



JCRC Omaha 2026 Jewish Voter Guide on State and Local Races

Candidate Positions on Issues of Importance to Nebraska's Jewish Community and Our Neighbors

NEBRASKA STATE SENATOR

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Antisemitism and leadership

1. Antisemitism can come from across the political and ideological spectrum. What responsibility do elected officials have to recognize and speak out against antisemitism, including when it comes from members of their own party, political allies, or supporters?

Elected officials have a responsibility to condemn antisemitism clearly and consistently, regardless of where it comes from. Hatred and discrimination do not become acceptable because the person expressing them belongs to our political party, supports our causes, or shares some of our views.

Antisemitism has a long and tragic history, and we should never minimize rhetoric or actions that threaten, intimidate, or dehumanize Jewish people. That includes confronting antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories, harassment and threats against Jewish individuals and institutions, and acts of vandalism or violence. When criminal conduct occurs, government has an obligation to enforce the law and protect the ability of Jewish Nebraskans to worship, gather, and live safely.

At the same time, we must protect the constitutional rights of free speech and religious liberty. People have the right to debate government policies, political movements, and events in the Middle East, including the policies of the Israeli government. But criticism of a government should never be used as a justification for hatred of Jewish people or holding Jewish Americans collectively responsible for the actions of another country.

2. How do you define antisemitism, and how would you distinguish it from legitimate political speech or criticism?

I define antisemitism as prejudice, hostility, discrimination, or hatred directed toward Jewish people because they are Jewish. It includes traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes and conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial or distortion, blaming Jewish people collectively for society's problems, intimidation or violence against Jewish individuals or institutions, and denying Jewish Americans the same dignity, rights, and protections afforded to others.

I believe the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism provides a useful framework for identifying antisemitism while recognizing the importance of protecting constitutionally guaranteed free speech. Context matters, and we must be careful not to label every disagreement or controversial statement as antisemitic.

There is an important distinction between antisemitism and legitimate political debate. Americans have every right to criticize the policies and actions of the Israeli government, just as they may criticize the policies of the United States or any other government. Disagreement over Israeli policy, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, foreign aid, military actions, or American foreign policy is not, by itself, antisemitic.

The line is crossed when political criticism becomes hostility toward Jewish people as a group, relies upon antisemitic stereotypes, holds Jewish Americans collectively responsible for the actions of Israel, advocates violence or discrimination against Jews, or denies Jewish people rights that are recognized for others.

As an elected official, I would defend both principles: the right of Americans to engage in vigorous political debate and the right of Jewish Nebraskans to live, worship, and participate fully in our communities without intimidation, discrimination, or fear. We can protect free speech while being unequivocal in opposing antisemitism.

3. Community harmony in a polarized environment: Political rhetoric can contribute either to division or to mutual respect. What responsibility do elected officials have to avoid language that stereotypes or scapegoats religious, racial, ethnic, immigrant, or other communities, particularly during campaigns?
Elected officials have a responsibility to lead by example. Political campaigns should involve vigorous debate over policies, priorities, and the direction of government, but disagreement should never require us to demean or stereotype

groups of people. We can disagree strongly without questioning the dignity, patriotism, or humanity of our fellow Americans.

I believe candidates and elected officials should avoid rhetoric that scapegoats people based on their religion, race, ethnicity, national origin, or other group identity. Such language can deepen divisions and make it more difficult for neighbors to see one another as fellow citizens. This responsibility is especially important during campaigns, when there can be strong incentives to use inflammatory language to gain attention or political advantage.

At the same time, promoting mutual respect does not mean avoiding difficult issues. We should be able to have serious conversations about immigration, religious liberty, public safety, foreign policy, education, and other controversial subjects. We must be able to distinguish between criticizing a policy, ideology, organization, or conduct and condemning an entire community of people.

I also believe this standard must be applied consistently. We should reject stereotypes and intolerance whether they are directed at Jews, Christians, Muslims, immigrants, racial or ethnic communities, or any other group—and regardless of whether the rhetoric comes from the political left or the political right.

Nebraska has a strong tradition of neighbors working together despite differences in background, faith, and political belief. As an elected official, I would work to preserve that tradition. My responsibility is to represent all of my constituents, including those who did not vote for me, and to conduct myself in a way that encourages respectful disagreement rather than unnecessary division.

