



2026 Voter Guide

The Jewish community of Nebraska values civic engagement, pluralism, democratic norms, and constructive dialogue. This questionnaire is designed to help Jewish voters better understand each candidate's positions and priorities. All candidates running for Nebraska's Second District and U.S. Senate were invited to respond to the same set of questions. The candidates featured here are those who submitted responses. Any candidate not listed did not respond to our request. To maintain fairness, responses are presented in alphabetical order, by race, and are published unedited.

John Cavanaugh – Democrat, Nebraska Congressional District 2

Brinker Harding – Republican, Nebraska Congressional District 2

Denise Powell - Democrat, Nebraska Congressional District 2

Crystal Rhoades - Democrat, Nebraska Congressional District 2

Daniel Osborn – Independent, U.S. Senate

Antisemitism, Civil Rights, and Pluralism

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

John Cavanaugh: I view antisemitism as discrimination, violence, hostility, hatred, or targeting against Jews because they're Jewish. I believe that political speech or criticism crosses the line when it singles out Jews collectively, employs classic antisemitic tropes, or denies Israel's fundamental right to exist. I also support expanding Holocaust and genocide education to ensure future generations understand and can recognize antisemitism in all its forms.

Brinker Harding: Antisemitism is hatred, prejudice, or discrimination directed at Jewish people — whether expressed through rhetoric, intimidation, vandalism, or violence. It includes Holocaust denial, conspiracy theories about Jewish people, and the targeting of Jewish institutions. I believe the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism provides a

sound framework for identifying it. Legitimate criticism of any government's policies is part of free political discourse. The line is crossed when criticism relies on age-old antisemitic tropes, singles out Israel with a double standard not applied to other nations, or seeks to delegitimize Israel's right to exist altogether — as the BDS movement does. I've been clear: the BDS movement's goals are rooted in hate and have no place in American institutions. That is not political criticism. That is antisemitism.

Denise Powell: I define antisemitism as prejudice or hatred toward Jewish people. Legitimate political speech is focused on policy positions and the programs our government or other governments carry out. Political speech is not about the race, gender, faith, ethnicity, or identity of a person or group of people.

Crystal Rhoades: I take my definition of antisemitism from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." I believe in the ability to fully criticize governments and their actions, but calling for the elimination of the entire Jewish state is antisemitic.

Daniel Osborn: There is a clear distinction that is spelled out in the First Amendment that enshrines a person's right to criticize a government and its policies that are not rooted in hate. Antisemitism is a specific kind of hatred focused on a group of people who have been persecuted for their religious beliefs for thousands of years. There is no place in society for hatred and bigotry. What I see in our daily lives is that politicians are intentionally blurring the line between political speech or criticism with what is obviously blatant hatred or bigotry. That messaging disgusts me and is why I have run a campaign about bringing people together across ideological divides with issues we can agree on like ending the two-party doom loop and leveling the playing field economically.

Do you support enforcement of federal civil rights laws, including Title VI? Please explain.

John Cavanaugh: Yes, I fully support enforcement of federal civil rights laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in federally funded programs. Title VI has been an important legal tool for addressing antisemitism on college campuses and in educational institutions. I believe all forms of hate and discrimination must be confronted with the full force of the law. As a former public defender I have seen how critical robust civil rights protections are, and in Congress I will support strong enforcement of these laws for everyone.

Brinker Harding: Yes. Title VI is essential, and I support robust enforcement — particularly on college campuses where antisemitic harassment has surged. I also support increased federal funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to protect synagogues, Jewish schools, and faith-based institutions. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure every American (regardless of religion, background, or ethnicity) can participate fully in civic life free from fear.

Denise Powell: Yes. The federal government should ensure that discrimination does not occur when the program is funded with federal dollars. This is an important protection for so many vulnerable communities, and I absolutely support enforcing these laws.

Crystal Rhoades: Yes. I strongly support the full enforcement of federal civil rights laws, including Title VI. These laws exist to ensure that no one is denied opportunity or treated unfairly because of who they are, where they come from, or the language they speak, especially when federal tax dollars are involved. If public institutions and programs receive federal funding, they have a responsibility to serve everyone equitably and without discrimination. Enforcement matters. Civil rights protections only work if they are backed by real oversight and consequences, not just words on paper. I will always stand up for equal treatment under the law and fight to ensure federal civil rights laws are enforced as intended. I have advocated for the expansion of these protections in local ordinances here in Omaha.

