I have every intention of continuing to do so in the Governor's office. Clean water is essential for our health, but is also an economic driver for the tourism industry. Our soil supports an agricultural industry that is important to our identity. We are also blessed with abundant energy resources that make us a key player in a booming economy. I intend to do everything possible to protect these resources and ensure they benefit the people of Oklahoma.

If elected, how will you work to ensure the safety of people living near the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World" in Cushing?

Any economic development project has to be weighed against the environmental costs. Environmental catastrophes can have impacts that last longer than any economic benefits. It is necessary to do all we can to ensure that pipelines are constructed and maintained in the safest way possible to protect our other natural resources from pollution. As Governor, I would not forget tribal sovereignty in new pipeline projects.

If elected, how will you and your staff approach compact negotiations?

Tribes have been valuable economic forces for the state and people of Oklahoma, and as Governor I would do nothing to damage that situation. In compact negotiations I intend to work together with tribes to reach mutually beneficial agreements.

In 2011, the State of Oklahoma dissolved the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission. There is now a Secretary of Native American Affairs appointed by the Governor. Do you think this was a positive change or not?

State government often makes empty gestures in the name of efficiency or reform. In my administration tribal concerns will be a top priority, irrespective of whether they are better served through a commission or a cabinet position. It is my belief that an Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission could be re-established without losing cabinet secretary status.

Do you have a plan to increase tribal representation on state boards and commissions? If so, please explain.

State boards and commissions should reflect the diversity of Oklahoma. I will always make diversity a priority when making appointments.

Oklahoma is currently taking steps to add work requirements into its Medicaid program. Do you believe Native Americans should be listed as an exempted group in the state proposal? Why or why not?

We cannot continue to punish the most vulnerable among us. We have been cutting budgets for mental health and other state services that provide essential services to needy Oklahomans for years. There is no need to further burden the disadvantaged, and that includes Native Americans.

What is your position on tribal sovereignty?

Tribal Sovereignty is not subject to the whims of a state; it is embedded and protected in the US Constitution and the treaties that have been entered into between the federal government and

tribal leaders over the centuries. I recognize tribal sovereignty and have no intention of violating it. My relationship with any tribe will be a partnership on a level playing field.

RESPONSES FROM REX LAWHORN:

Do you have experience working with tribes?

Not in a regulatory environment. My work with the tribes has been social in nature with the exception of some coordination regarding land access and historical surveys. This should not be seen as a disadvantage, however, as my position on the tribes is total sovereignty and should be recognized as the relationship between one ally to another. All of my dealings with each of the nations will be treated as such.

If elected, how will you and your staff interact with tribes?

I would like to have a dedicated ambassadorial team that has the primary function of coordinating with the tribes in regards to state fulfillment of the compact. It will be a dedicated individual or team who will conduct day-to-day business and also act as a single point of contact to help navigate the bureaucratic network of systems in the state.

If elected, how will you work to protect and preserve Oklahoma's natural resources?

Through transparency and accountability. As a libertarian, I believe that the common resources currently owned by the state are held in trust for everyone, and those resources privately owned are to be utilized in a way that does not interfere with anyone else's life or property. In example, Tyson will not be allowed to pollute the Illinois river and will be responsible for remediation of any damage they do. It applies to corporations and individuals alike.

If elected, how will you work to ensure the safety of people living near the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World" in Cushing?

First, we need to ensure that the injection wells aren't causing earthquakes. If they are, the AG needs to hold the well owners accountable. Second, there have been reports of regular spilling and other disposal of surface waste in unauthorized manners. This should also be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and remediation should, again, be the primary result of transgressions. Third, all actions on the right of way should be open to public notice and inspection at all times.

If elected, how will you and your staff approach compact negotiations?

As one nation to another. The tribes have had to respond and interact under the constraints of knowing the BIA or the state could back out of their contracts and own policies at any time, leaving the tribes with a very tough road for recourse. The handling of the DAPL situation was highly contentious and I believe this could have been resolved much easier by a more open dialogue and respect of all agreements made. I come in with all respect for the culture and beliefs of the tribes and a firm duty to uphold the agreements made before and to be made in 2020.

In 2011, the State of Oklahoma dissolved the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission. There is now a Secretary of Native American Affairs appointed by the Governor. Do you think this was a positive change or not?

I believe it removed bureaucracy and added a more direct line of communication. It is a question I would eagerly seek the advice of the tribes to get the answer to, as no one who isn't part of that process would be able to make an accurate assessment. I wish for the communication lines to be open between the state and the tribes, and whatever mechanism needs to be in place to make that happen should be in place, but my answer to your question is that from the outside, it appears to have been beneficial. I'm willing to change my mind immediately if the tribes tell me otherwise.