Hate and bias

4. Should Nebraska codify IHRA legislatively so its applicability extends beyond what a governor can accomplish through executive action. How would you respond to acts of hate or bias affecting any community in your district or across Nebraska, and what legislative action, if any, do you believe is appropriate?

I believe Nebraska should seriously consider codifying the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism in state law so that there is a clear and durable standard that does not depend solely on the executive action of a particular governor. The IHRA definition can provide valuable guidance to state

agencies, educational institutions, and law enforcement in recognizing and responding to antisemitism.

Any legislation, however, must be carefully written to protect the First Amendment. The IHRA definition should be used as a tool for identifying and understanding antisemitic discrimination or conduct, not as a mechanism for suppressing constitutionally protected political or religious speech. People must remain free to debate Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, American foreign policy, and other controversial issues, even when those views are strongly expressed or unpopular. The government's role is to address unlawful discrimination, threats, harassment, and criminal conduct—not to police legitimate political opinion.

When acts of hate or bias affect the Jewish community or any other community in Nebraska, elected officials should respond promptly and consistently. I would speak out against such conduct, communicate directly with affected community leaders, and ensure that appropriate state and local authorities have the tools necessary to investigate credible threats and enforce existing laws. A threat against a synagogue, church, mosque, or other community institution should be taken seriously regardless of the identity of the people being targeted.

Before creating new criminal laws or penalties, I would first determine whether existing Nebraska law adequately addresses the conduct and whether enforcement resources are sufficient. Where genuine gaps exist, I would be willing to consider targeted legislation. I would also support improved coordination among law enforcement, schools, religious institutions, and community organizations to prevent violence and ensure that credible threats are reported and addressed quickly.

Ultimately, Nebraska should send a clear message: antisemitism and other forms of religious or ethnic hatred have no place in our communities. At the same time, we should remain equally committed to free speech, religious liberty, due process, and equal protection under the law. Those principles reinforce one another and should guide any legislative response.

Community security

5. Jewish institutions and other houses of worship have faced increased security concerns in recent years. What role do you believe elected officials should play in helping communities feel safe while preserving an open and welcoming civic environment?

Every Nebraskan should be able to attend a synagogue, church, mosque, or other house of worship without fear for their safety. Protecting that freedom is both a public-safety responsibility and a fundamental part of protecting religious liberty. Elected officials should begin by listening to the communities facing these threats and ensuring strong communication among religious institutions, local law enforcement, emergency management, and state and federal authorities. When credible threats arise, information needs to be shared quickly and law enforcement must have the resources and training necessary to respond effectively.

I also support helping religious institutions improve security through voluntary measures such as security assessments, emergency planning, training, improved lighting and access controls, and other appropriate security improvements. Where state or federal security grants are available, Nebraska should help smaller congregations understand and navigate those programs. We should periodically evaluate whether existing resources are adequate and whether targeted state assistance is warranted, particularly for institutions facing documented threats.

At the same time, security should not require turning our houses of worship into fortresses. Synagogues, churches, mosques, and other religious institutions are intended to be places of worship, fellowship, education, and community. Government's role should be to provide communities with tools and partnerships that allow them to determine the security measures appropriate for their circumstances.

Prevention also requires confronting the hatred that can lead to violence. Elected officials should speak clearly against antisemitism and religious hatred, encourage the reporting of threats and suspicious activity, and ensure that acts of violence, vandalism, intimidation, and other criminal conduct are investigated and prosecuted appropriately.

Our goal should be straightforward: people should be able to practice their faith openly and freely without being intimidated into withdrawing from public life. I would work with Nebraska's Jewish community and all faith communities to protect both

their physical safety and the open, welcoming character that is essential to religious and civic life.

Church and State

6. Religious liberty includes both the right to practice one's faith and protection against government establishment of religion. As a state senator, how would you balance these principles when considering legislation affecting public schools and other government institutions, particularly when the religious beliefs of the majority differ from those of religious minorities?