Daniel Osborn: I believe that we are a country of laws and that everyone is protected by them under the Constitution. As a U.S. Senator, I would be outspoken

in my commitment to civil rights laws, including Title VI, because there is nothing more American than protecting everyone's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

How would you respond to acts of hate or bias affecting any community in NE-02?

John Cavanaugh: Hate has no place in our communities. When these acts happen, I want the community to know that I'm there to hear them and support them and ultimately fight for policies that improve the lives of my constituents.

Brinker Harding: I would, and have spoken out immediately and unequivocally to acts of hate or bias in NE-02 or to the Jewish community as whole. Hate directed at any community in NE-02 is unacceptable, and elected officials have a responsibility to say so clearly. As someone who has spent decades building coalitions across Omaha, I know that communities are stronger when leaders show up for one another. I expect federal law enforcement to investigate and prosecute hate crimes to the fullest extent of the law.

Denise Powell: No community should face acts of hate or be discriminated against, here in NE-02 or anywhere in this country. I will call out and stand against any such acts, and use the resources of a Congressional office to help make sure our communities feel safe and secure. Any such acts that break the law should be prosecuted fully.

Crystal Rhoades: When acts of hate or bias occur in NE-02, my response would be immediate, clear, and unequivocal: hate has no place in our community. I would stand with those affected, work with local leaders and law enforcement to ensure accountability, and push for resources that support victims and prevent future harm. Leadership means showing up, especially when it's uncomfortable, and making it clear that every person in this district deserves safety, dignity, and equal protection under the law.

Daniel Osborn: As a U.S. Senator, I would use my bully pulpit to condemn acts of hatred or bias in any of Nebraska's three congressional districts. When you hold

public office, the public expects that you will stand on the values you were elected to represent. It has become commonplace for politicians to shy away from standing up for what they believe in because of special interest groups, etc. That is why I am running to take big money out of politics, so we do not have politicians bought and paid for, and so they represent the people. I believe that Nebraskans categorically oppose hatred of any kind and I would publicly stand against acts of hatred as a Senator.

Israel and Foreign Policy

What is your understanding of the U.S.–Israel relationship, and why do you believe it is (or is not) important to the United States?

John Cavanaugh: No Response

Brinker Harding: The U.S.–Israel relationship is one of America's most important alliances — grounded not only in strategic interest but in shared values: democracy, freedom, innovation, and a commitment to human dignity. Israel is a beacon of stability in a volatile region and a hub of technological innovation that benefits Nebraska farmers, manufacturers, and consumers. The alliance strengthens American security and reflects America's moral commitment to defend its allies.

Denise Powell: Israel is a key ally to the United States, and our long history of working together closely is incredibly important. As the only democracy in the region, it is also a strategic ally for U.S. interests globally.

Crystal Rhoades: The U.S.–Israel relationship is a long-standing strategic partnership rooted in shared democratic values, regional security cooperation, and deep cultural and economic ties. Israel is a key ally in a volatile region, and that partnership has played an important role in intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, and regional stability. I believe the relationship is important to U.S. interests, and it should be guided by American values, security, dignity, and justice for all people in the region.

Daniel Osborn: The U.S.–Israel relationship is a cornerstone of our national security. My time in the Navy and National Guard taught me that you don't turn your back on your allies. This isn't just about strategy; it's about a deep, historical

connection. After the U.S. helped defeat the forces of genocide in WWII, we forged a bond with the Jewish people and the State of Israel that cannot be broken. I believe our two nations are linked by a shared commitment to democracy and security, and I will always be a proud supporter of that partnership.

Do you support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state? Why or why not?

John Cavanaugh: No Response

Brinker Harding: Unequivocally yes. Israel is a democratic state with deep historical, religious, and cultural roots. The October 7th Hamas attacks reaffirmed that Israel's survival is not a given; it must be actively defended. I will be a steadfast voice for Israel's right to exist, defend itself, and thrive in peace and prosperity. I also support the continued delivery of security assistance, including Iron Dome and Iron Beam missile defense systems, and renewal of the U.S.–Israel Memorandum of Understanding providing \$3.8 billion annually in military aid.

Denise Powell: I strongly support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state. As the homeland and a refuge for the Jewish people, Israel's existence should not be questioned. It is also incredibly important for Americans and Israelis alike that Israel remains a democratic state. They are a key partner for spreading democracy and protecting U.S. security interests.

