

Senate District 40 (R) – Craig Brandt (i)

BY THE CANDIDATE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2016 AT 12:34PM

NAME: Craig Brandt (i)

POLITICAL PARTY: Republican

OCCUPATION: Clergy

CITY OF RESIDENCE: Rio Rancho

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE: 4 years state Senate, 4 years RRRS Board of Education



Craig Brandt

What are the top two things you would do to improve the economy in New Mexico?

First, I would pass right-to-work, which will open the door for many companies to relocate here. Second, I would do a reset on our entire tax code. We need to lower the gross receipts tax while we widen the base. No more special exemptions, everyone contributes.

If the state's revenue downturn persists, would you favor trimming state spending or increasing taxes as a primary response? Which cost-cutting or revenue-generating measures would you prefer?

If we increased taxes, we would drive our state into an even deeper recession. We have to trim spending. This will be very hard as our cost for Medicaid has skyrocketed to over \$1 billion and makes up 19 percent of our budget. We must figure out how to reduce those costs.

Do you support or oppose the current policy of including student test scores as part of teacher evaluations? If you support the policy, what percentage of the evaluation should the test scores account for?

I support the principle of using student test scores on teacher evaluations. The issue is how do you hold teachers accountable for test scores that they aren't responsible for teaching. We only have standardized testing in three core subjects; that leaves a lot of teachers

Do you support or oppose legalizing recreational marijuana use in New Mexico?

I would consider supporting a comprehensive bill that includes several things: minimum age 25 as you're 95 percent less likely to become addicted; licensed distributors and growers, where the license is non-transferable; ban on products or advertising designed for children (lollipops, brownies, etc.) just to name a few.

Current state law requires early-grade reading intervention. Coupled with that, do you support or oppose legislation that would automatically require some third-graders without adequate reading skills to repeat the grade level?

Starting in fourth grade you read to learn. If you cannot read then you are at a huge disadvantage; promoting you anyway only compounds the problem. We must make sure that reading intervention is available for every student who needs it; then not promoting to fourth grade makes sense.

To provide more money for early childhood programs, which are unspecified, do you support or oppose taking more money out of the state's largest permanent fund on an annual basis? If you are in support, what sort of accountability measures would you favor?

I oppose taking a higher percentage out of the permanent fund. The permanent fund is not a rainy day fund. Every time we increase the amount coming out, we lower all future state revenue from the fund.

Would you support or oppose the creation of a state ethics commission that publicly releases complaints and holds open hearings?

I would oppose such a plan as I believe it would be too easy to be abused for political gain. I would support the release of substantiated complaints and believe that hearings and findings once substantiated should be made public.

Do you support or oppose making New Mexico a so-called right-to-work state, by changing state labor laws so that nonunion employees would not have to pay union fees as a condition of employment?

Support. Everyone should have the freedom to choose whether to be a part of a union and not be forced to join as a condition of employment. Our country was founded on freedom, freedom to speak, freedom to worship, freedom to protect yourself and freedom to associate or not to.

Do you support or oppose updating the current prohibition in the law on assisted suicide in order to allow aid-in-dying under certain medical circumstances?

Oppose, doctors are already allowed to use as much medication as needed to make their patient as comfortable as possible even if those meds will shorten the patient's life.

Do you support or oppose allowing retired law enforcement officers to return to work while still collecting pension benefits to shore up department staffing, if the program does not negatively impact the solvency of the retirement fund?

Oppose. The shortage of police officers is not a result of doing away with double dipping. Upward mobility of officers is harmed by allowing retiring officers to retire one day and come back the next. We should instead focus on keeping officers longer than 20 years.

Do you support or oppose opening the state's primary elections to voters who aren't affiliated with either major political party?

The primary is to determine who will represent your party in the general election. I would support a process for minor party members to choose which major party they will vote with upon registration. This would allow everyone to participate in the primary process.

How should the state's lottery scholarship program be kept solvent into the future?

The lottery scholarship is solvent now, simply unable to cover 100 percent of the tuition. The lottery fix passed in the 2013 session adjusts the percentage of tuition covered each year depending on the proceeds available. It is impossible for the lottery scholarship to keep up with rising tuition.

Does the state need to toughen its DWI laws? If so, how?

Yes, and in 2014 I sponsored SB586 bringing DWI and DUI laws into one act, requiring treatment for all offenders and providing \$17 million, forcing fourth offenses to be charged not another third offense, and increasing the penalty for driving on a suspended license. Unfortunately, it died in Senate Judiciary.

Do you support or oppose opening all legislative meetings in connection with the budget to the public?

All committee meetings should be open to the public.

Do you support or oppose raising New Mexico's minimum wage, currently \$7.50 per hour? If so, by how much?

Oppose. The minimum wage was never meant to be a living wage. Its purpose is to be a training wage. By raising it, you would make it even more difficult for our youth to get their first jobs and risk harming every citizen who is on a fixed income.

Do you support or oppose reinstating capital punishment in New Mexico for specific crimes like killing a child or killing a law enforcement officer?

I support reinstating the death penalty for anyone who commits murder.

Personal background

Have you or your business, if you are a business owner, ever been the subject of any state or federal tax liens?

No.

Have you ever been involved in a personal or business bankruptcy proceeding?

No.

Have you ever been arrested for, charged with, or convicted of drunken driving, any misdemeanor or any felony in New Mexico or any other state?

No.

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