Religious liberty is one of our most fundamental constitutional freedoms, and it protects everyone—not simply members of the majority faith. As a state senator, I would approach these questions with two principles in mind: government should not interfere unnecessarily with an individual's right to practice his or her faith, and government should not establish, endorse, or compel adherence to a particular religion.

In our public schools, students and educators do not surrender their religious liberty simply because they enter a government building. Students should be free to pray individually, express their religious beliefs, form religious organizations on the same terms as other student organizations, and observe their faith consistent with constitutional protections. At the same time, a public school should not compel students to participate in religious exercises or use government authority to promote one faith over another.

That distinction is particularly important when protecting religious minorities. Constitutional rights cannot depend upon whether a person's faith represents 70 percent of the community or 1 percent. Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other religious students—as well as students who profess no religious faith—are entitled to equal treatment under the law.

I also believe parents have an important role in directing the upbringing and education of their children, including their religious formation. Schools should communicate openly with parents and make reasonable accommodations for

sincerely held religious practices when they can do so without substantially interfering with the rights of others or the school's educational responsibilities.

When considering legislation, I would ask whether it protects the individual's freedom to exercise religion or instead uses government power to impose a religious practice or belief. I would also consider how the proposal would affect a family belonging to a minority faith. A policy that seems reasonable when our own beliefs are in the majority can look very different when another faith becomes the majority. Religious liberty is strongest when government neither favors nor disfavors religion. My responsibility as a state senator would be to uphold those constitutional principles consistently, protecting the rights of people of every faith and those of no faith to participate fully and equally in Nebraska's public life.

Education

7. What role should the Legislature play in addressing antisemitism and other forms of religious discrimination in Nebraska's K-12 schools and public colleges and universities?

Every student in Nebraska should be able to attend school, college, or university without being subjected to discrimination, harassment, threats, or violence because of his or her religion. The Legislature has an important role in establishing that expectation and ensuring that our public educational institutions protect the constitutional rights of all students.

I believe our first responsibility is to make sure existing laws and policies are being enforced effectively. Schools should have clear procedures for reporting and responding to antisemitic and other religious discrimination, and students and parents should know where to turn when problems occur. Serious threats or criminal conduct must be referred promptly to appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Education is also an important part of prevention. Students should have an accurate understanding of the Holocaust, antisemitism, and the consequences that can result when religious prejudice and dehumanization are allowed to flourish. More

broadly, our schools should teach students the importance of religious liberty and the constitutional protections that allow Americans of different faiths to live together in a free society.

At our colleges and universities, we must protect both student safety and freedom of expression. Higher education should be a place where difficult and controversial subjects can be vigorously debated. Criticism of Israel, American foreign policy, a religion, or a political viewpoint cannot automatically be treated as discrimination simply because someone finds it offensive. But free speech does not excuse unlawful threats, violence, targeted harassment, or discriminatory treatment of Jewish students or members of any other religious community.

The Legislature should provide oversight and accountability while respecting the appropriate responsibilities of local school boards, educators, and university leadership. If existing law does not adequately protect students from religious discrimination, I would consider targeted legislation to address demonstrated gaps rather than imposing broad restrictions on constitutionally protected expression.

Most importantly, these protections must be applied consistently. Jewish students, Christians, Muslims, members of other faiths, and students with no religious affiliation should receive the same protection under the law. We can vigorously defend free speech and academic freedom while also making clear that antisemitism and religious discrimination have no place in Nebraska's educational institutions.

Budget

8. Nebraska faces a significant projected budget shortfall. What two specific actions would you support to restore structural balance, and what area of the state budget would you prioritize for protection?

Nebraska must balance its budget, but we should do so thoughtfully rather than relying on broad tax increases or across-the-board cuts that fail to distinguish between essential services and lower-priority spending.

First, I would conduct a comprehensive review of state spending, with particular attention to programs that have grown significantly, duplicate services provided

elsewhere, or have not demonstrated measurable results. We should require agencies to justify programs based on outcomes rather than simply using the previous year's appropriation as the starting point. Programs that are ineffective, duplicative, or no longer serve their original purpose should be reduced or eliminated. I would also scrutinize administrative overhead before reducing services delivered directly to Nebraskans.