Crystal Rhoades: Yes absolutely. Of course Israel has the right to exist...and exist safely...and exist in the promised land. It is insane that in 2026 this is something that is controversial. As the only place in the world where any Jew can find safe haven after millennia of being the victims of violence across the globe (and less than two generations removed from the Holocaust), this is non-negotiable. We must stop giving lip service to the horrifying rise of antisemitism domestically. Leaders who refuse to call out the usage of 'Globalize the Intifada' or 'From the River to the Sea' must be held accountable in a meaningful way. We must stand strong against BDS movements that take root from college campuses to City Halls.

Daniel Osborn: Yes, I fully support Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state. From my time in the service, I learned that every nation has a right to defend its people and its sovereignty. The Jewish people deserve a state of their own where they can live in peace and security. Achieving stability in the Middle East is one of the greatest challenges we face, but that stability must be built on the bedrock of Israel's right to exist. I will bring that conviction with me to the U.S. Senate.

What principles guide your approach to U.S.–Israel relations and Middle East policy?

John Cavanaugh: My heart breaks for the innocent people on both sides of this awful conflict which has taken so many lives. Israel and the US have an important relationship. I believe Israel has the right to exist as a Jewish democratic state and I believe there should be an independent Palestinian state. I support a 2-state solution and a secure, peaceful future for both Israelis and Palestinians. Over the last several months, I've had long conversations with friends in the Omaha Jewish Community and others who represent other points of view, these conversations have been very helpful to me.

Brinker Harding: Peace through strength, not appeasement. I oppose any revival of the failed Iran Nuclear Deal. I support building on the Abraham Accords to expand normalization between Israel and Arab nations. I also support the Taylor Force Act and oppose any U.S. funding to the Palestinian Authority until it ends its "pay-to-slay" program. The BDS movement's goals are rooted in antisemitism and have no place in American institutions.

Denise Powell: I am dedicated to protecting the U.S.-Israel relationship, the security of our country, and promoting democracy and freedom in the region. I also believe strongly that for there to be lasting peace in the region, we must be committed to a two-state solution. The first steps must be to ensure that humanitarian aid can flow into Gaza and that the ceasefire holds. But then the United States must use its influence to make progress toward a two-state solution that allows peace and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Crystal Rhoades: The United States should honor its security assistance commitments to Israel in the 2016 memorandum of understanding, which are both vital to Israel's defense and also benefit the United States and continue a bi-partisan history of continuing these commitments across both Republican and Democratic Administrations. We must continue to authorize the necessary assistance to replenish Iron Dome, David's Sling, along with other forms of defense. As Israel's enemies have taken the step of using ballistic weapons in their unprovoked attacks on Israelis of all ethnicities, I will be a strong YES vote for supplemental appropriations to ensure Israel has the resources necessary to defend itself. I also believe that friendship is not conditional. US military aid is already subject to a host of conditions that aid to all countries are subject to. As a result, I will strongly oppose any conditions to aid on Israel and will vote NO on any legislation that includes conditions. To impose additional conditions is simply singling out the Jewish state in US policy, and that is unacceptable. In addition to strengthening our security partnership, I firmly support expanding economic cooperation between the United States and Israel. Joint ventures between our countries have delivered significant returns, creating jobs and generating wealth on both sides.

Daniel Osborn: When I signed the dotted line to serve, I did it because I believe in freedom. Those same values—democracy and individual liberty—guide my view of the Middle East. But my service also taught me a hard lesson: Washington's attempts to 'export democracy' through nation-building have often failed. I will be a Senator who leads with empathy and a commitment to our allies, but I will also be the first to call out government overreach. We must support Israel as a stable, democratic partner without falling back into the trap of policing the world at the expense of our own people.

Democracy and Civic Norms

What responsibilities do elected officials have in promoting civil discourse and protecting democratic institutions?

John Cavanaugh: Elected officials have a fundamental responsibility to uphold democratic institutions and promote civil discourse. I would co-sponsor the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the For the People Act to protect

voting rights and combat partisan gerrymandering and dark money in our elections. I oppose Trump's actions to make voting more difficult.

Brinker Harding: Elected officials set the tone. When leaders use their platforms to inflame division, dehumanize opponents, or spread misinformation, they erode the trust that makes self-governance possible. I believe in winning arguments with evidence and persuasion — not fear or falsehood. I've worked across the aisle on Omaha's City Council because the job requires it, and I'll bring that same commitment to Washington.