Do you have a plan to increase tribal representation on state boards and commissions? If so, please explain.

The tribes should absolutely have a say, seeing as 40% of the state is tribal land. Again, this is something that would need to be negotiated and I am eager to hear the wisdom of the successes the tribes have had in managing their programs. I am unclear as to what form of expansion the tribes would be requesting, but that information will come from an open and transparent dialogue between the State of Oklahoma and the representatives of the tribal nations. I recognize the governor as the State of Oklahoma and all her people, but mostly in an advisory manner to the tribes.

Oklahoma is currently taking steps to add work requirements into its Medicaid program. Do you believe Native Americans should be listed as an exempted group in the state proposal? Why or why not?

No. The Medicaid program is a federally administered program with federal requirements that aren't unique to the native people. I believe that the tribes should be permitted to 'opt out' of any federal mandate that is inconsistent with their national sovereignty, but if they chose to participate, I believe that all Americans, regardless of ancestry, need to put on their American hats and be equal to all other Americans. Equal protection under the law is important to me.

What is your position on tribal sovereignty?

They are sovereign. Period. Yes, in areas of mutual exchange and the fact that we are neighbors and cohabitate on the same lands throws some wrenches into the machine, but I am of the firm belief that the tribes need to be permitted the freedom to operate on their lands as they see fit to the extent that innocent non-natives are not harmed in their individual liberties as well.

RESPONSES FROM CHRIS POWELL:

Do you have experience working with tribes?

I do not have experience doing business with any tribal entity but as a genealogist having spent nearly three decades doing research I have utilized tribal records in various contexts and have always found tribal record-keepers and archivists to be helpful.

If elected, how will you and your staff interact with tribes?

My approach would be to treat tribes as the sovereign nations they are, recognizing the tremendous economic and cultural contributions that tribal members have made to Oklahoma and the country and seeking to work together in a cooperative environment of mutual respect.

If elected, how will you work to protect and preserve Oklahoma's natural resources?

I believe strongly that we must be cognizant of the interests of tribes and rural areas in regard to water and our other natural resources, and I am committed to moving towards better means of protecting resources and the environment by both seeking to eliminate favoritism from our policies and by moving towards resolving instances of environmental damage and misuse of resources by requiring restitution towards those harmed to the greatest extent possible. These will be my guiding principles.

If elected, how will you work to ensure the safety of people living near the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World" in Cushing?

It will be key to support the work of the Corporation Commission to oversee fracking in order to continue to address the seismic activity that has resulted from this technique. As Governor I will also seek to cooperate with the Insurance Commissioner to better understand the risks to pipelines as well as all other property as well as take a proactive approach to insurance issues.

If elected, how will you and your staff approach compact negotiations?

As mentioned above, tribes are sovereign nations that contribute mightily to Oklahoma economically and otherwise. As Governor I will work together with tribal leaders as equals to produce a compact that will be beneficial to all.

In 2011, the State of Oklahoma dissolved the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission. There is now a Secretary of Native American Affairs appointed by the Governor. Do you think this was a positive change or not?

Having a single person who directly represents the Governor is a more efficient manner of maintaining a positive relationship between tribes and the Governor's office, but does have the weakness of it's effectiveness being dependent upon both the Governor and the Secretary appointed by the Governor. I have every confidence that by making tribal relations a priority my administration would be amicable and effective. but with every new Governor comes a risk of difficulties. All in all the change is positive, but not without risk.

Do you have a plan to increase tribal representation on state boards and commissions? If so, please explain.

It will be an important consideration to me when making appointments to ensure that native voices, critically important in our state, are given ample consideration on a case-by-case basis to ensure that tribal members are well represented overall and are not missing from agencies of key importance in tribal matters.

Oklahoma is currently taking steps to add work requirements into its Medicaid program. Do you believe Native Americans should be listed as an exempted group in the state proposal? Why or why not?

I am uncertain that adding work requirements was necessarily the best way forward but will seek to implement the new rules with as much fairness and equitable treatment as possible. With the great diversity of tribes and of health and economic situations among tribes it would be difficult to put in place a requirement that includes Native Americans that will not be a hardship on at

least some and this causes me to be hesitant to agree that the requirements should apply to tribal members.

What is your position on tribal sovereignty?

Just that, that the tribes are indeed sovereign and have the right to rule themselves as they see fit. As a Libertarian my view is not just that government ought to be limited in scope but that government functions should always be carried out at the lowest level possible so that decision-making occurs as close to the people affected as possible. Reducing attempts to control tribal government by both the state and the federal government serves this purpose as well as honoring the tribal entities that have in one form or another pre-date not just Oklahoma but the United States as well.