Second, I would examine Nebraska's tax credits, exemptions, and economic incentives with the same discipline we apply to appropriations. Tax incentives should demonstrate that they produce economic activity and benefits for Nebraska taxpayers that justify their cost. At the same time, I would resist using temporary cash reserves, one-time federal funds, or accounting measures to support permanent ongoing expenditures. Structural deficits require structural solutions.

The area I would prioritize for protection is funding for essential services to vulnerable Nebraskans, particularly services for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Programs that help people remain safely and independently in their homes can improve quality of life while often avoiding more costly institutional care. Public safety and our core educational responsibilities must also remain high priorities.

Ultimately, Nebraska government has to operate under the same basic principle Nebraska families and businesses understand: recurring expenses must be supported by sustainable recurring revenue. My goal would be to restore structural balance by controlling spending, demanding measurable results from government programs and tax incentives, and protecting the essential services Nebraskans depend upon.

Reserves

9. Nebraska entered 2023 with historically strong General Fund balances and nearly \$1 billion in its Cash Reserve Fund. What lessons should the Legislature draw from the fiscal decisions of recent years, and what spending, revenue, or tax-policy changes would you support to restore long-term fiscal stability?

The lesson from recent years is that strong cash balances can create a false sense of permanent fiscal capacity. Nebraska benefited from unusually strong revenues,

significant federal dollars, and large reserve balances, but one-time resources should not be used to support permanent spending commitments. When recurring expenditures grow faster than sustainable recurring revenue, even a state with a strong reserve can quickly face structural imbalance.

Going forward, I would support three basic principles. First, we should restrain the growth of ongoing spending and require a more rigorous review of programs, particularly those that have expanded rapidly or have not demonstrated measurable results. New permanent spending should be tied to a clearly identified and sustainable funding source.

Second, I would protect the Cash Reserve Fund as a true rainy-day fund rather than treating it as an extension of the General Fund. Reserves should be available for genuine emergencies and economic downturns, not routinely used to close recurring budget gaps.

Third, I would review both tax expenditures and recent tax policy changes to make sure Nebraska's overall tax structure remains competitive and sustainable. I support continuing efforts to reduce the tax burden on Nebraskans, particularly property taxes, but tax relief must be structured in a way that does not simply shift the burden elsewhere or create future deficits. Likewise, economic incentives and exemptions should be periodically evaluated to determine whether they are producing sufficient benefit for taxpayers.

I would be very cautious about broad-based tax increases as the first response to a budget shortfall. Before asking Nebraskans to send more money to Lincoln, the Legislature should demonstrate that existing dollars are being spent efficiently and that lower-priority expenditures have been addressed.

Long-term fiscal stability requires discipline in both good years and difficult years. When revenues are strong, we should build reserves, pay down obligations, make strategic one-time investments, and provide sustainable tax relief rather than permanently expanding government beyond what future revenues can support. That approach will put Nebraska in a stronger position to protect essential services, meet its obligations, and keep taxes competitive over the long term.

Food insecurity & Affordability

10. Food insecurity is growing and profoundly impacting families across Nebraska.

What role should state government play in addressing hunger, and how would your administration approach Nebraska's participation in and administration of federal nutrition programs?

No Nebraskan—particularly a child, senior, or person with a disability—should go without adequate nutrition. State government has an important role in maintaining an effective safety net for people who genuinely need assistance, while also recognizing the tremendous contribution of families, food banks, faith communities, nonprofits, schools, and local organizations in addressing hunger.

Nebraska should participate responsibly in federal nutrition programs when they provide meaningful assistance to eligible Nebraskans and represent an appropriate partnership between the state and federal government. Programs such as SNAP and nutrition assistance for children and seniors can provide an important bridge during periods of financial hardship. Our responsibility at the state level is to administer these programs efficiently, accurately, and with as little unnecessary bureaucracy as possible.

I would focus on three principles: access, accountability, and independence. Eligible Nebraskans should be able to understand the programs available to them and apply without unreasonable administrative obstacles. At the same time, taxpayers deserve strong safeguards against fraud, improper payments, and misuse of benefits. We should regularly measure whether programs are reaching the people they are intended to serve and whether administrative dollars are being used effectively.