Denise Powell: One of the primary responsibilities of an elected official is to protect, support, and defend our democracy. As Trump and MAGA Republicans in DC continue to attack our democracy, this is one of the most important jobs for our next Congressperson. We must strengthen our democracy and make sure Americans maintain the ability to participate in our democracy, from voting to protesting. It is also the responsibility of every leader in this country to act civilly and lead by example with their rhetoric and actions - an imperative too many today fail. That must change in order to strengthen our country and overcome our divides.

Crystal Rhoades: Elected officials have a responsibility to lead by example. Telling the truth, respecting the rule of law, and rejecting rhetoric that undermines trust in our democracy. Promoting civil discourse doesn't mean avoiding tough debates; it means engaging them honestly, without dehumanizing opponents or encouraging division. Protecting democratic institutions requires defending free and fair elections, respecting judicial independence, and proper application of checks and balances. Congress needs to pass legislation to strengthen our democracy and protect the rights of Americans. There are a number of issues that have been identified over the last several years that could be implemented to reduce the likelihood of continued abuses of presidential power and immediate action should be taken to address those problems - gerrymandering, age limits for federal officials, etc.

Daniel Osborn: Elected officials have an outsized role in upholding and promoting civil discourse and protecting democratic institutions. In recent years, our elected officials have fallen far short of the mark in those responsibilities and have

regularly incited hostility against those pillars. If we are going to move forward as a country, we need our politicians to lower the temperature and work together to solve our country's biggest problems. On the face of it, that sounds impossible, right? That is why it is so essential to break the partisan divide by electing an independent candidate to the U.S. Senate, who can bring people together and find compromise. That is the only path forward.

What steps would you take to ensure that misinformation and extremist rhetoric do not undermine public trust or target minority communities?

John Cavanaugh: As a member of Congress, I will be a vocal and productive partner in calling out extremist rhetoric and misinformation when confronted with it. I will call it out and push the FCC and other regulatory agencies to play their role to ensure the public airwaves aren't being used to disseminate hate speech and intentional misinformation.

Brinker Harding: Extremist rhetoric and misinformation thrive when leaders stay quiet. I believe elected officials have an obligation to speak plainly when hate targets any community. Federal law enforcement must investigate and prosecute hate crimes and material support for terrorism aggressively. Beyond enforcement, I believe the strongest defense against extremism is the kind of trust built between communities over time — and that starts with leaders who take those relationships seriously.

Denise Powell: We should continue to call out misinformation and extremism when we see it. Bringing awareness to the issue is the first step. We also must ensure that victims of misinformation and extremism are fully protected.

Crystal Rhoades: I would be proactive and clear in calling out misinformation and extremist rhetoric, regardless of who it comes from. That starts with telling the truth, sharing verified information, and refusing to amplify fear or falsehoods for political gain. I would work with local leaders, educators, and community organizations to promote media literacy and ensure rapid, accurate communication during moments of tension. Just as importantly, I would support strong enforcement of laws that protect communities from harassment, threats, and violence. Protecting public trust means standing up for facts, accountability, and

the safety of every community. I also will advocate for the return of the fairness doctrine and require that traditional and social media platforms be required to provide both sides of controversial subjects to ensure the American people are hearing all sides of an issue, rather than being fed misinformation by the algorithm.

Daniel Osborn: I would work to place guardrails on social media and AI companies to reign-in the misinformation and extremist rhetoric their algorithms fan.

How do you approach policymaking in a culturally and religiously diverse district?

John Cavanaugh: Something that I think is incredibly important for elected officials is listening and working with diverse partners across our community and helping turn real-life concerns into policy. I approach policymaking by seeking input from communities with different beliefs, perspectives, and priorities. I have worked across the aisle in the Nebraska Legislature and believe good policy comes from genuine engagement with both constituents and lawmakers. I will bring this same collaborative approach to Congress, ensuring every community in NE-02 has a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. I'll make an intentional effort to show up at different places of worship and community events as a Congressman.

Brinker Harding: NE-02 is one of the most competitive and diverse districts in the country, and I think that's a strength. Earning the trust of a broad coalition of Nebraskans — not just those who already agree with me — makes for better representation. I've spent my career in public service doing exactly that, working across party lines and across communities because the job demands it. That won't change in Washington.

