



2018 Gubernatorial Questionnaire

Ross Wilburn, Responses

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Please limit your response to each question to 200 words or less.

1. **Clean Water:** Iowa has a clean water crisis, and runoff from factory farms is a major cause. **Do you support a moratorium on new or expanding factory farms until there are fewer than 100 polluted waterways, and local control of factory farms?**

No, because I would first regulate concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) by adequately staffing the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Adequately funding and staffing the DNR will allow vigorous inspection and enforcement of the provisions of IA Code Chapter 459 (A & B), which addresses open feedlots and dry bedded confinement feeding operations. In this way, regulations like manure management plans will be more consistently followed and we can review guidelines for permitting and new construction. As a former Mayor and City Councilmember, I generally support local control, however, state law should establish the floor or minimum expectation of compliance. The impact of mixed enforcement by counties may result in CAFO's becoming concentrated in even fewer counties and with even larger numbers of livestock. This won't address the negative impact on our region's aquifers, nor reduce the impact on the Gulf of Mexico's dead zone. .Secondly, we should emphasize greater efforts at education on the benefits of crop nutrient management. Following soil conservation plans developed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service can also help farmers better manage farm resources, reducing runoff, and protect the environment.

2. **Immigration:** Last year, the Iowa Legislature proposed legislation that would pit our law enforcement agencies against our immigrant and refugee friends and neighbors. **Will you ensure that no law enforcement agency in Iowa will be deputized under Immigration and Customs Enforcement?**

I will issue an executive order limiting state law enforcement agencies assistance regarding federal immigration law by taking no law enforcement action toward and committing no state resources toward enforcing federal immigration law. There would be exceptions for threats to public safety, warrants for specific individuals with felony criminal histories, criminal acts qualifying as violent felonies, or where cooperation would be needed to protect the public from violent acts. There would also be an

exception for cooperating with Homeland Security Investigations for work against human trafficking. Iowa law enforcement officials must have the trust of immigrant and undocumented people in Iowa for positive community relationships and for them to feel comfortable reaching out to law enforcement when they need assistance. This issue emphasizes the need for federal comprehensive immigration reform and a path to citizenship. Most importantly, we welcome people here in Iowa and we recognize the overall benefits culturally and economically to be welcoming and to comply with Iowa Civil Rights laws

3. **Raising the wage:** Living wages are good for workers, our families, our business and our communities. **Do you support a statewide living wage of at least \$15/hour for all Iowa workers?**

I support a long needed increase in the state minimum wage, specifically to \$15/hour. The increase will lift Iowans' purchasing power for everyday living costs. We should also explore the impact and possibility of a periodic cost of living adjustment on the minimum wage. It will be important for Iowans to increase shopping local to support small business employers and support local non-profit organizations as they support paying employees a living wage.

If a legislature isn't put in place to support changing the minimum wage, then I strongly support Iowans pushing for a return to local control in this area, so that local governments can adopt a minimum wage higher than the state's if residents in those communities decide to support it. The state wage then can be the floor or minimum expectation for workers and employers across the state.

4. **Healthcare:** Everyone has the right to quality healthcare but Iowans are receiving worse healthcare than ever. **As governor, will you implement a state-level program that guarantees universal, high-quality healthcare to all Iowans?**

Yes, the view that universal access to affordable healthcare coverage being a right has grown in the country and in Iowa. Sadly as a country, our government has lagged behind many countries in this view. In addition, the right to good health in general and conditions that support health should be a goal of state government. Privatization hasn't worked in Iowa providing adequate care and coverage. There was no plan for community based mental health services for those needing to be supported, after closing down mental health institutes. We should also explore partnering regionally with neighboring states to see if they are interested and willing to provide universal coverage and bargaining for reasonable costs, as well as to promote transparency in costs.

5. **Climate:** Climate change is happening before our eyes and is becoming even more urgent by the day. What is your plan to transition Iowa to 100% clean energy that benefits all Iowans?

First by making the commitment to increasing our transition to renewable energy. Continue to grow Iowa's wind energy generation. We are second in the nation in wind power. Let's expand our efforts in solar power. We can provide renewable energy production tax credits investing in good paying jobs for Iowans in manufacturing and in the industry's supply chain. Promoting innovation with multiple clean energy strategies will help our continued movement towards energy independence. We can increase public education about renewable energy and energy efficiency programs to help individuals and businesses save money and reduce their carbon footprint. Investments like increasing broadband access to rural areas in Iowa can lead to new jobs and small business creation in rural economies, including jobs that you can telecommute, continue to live in rural Iowa, and have a positive environmental impact. Sometimes it just takes the commitment of leaders in an area to free the creative energy of Iowans to innovate and make a difference. While serving as Mayor, I signed the 2006 US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement establishing goals to reduce our community's carbon footprint by 2025. Making that commitment opened up creative thinking by city staff to review and try more environmentally friendly practices. The results included more efficient cooling and heating practices in municipal buildings, establishing a municipal owned public/private operated recycling center, and purchasing a privately owned sand quarry to establish a publicly accessible lake and passive recreation area. As Iowans, if we all do a little to adopt more efficient and cleaner energy usage, we can collectively make a positive environmental impact.