For able-bodied adults who are capable of employment, nutrition assistance should be connected, where appropriate and consistent with federal law, with employment, education, or workforce-development opportunities. The objective should not simply be to provide benefits indefinitely, but to help people achieve greater financial independence whenever that is realistically possible. At the same time, we must recognize that children, seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals experiencing temporary crises have very different circumstances. I also believe Nebraska should strengthen partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors. Food banks, churches, synagogues, community organizations,

farmers, grocery stores, and other local partners frequently know the needs of their communities better than government does. We should eliminate unnecessary barriers that prevent those organizations from recovering and distributing food that would otherwise be wasted.

Finally, when considering participation in new or expanded federal programs, I would examine both the immediate benefit and the long-term financial obligation to Nebraska. Federal dollars are ultimately taxpayer dollars, and programs should be evaluated for effectiveness, administrative cost, state matching requirements, and sustainability.

Addressing hunger requires both compassion and accountability. Nebraska should maintain a strong safety net for those who need it, administer federal programs responsibly, work closely with community partners, and pursue policies that ultimately help more Nebraska families become economically secure and self-sufficient.

11. With rising home prices and property taxes, homeownership is becoming increasingly difficult for many families. What would you do to make homeownership more affordable while ensuring local governments have the resources they need? Homeownership remains one of the most important ways families build stability, wealth, and a long-term connection to their communities. Nebraska should pursue policies that make it easier to buy and remain in a home without undermining the essential services local governments provide.

First, I would continue working to reduce the property-tax burden. Nebraska has taken important steps in recent years, but rising valuations can still result in higher tax bills even when levy rates remain unchanged. I support greater transparency in local budgeting, stronger requirements that political subdivisions publicly justify significant increases in property-tax collections, and continued efforts to shift appropriate funding responsibilities away from property taxes where doing so is fiscally sustainable.

Second, we need to address the cost and supply of housing itself. State and local governments should review zoning, permitting, infrastructure requirements, and other regulations that unnecessarily increase the cost of building homes. Encouraging a broader range of housing—including starter homes, townhomes,

duplexes, and accessory dwelling units—can expand opportunities for first-time buyers and older Nebraskans looking to downsize.

At the same time, local governments need reliable resources to provide police and fire protection, roads, schools, utilities, and other essential services. Property-tax relief should not simply shift costs from homeowners to another group of taxpayers or leave local communities unable to meet core responsibilities. I would favor reforms that encourage spending discipline, improve efficiency, and provide predictable state support where the state has assumed a greater share of responsibility.

I would also support targeted efforts that remove barriers to ownership rather than creating broad subsidies that can drive prices higher. Financial education, responsible first-time homebuyer assistance, and programs that encourage development in communities with housing shortages can be useful when they are carefully designed and measured for results.

The goal should be balance: reduce the tax and regulatory pressures that make homeownership less affordable, increase the supply of housing, and preserve the ability of local governments to provide essential services. We should make it easier for Nebraska families to achieve and keep homeownership without simply moving the financial burden somewhere else.

Workforce

12. What policies would you support to address Nebraska's workforce shortages, including attracting and retaining legal immigrants and refugees who can contribute to Nebraska's economy?

Nebraska's workforce shortage is one of the most significant challenges facing our economy. Employers in agriculture, manufacturing, health care, construction, technology, and other industries need qualified workers, and our response should include developing the people already here while making Nebraska an attractive place for individuals and families who want to work, contribute, and build a life in our state.

First, I support strengthening career and technical education, apprenticeships, community college partnerships, and employer-driven training programs. We should do a better job connecting high school students and adults with occupations where Nebraska has demonstrated workforce needs. We should also remove unnecessary occupational licensing barriers while maintaining legitimate health and safety standards.

Legal immigrants and refugees have long contributed to Nebraska's communities and economy, and they should be part of our workforce strategy. While immigration policy and border security are primarily federal responsibilities, Nebraska can make sure that people who are lawfully here have a reasonable opportunity to enter the workforce and become self-sufficient.

I also believe successful integration is a two-way commitment. Nebraska should welcome people who come here legally and want to work and contribute, while expecting newcomers to respect our laws and encouraging English proficiency, employment, and participation in their communities. Our objective should be independence and opportunity rather than long-term dependence on government programs.