Denise Powell: I think as an elected official you should always listen twice as much as you speak. With a diverse district like ours, I will always seek to visit with members of various communities to hear what they need from their member of Congress. I believe it's important to get multiple perspectives on many issues, and I promise to always have an open-door policy so our community can voice their needs and concerns.

Crystal Rhoades: I approach policymaking by listening first and leading with respect. NE-02 is home to people of many cultures, faiths, and backgrounds, and effective representation means understanding how policies affect real lives across those differences. My focus is on finding common ground where possible, being honest where we disagree, and crafting policies rooted in fairness, dignity, and equal opportunity. A diverse district is a strength, and good policymaking reflects that reality rather than ignoring it.

Daniel Osborn: I enjoy and pride myself on seeking out a wide variety of opinions when I look to take a position on an issue. That includes perspectives across race, gender, religion, and socio-economic status. The job of a U.S. Senator is to make yourself available to hear every perspective and then make a decision on how to uplift what your constituents want. How you get that information is by meeting people where they are. When I ran for U.S. Senate in 2024, I had over 200 public events. I'm going to do even more this time around. When I get to the Senate, those events will not stop – those events are going to be how I absorb the perspectives of all Nebraskans across the state.

Healthcare and Well-Being

Access to affordable, high-quality healthcare remains a concern for many Nebraskans. What role should Congress play in improving healthcare access and affordability, including prevention, treatment, and access for children, families, and seniors?

John Cavanaugh: Healthcare is a human right. When Democrats take control of the House, one of our first priorities should be funding the ACA tax credits and restoring Medicaid funding. I support allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, and adding dental, vision, and hearing coverage to Medicare. I oppose efforts to restrict access to birth control and reproductive care.

Brinker Harding: America's healthcare system works best when it prioritizes lowering costs, increasing competition, and improving price transparency. I support maintaining private insurance as a core component of American healthcare — it drives innovation, competition, and patient choice. Federal policy should focus on

expanding access and reducing costs through market-based solutions, not government mandates. I also believe we must protect Medicare, Medicaid, and other critical safety nets for those who need them – seniors, veterans, struggling families, not able-bodied adults trying to game the system.

Denise Powell: Far too many families in this district find themselves forced to choose between seeing a doctor and paying their rent. Filling a prescription instead of filling the fridge. Many families are one health emergency away from financial ruin. In Congress, I will take on big pharmaceutical companies by requiring Medicare to negotiate prices for more prescription drugs and capping insulin costs at \$35 a month for everyone. I'll also take on insurance companies that unfairly deny people coverage for needed health care. We also must work to create a Medicare-like public option that gives every American the choice of affordable coverage while protecting private insurance for those who want it. And no matter what, we should build on the Affordable Care Act to make sure that – no matter how they access their health insurance – families aren't forced to spend an unreasonable share of their income on premiums and deductibles.

Crystal Rhoades: Healthcare is a right. Congress has a responsibility to make healthcare more affordable, accessible, and focused on prevention, not just crisis care. That means strengthening and expanding coverage, lowering prescription drug costs, and protecting Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP for seniors, families, and children. We should invest in preventive care and mental health services, especially in underserved communities, so people can get care early instead of waiting until problems become emergencies. No one should have to choose between seeing a doctor and paying their bills like I've had to do, and I will fight for a healthcare system that works for everyone.

Daniel Osborn: There are two glaring issues concerning healthcare in Nebraska that I would focus on as U.S. Senator. For one, there are 29 counties with no access to mental health services at all. 88 of Nebraska's 93 counties are considered mental health profession shortage areas. This comes at a time when farmer suicides are on the rise and the industry continues to have the highest suicide rates. As a U.S. Senator, I will work to grapple with this issue by securing federal funding to ensure rural communities have access to mental healthcare and work to pass a new Farm Bill to ensure our farmers stay profitable. Secondly, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

is going to devastate rural healthcare – an ecosystem that was already struggling. Nebraska needs a U.S. Senator that will stand up for rural healthcare and ensure its hospitals are adequately funded. That’s what I’ll fight for when I get to Washington.

Food Insecurity and Basic Needs

Food insecurity affects families, seniors, students, and working households across Nebraska. How should Congress address food insecurity, and what is your view of federal nutrition programs?

John Cavanaugh: I support strengthening federal nutrition programs and emergency food assistance. I also support expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, which help lift families out of poverty and improve food security for working Nebraskans.

