

State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Please answer as succinctly as possible. Your responses will be shared on the Community Website and in the Community newspaper the O'odham Action News.

Why are you running for elected office?

For many families, including mine, doing right for the next generation is becoming increasingly harder as wealth continues to concentrate into the hands of a few. This is why I have spent the majority of my life channeling my energy into fighting for the common good. However, I know anything worth fighting for requires resiliency, strength, and courage. In my tenure in the State House of Representatives, I have proven time and time again that I am willing to go as far as it takes to stand up for the most vulnerable individuals in our community. I am running again to represent the people of Arizona because I believe in our state's potential to be a vibrant and uplifting place for all of us.

What qualifies you to serve in the State legislature?

I'm completing my second term in the Arizona House of Representatives, my first term in Democratic Leadership, and have been an effective leader inside and outside the state Capitol over the past ten years. Prior to running, I fought against corporate greed as a union shop-steward with the hospitality workers union Unite Here, organized public university students to fight against budget cuts, tuition hikes and racist legislation brought forth by the state legislature, analyzed and proposed changes to national healthcare legislation, and have professional working experience with nonprofits and government. My effectiveness as a state legislator both earned me the Phoenix New Times' Best Politician in 2018 and the Arizona Republic's Top 10 Newsmakers to Watch in 2019. I was the first in my immediate family to graduate from college, graduating magna cum laude from Arizona State University with degrees in Economics and Political Science.

Representing LD26 that includes the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. What is your view of tribal sovereignty and how should the state legislature work with tribal communities to address their respective priorities?

My father was born in the West Bank of Palestine. He immigrated to this country to escape the western colonialism that severely restricted his future potential as an indigenous Palestinian man living in the occupied territories. Today, the situation for my aunts, uncles and cousins have become much worse. Not only are they not allowed free movement on their own land, but they live under constant threat of annexation on top of every aspect of their civil society being controlled and appropriated by an outside military occupation.

The denial of sovereignty and self-determination for my family guides the responsibility I feel to respect tribal sovereignty in Arizona. I feel privileged to represent a district that includes strong indigenous communities. I have taken time to build relationships with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and I am always proud to attend community meetings, events, celebrations and President & Council inaugurations. I also partnered with Sen. Juan Mendez and the SRPMIC government affairs team to begin the statewide first annual tribal youth day at the Capitol.

In general, if elected, what will be your main objectives?

For too long our government leaders - beholden to corporate groups like the Arizona Chamber of Commerce - have left too many hard working Arizonans behind. As your state Representative, I have worked tirelessly towards building a strong foundation for Arizona families to land on. To achieve this, I am committed to advocating for universal healthcare, quality education that addressed inequities among students, and an economy that works for all.

How do you plan to build your relationship with the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community members, specifically during this extraordinary time?

I have had the joy of building relationships with members in the community, including the outstanding youth in the Young River People's Council. Now more than ever, I am even more committed to working closely with SRPMIC members and public officials to ensure the state's support during these extraordinary times.

Revenue from Gaming is a vital tool that helps fund many important programs for tribal communities across the state. In 2002, voters provided gaming exclusivity to Arizona's Indian Tribes. Do you believe tribes should continue to have tribal exclusivity in gaming?

Yes, I believe tribes should continue to have tribal exclusivity in gaming and I have a voting record that blocks the multiple attempts by Republicans to strip this privilege away from tribes.

What benefits do you believe the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community brings to the economy of Arizona?

The Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community is one of the key economic engines in Maricopa County and District 26. Partnering with Scottsdale Community College to provide access to affordable higher education to the the community at large and tuition-free college to our indigenous students, donating gaming funds to a variety of organizations that serve our community, destinations that attracts visitors from all over the country, and the rich cultural history and artifacts are just a few of the many ways SRPMIC benefits the Arizona economy.

Unlike cities in Arizona, the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community and all other Arizona Indian Tribes do not receive any portion of the Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT) that is generated on tribal lands. Do you believe the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community should have parity with other local governments and be able to receive TPT that is generated on tribal land? If so, would you support legislation to resolve this issue?

Yes, I believe the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community should have parity with other local governments by receiving the TPT that is generated on tribal land. In fact, I cosponsored HB2205 (Indian Tribes; TPT), a bill that would allow all tribes in Arizona to receive their TPT. Under republican-controlled leadership, the bill unfortunately didn't even receive a hearing. With tribal communities being among the hardest hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, Democratic leadership in both chambers worked closely with our tribal members to make the TPT issue a top priority for our Caucus next legislative session.

COVID19 has affected all Arizonans. What are your priorities for Arizonans from both a health and financial perspective?

The conservative agenda to dismantle the government has backfired in the face of COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, most Arizonans were already in a crisis due to inadequate public support

and overwhelming income inequality. Now during these unprecedented times, the biggest issue facing us is building a strong foundation that invests in our public infrastructure and social services that empower real Arizonans. To achieve this, we need to take a hard look at our budget and reallocate resources towards supports like extending unemployment benefits and housing assistance for rent and mortgages. The pandemic also has revealed how dangerous it is to have almost three-quarters of a million uninsured people without adequate healthcare. I will continue to support efforts led by the Ranking Member on the Health Committee to develop a public healthcare option by expanding AHCCCS so people can buy-in at an affordable rate.

COVID19 has also impacted education. What are your priorities for both K-12 and higher education?

Our public schools are in desperate need of funding. Conservatives never restored funding cuts from the last recession even though the state has operated with hundreds of million dollar surplus every year that I've been elected -- minus this year due to the pandemic. One of our country's hallmark achievements was our public education system. We must reprioritize our existing budget to divest from our criminal punishment system and divert those dollars into public education. We must pass comprehensive charter school reform to ensure oversight and accountability. We must scale back private school vouchers that drain our public treasury into private institutions. Finally, it's imperative that everyone reading this vote in support of Invest in Ed, an equitable tax on the wealthiest Arizonans that would generate over close to a billion dollars for our public schools.