Finally, retaining workers requires more than recruiting them. Nebraska must remain a place where families can afford housing, find quality schools and child care, access health care, and build successful careers. Our tax and regulatory environment also needs to remain competitive so businesses can expand and create opportunities here.

I support secure borders and enforcement of our immigration laws, but that is entirely compatible with welcoming legal immigrants and refugees. Nebraska has always benefited from people who came here seeking opportunity and were willing to work hard, raise families, and contribute to their communities. A workforce strategy that develops Nebraska talent while welcoming those who come through lawful channels can strengthen both our economy and our communities.

Diverse representation

13. Relationships across differences: How would you build relationships with Jewish and other faith and minority communities—including communities whose members may disagree with you politically—and ensure they have meaningful access to you if you are elected?

If re-elected, I would represent every person in my district—not simply those who voted for me or share my political beliefs. Building relationships across differences is an important part of effective public service, particularly at a time when our politics can too easily divide people into opposing camps.

I would make a deliberate effort to maintain relationships with Jewish and other faith communities, as well as ethnic, immigrant, and minority communities throughout the district. That means more than meeting when there is a controversy or asking for support during an election. It means attending community events, meeting periodically with religious and community leaders, visiting their institutions, and listening to their concerns before legislation is introduced or a crisis occurs. Meaningful access is also important. My office would maintain an open-door approach to constituent service, with opportunities to communicate by telephone, email, community meetings, and individual appointments. I would also seek input from communities that may not traditionally have strong relationships with government or feel that their voices are being heard.

Political agreement would never be a condition for access. I expect that members of the Jewish community and other communities will sometimes strongly disagree with me, just as people within those communities will disagree with one another. I welcome those conversations. Listening to someone does not require agreeing with everything they say, and disagreement does not prevent us from finding areas where we can work together.

I also believe relationships are built through consistency and trust. People should know that I will listen respectfully, explain my decisions, and be willing to hear perspectives that challenge my own. When we disagree, I will strive to do so without questioning another person's motives or treating political differences as personal hostility.

Nebraska is strongest when people of different faiths, backgrounds, and political beliefs see themselves as neighbors first. As a state senator, I will continue to work to ensure that every community in my district knows that its members have a voice, a seat at the table, and meaningful access to their elected representative.

14. How do you approach policymaking in a culturally and religiously diverse legislative district, and how will you engage with faith-based and minority communities if elected?

I approach policymaking with a simple principle: I may bring my own values and experiences to public service, but as a state senator, I have a responsibility to represent everyone in my district. Our differences in religion, culture, background, and political philosophy should be respected, and the law should be applied fairly and consistently to all Nebraskans.

When considering legislation, I would look beyond whether a proposal reflects the views of the majority and ask how it affects people whose beliefs or circumstances may be different. Majority rule is an important part of democracy, but our constitutional system also protects individual rights and religious minorities.

Ultimately, my goal would be to govern consistently rather than according to who has the loudest voice. Every constituent—regardless of faith, ethnicity, background, or political affiliation—should know that they will be treated with respect, have meaningful access to their state senator, and receive equal consideration from their state government.

Israel and the Jewish community

15. Israel is an important part of the organized religious, cultural, and communal identity of most Jewish Nebraskans even while holding a wide range of views about Israeli government policies. How do you approach conversations about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that respects both legitimate political disagreement and the concerns of Jewish constituents about antisemitism?

I approach conversations about Israel and Israeli-Palestinian conflict by recognizing two principles that can and should coexist: Americans have the right to engage in vigorous debate about the policies of any government, including Israel, and Jewish Nebraskans have legitimate concerns about antisemitism and about political rhetoric that can cross the line from criticism of Israel into hostility toward Jewish people.

I recognize that Israel has deep religious, historical, cultural, and personal significance for many Jewish Nebraskans. I also recognize that the Jewish community is not monolithic and includes a wide range of views about Israeli governments and policies. I would listen to those perspectives rather than assume that any individual Jewish constituent speaks for, or is responsible for, the actions of the Israeli government.

These are difficult and emotional issues, which makes respectful dialogue even more important. I would defend robust political debate while being clear that antisemitism has no legitimate place within that debate. We can disagree strongly about governments and policies while continuing to treat our neighbors with dignity and respect.