Brinker Harding: Food insecurity is a real problem in Nebraska. Federal nutrition programs and school meal programs play an important role in ensuring families don't fall through the cracks. I support protecting these programs for the people who genuinely need them — children, seniors, veterans, the disabled and working families facing hardship. At the same time, Congress has a responsibility to ensure these programs are efficiently run and free from fraud and waste. The goal should be a bridge to self-sufficiency, not a permanent substitute for it.

Denise Powell: Donald Trump has cut funding for SNAP, and last year when the government was shut down, he refused to release funding for federal nutrition programs, allowing millions of families to miss meals. This is cruel, and Congress should fully fund these programs to help the most vulnerable families. I will always protect programs like SNAP and WIC - particularly for kids and seniors.

Crystal Rhoades: Food insecurity is a moral and economic failure, especially in a state that helps feed the world. Congress should strengthen federal nutrition programs like SNAP, WIC, school meals, and senior nutrition programs, which are proven to reduce hunger and improve health and educational outcomes. These programs support working families, children, seniors, and rural communities alike. We should also address root causes by raising wages, supporting family farmers,

and investing in local food systems. No child, senior, or working family should go hungry in Nebraska, and federal policy should reflect that basic commitment.

Daniel Osborn: Like many states in our region, Nebraska has massive food deserts. One of our biggest grocers is Dollar General, which sells cheap processed foods. If it weren't for federal nutrition programs, many of these communities would suffer serious health-related conditions. Even before SNAP was cut in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, there was a vacuum that needed to be filled in Nebraska. Now, rural communities are going to from reduced funding. As Nebraska's U.S. Senator, I will work to restore previous funding levels for SNAP and ensure our state's most vulnerable communities are being supported by this important program.

What is your perspective on federal nutrition programs, such as SNAP and school meal programs?

John Cavanaugh: I strongly support SNAP, school meal programs, and other federal nutrition programs. These are lifelines for families, seniors, children, and working households who struggle to put food on the table. I oppose cuts to these programs. Every child deserves access to nutritious meals at school, and every family deserves to be able to eat. These programs also support local economies and are among the most effective anti-poverty tools we have. I will fight any effort to use these programs as political bargaining chips.

Brinker Harding: I support nutrition programs that serve the people who truly need them — children, seniors, veterans, the disabled and working families. Congress's job is to protect those programs and make sure they work as intended.

Denise Powell: I absolutely support federal nutrition programs and programs to feed kids in school. This should not be controversial — it is simply the right thing to do. Investment in school lunches is also proven to increase academic performance and reduce behavioral issues. When kids aren't worrying about being hungry, they're better able to focus on learning.

Crystal Rhoades: I strongly support federal nutrition programs like SNAP and school meal programs because they work. These programs reduce hunger, improve health, and help children learn and succeed in school. They support working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and rural communities across Nebraska. I

myself was a beneficiary of these programs and will fight to ensure they are there for the working class families like mine who worked hard, but were paid low wages so that they might use the opportunity to climb into the middle class - just like I did.

Daniel Osborn: I think SNAP is an essential federal program and I will vote to support adequate funding as a U.S. Senator.

How can federal policy better support community-based and faith-based organizations working to meet basic needs?

John Cavanaugh: Community-based and faith-based organizations are often the first responders when people need help, such as providing food, shelter, counseling, and support services that the government alone cannot deliver. I support maintaining and expanding nonprofit infrastructure funding and ensuring that Jewish community centers, food banks, houses of worship, and other faith-based organizations have the resources they need. I also support charitable tax protections that encourage philanthropic giving, which is the lifeblood of these organizations. Federal policy should be a partner to, not a burden on, the community institutions that Nebraskans rely on every day.

Brinker Harding: Faith-based and community organizations are often more effective and efficient than federal agencies at delivering services because they know their neighbors. Congress should reduce the bureaucratic barriers that prevent these organizations from accessing federal partnership funding and expand initiatives like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. Congress should empower these organizations, not compete with them.

Denise Powell: First, we need to end the politicized approach by the Trump administration where funding is determined or cut based upon an organization's perceived political beliefs. I'll be a strong advocate for robust funding for the community and faith-based organizations that strengthen our communities and provide a critical lifeline to tens of thousands, such as those fighting hunger, supporting domestic violence survivors, and so many more priorities.