6. **Money in Politics:** Our pay-to-play system of financing elections means that corporate special interests can buy off elected officials. Will you push for a small dollar donor/public financing system to get big money out of politics?

Yes and that is only part of the solution. Unfortunately, the Citizens United Supreme Court decision has given too much political influence and access to the wealthy and to wealthy corporations in our elections. The amount of money required to access the electoral system presents a barrier to many Iowans from even considering running for office. Pushing for transparency in campaign contributions is one step that can help the public be aware of who is influencing our elections. I would support an effort in Iowa to call for a US Constitutional Amendment to overturn Citizens United. We must also work on federal elections to elect a Congress and President who support the Voters Rights Act protections. Finally, while the CCI Action Fund is a non-partisan group, in the Democratic Party, we can work to improve participation in our party in between Presidential and Gubernatorial elections. This will allow greater time for grassroots efforts at policy creation, education, and support, rather than the majority of donations being spent in only a few legislative races.

7. **Racial Justice:** Recent history shows that Iowa's new Stand Your Ground bill will be used to target communities of color. Will you work to repeal the Stand Your Ground law in Iowa?

Yes. Iowa's previous "castle doctrine" let Iowans use deadly force if they reasonably believed their life was endangered in their home or car. Stand your ground has the potential to change one's perception from protecting to an assertive or aggressive posture, based on a perception of whether a person feels threatened. This is a very subjective threshold and bias studies have shown that cultural factors and unconscious bias can influence and impair our judgement on perceived threats. Iowans will have to use their influence and collective voice to make changes in the legislature in order to keep concern for this dangerous legislation to be repealed.

However, racial justice work must go beyond repealing stand your ground. Criminal justice reform work must continue. Efforts in the Iowa Department of Human Rights, the Attorney General's Office, and collaborations with Iowa Civil Rights groups should continue towards valuing diversity, inclusion, and creating a sense of belonging in Iowa.

8. **Higher Education:** Communities across Iowa, the US, and the world face increasingly oppressive levels of student debt as tuition rates are pushed ever higher. Will you support legislation to make Iowa's public colleges and universities tuition free for all students?

Yes, beginning with our public community colleges. Similar to the state of Tennessee, which has a program in place that if an adult without a degree will commit to using their degree in-state for two years, then their college or trade education is paid for after federal and other tuition resources are used. This "Grow Iowa" education program can serve as a source of new labor in Iowa, working collaboratively with employers and community colleges, while creating an opportunity to retain young workers and older Iowans without a degree here in Iowa communities.

The foundation for post-secondary education is our K-12 Education system. Therefore I also support: prompt, dependable public funding for public schools; increases in teaching and learning, decreases in mandatory testing; growth-based accountability using a variety of measures and methods; access to on-site physical and mental health services for children; quality before and after school programs; support for curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular options which build the 21st Century Skills of collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

9. **Budget:** Governors Branstad and Reynolds have created a state revenue crisis with their corporate handouts, including the 2013 commercial property tax deal that they passed with the support of legislative Democrats. Do you pledge to roll back this corporate tax break and close other corporate tax loopholes?

Yes, I will have staff review corporate tax breaks first and will set the expectation that corporations looking for tax breaks are demonstrating their plan to invest in Iowans. Among the criteria for those seeking a tax break will be to show how will they be

providing livable wages and offering benefit packages to their workers. Will they be putting up barriers to workers looking to collectively bargain? Are they investing in using clean energy? Is their building LEED certified? Are they a clean energy producer? When a tax break is given, they will tend to be short term plans so that the tax credit support from the tax payers will see a more sustainable investment in citizens and infrastructure.

10. **Agriculture:** Just as workers need a livable minimum wage, farmers need a livable minimum price. As governor, what would you do to ensure that farmers get a fair price for their crops?

I would promote Iowa products in the US and other countries. Promote diversification of crops and livestock, traditional family farms, sustainable organic farming, and ongoing growth of local food systems. In addition, I would look for ways to invest in beginning farmers and women in farming programs. Encourage leadership in the Iowa legislature to conduct open public hearings on priorities for Iowans regarding advocacy on the national Farm bill, in terms of fair safety net for disasters for family farms and in connection with conservation practices. I would welcome hearing from CCI Action board for input on this and other issues.

Respectfully submitted by Ross Wilburn, Democratic Candidate for Governor
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