Crystal Rhoades: Federal policy should treat community-based and faith-based organizations as true partners. Congress can help by increasing flexible grant funding, cutting red tape that keeps small organizations from accessing federal

dollars, and ensuring funds reach groups already trusted in their communities. These organizations often know local needs best, whether it's food, housing, childcare, or disaster relief, and they can respond quickly and compassionately. Support should always respect constitutional boundaries and ensure services are accessible to everyone. Strengthening these partnerships is one of the most effective ways to meet basic needs with dignity and efficiency.

Daniel Osborn: To better address community and faith-based organizations, elected officials need to do more listening and less preaching. As Nebraska's next U.S. Senator, I am excited for the prospect of hearing about the issues from an array of perspectives from constituents across the Cornhusker State. My focus would be to intentionally seek out the time and space to meet with community and faith-based organizations to understand their needs and collaborate with them to find solutions.

Economy and Cost of Living

What are your top economic priorities for NE-02, particularly regarding cost-of-living pressures?

John Cavanaugh: My top economic priority is making sure people can afford a home, health care, and everyday goods.

With housing, we should be preventing private equity firms from buying up homes and finding ways to build housing more affordably. I support making corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share so we can invest in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and good-paying jobs. I support raising the national minimum wage and indexing it to inflation.

Brinker Harding: Since 2020, consumer prices are up nearly 26%, rent has jumped 33%, and home prices have spiked 55%. My priorities are straightforward: make the pro-growth tax cuts permanent, cut the regulatory red tape that drives up housing costs, and take on big pharma so Nebraskans aren't subsidizing the rest of the world's drug prices. Research shows government regulation accounts for nearly a third of the cost of a new home in Omaha — that's a policy failure Congress can address.

Denise Powell: As a working mom and small business owner, I know how hard it can be to manage a family budget, especially when the cost of just about

everything continues to skyrocket. From groceries to energy bills to healthcare, costs continue to rise, putting a major strain on families all across the district. In Congress, I'll stop Trump's illegal tariffs to help bring down the costs of items Nebraska families need every day. We also need to expand clean energy production to bring down costs in the short term while protecting our environment in the long run. Housing costs are also a major contributor to folks' economic struggles. We need to build more high-quality, affordable housing that is attainable for first-time homebuyers and middle-class families. Finally, we need to address healthcare and childcare costs. I'll fight to keep healthcare premiums down so that every family can afford to see a doctor when they need to. I will also address the need for more affordable, high-quality childcare, including investing in Head Start programs and childcare centers, so that working parents have the support they need to get ahead while knowing their children are well cared for.

Crystal Rhoades: My top economic priority for NE-02 is lowering everyday costs for working families. That means tackling housing affordability, lowering prescription drug and healthcare costs, and fighting for living wages for the workforce. I support policies that raise wages, protect workers' rights, and invest in good-paying jobs without raising taxes on working people. We also need to rein in corporate price gouging and ensure tax policy rewards work, not wealth. Families shouldn't be falling behind while doing everything right, and Congress has a responsibility to make the economy work for them.

Daniel Osborn: My top economic priorities for NE-02 focus on 'bread-and-butter' issues that help working families keep more of what they earn. This includes cutting taxes for the middle class and small businesses—specifically by eliminating the tax on overtime pay—and lowering the cost of essentials by taking on corporate monopolies in the pharmaceutical and meatpacking industries. I am also committed to Right to Repair legislation to reduce costs for farmers and car owners, and ensuring Social Security remains strong so our seniors aren't forced to choose between groceries and medicine. Finally, I will be outspoken in my beliefs that tariffs should be issued by Congress—not the Executive Branch—to reduce costs for working families.

Nebraska faces workforce shortages and brain drain. What federal policies would you support to attract and retain talent?

John Cavanaugh: To address workforce shortages and brain drain, I support expanding federal investment in registered apprenticeship programs. I have championed apprenticeship legislation in the Nebraska Legislature and will continue this work in Congress.

Brinker Harding: Nebraska has real workforce shortages in manufacturing, healthcare, and the skilled trades. I support strengthening career and technical education, expanding apprenticeship programs, and empowering businesses and workers to build the partnerships that meet those needs. I also support updating employment-based visa pathways so Nebraska employers can access the talent they need while prioritizing opportunities for American workers.

Denise Powell: Our federal policies should focus on making Nebraska an affordable place to live with access to the resources and amenities that people, especially young people, need when looking to build a life and career. We should invest in housing and childcare to make sure that people can afford to buy a home and raise children if they choose to. We should invest in our rural communities, expanding broadband and offering targeted incentives like loan forgiveness for healthcare workers that live and work in rural areas. And as so many of our workforce shortages affect our agricultural and healthcare industries, we should focus on comprehensive immigration reform that benefits Nebraska, these vital industries, and workers.

Crystal Rhoades: To address workforce shortages and brain drain, federal policy should make it easier for people to build a life in Nebraska. That means investing in housing, student debt relief, and living wage jobs. I support expanding apprenticeship and workforce training programs tied to local employers, investing in higher education and research, and supporting immigration policies that help fill critical gaps in healthcare, tech, and skilled trades. We should also invest in quality-of-life infrastructure, broadband, transit, and healthcare, so people don't have to leave to find opportunity. We must also pass laws to ensure a woman's right to choose and end cannabis prohibition. The restrictive and authoritarian nature of the Nebraska Legislature and its regressive policies are creating an environment where we cannot compete with the free states. Workers will not stay in a regressive place where taxes are high and freedoms are low when there are

other areas of the country that can better support the life they want to build for their families.

Daniel Osborn: Nebraska is uniquely positioned to rapidly expand the workforce in education and medicine given the concentration of major research institutions such as the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Creighton University. Paired with those academic institutions are the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine, which have become major institutions in the region. In securing federal funding for these institutions, the Omaha/Lincoln area could see significant investment in the private sector as young people are increasingly drawn to the region. A concurrent issue that would need to be addressed in order to foster this growth is ensuring that housing is affordable. One way to do that is to reduce property taxes at the state level, but we also need to address the systemic issue of private equity companies driving up housing prices by purchasing as much as a third of all single-family residential properties. As U.S. Senator, I would work to grapple with this issue to ensure that our youth are able to one day own a home, just like previous generations were able to achieve. Additionally, Congress needs to eliminate predatory lending in higher education, which is something I would be eager to co-sponsor as a member of the U.S. Senate.

What federal investments or policy changes would help make Nebraska more competitive and innovative over the next decade?

John Cavanaugh: I support serious investment in education from early childhood through higher education, including career and technical programs and apprenticeships. Fair trade agreements that keep good jobs in Nebraska rather than shipping them overseas are also essential to our long-term future.

Brinker Harding: Nebraska's competitiveness over the next decade depends on getting the fundamentals right. That means modernizing federal permitting laws to reduce unnecessary delays on infrastructure and energy projects, promoting more pro-growth tax policies so businesses can plan and invest with confidence, and expanding U.S.–Israel cooperation on ag-tech, water management, and energy innovation — areas where Nebraska stands to benefit directly. Congress should

also establish a clear national framework for AI governance that promotes innovation and maintains American leadership in emerging technologies, rather than allowing a patchwork of conflicting state regulations to slow progress.

Denise Powell: We need to invest in workforce development, partnering with community colleges, universities, and our local labor unions to ensure the next generation of Nebraskans have the skills they need to help our state grow. We should also continue to invest in our agricultural sector, helping farmers to adapt to a changing climate and market. Finally, in NE-02, we have a growing small-business and entrepreneurial community, and the federal government should invest in small business programs that help grow a community like ours.

Crystal Rhoades: Nebraska's competitiveness depends on smart, long-term federal investments. That includes funding for workforce training and apprenticeships, research partnerships with our universities, and strong support for agriculture, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing. We need major investment in broadband, transportation, and water infrastructure so rural and urban communities alike can grow. I also support policies that lower barriers for small businesses, expand access to capital, and attract entrepreneurs and innovators. If we invest in people, infrastructure, and homegrown ideas, Nebraska can lead over the next decade.

Daniel Osborn: To make Nebraska more competitive, we need federal policies that prioritize the 'human capital' of our state. This means cutting taxes for small businesses to honor our city's entrepreneurial spirit and investing in vocational and tech training so our youth have a future here. I also believe innovation is stifled by corporate monopolies; by passing Right to Repair and enforcing Antitrust laws, we can lower costs for everyone. Finally, we must ensure our communities are safe to innovate by fully funding security and infrastructure grants for our local nonprofits and schools.

Engagement and Accountability

How will you engage with faith-based and minority communities if elected?

John Cavanaugh: I am committed to meaningful, ongoing engagement with faith-based and minority communities, not just around election time, but as a core part

of how I govern. I will maintain open lines of communication with organizations like the JCRC Omaha and Jewish Federation of Omaha, faith leaders, and community groups across NE-02. I will attend community events, hold listening sessions with diverse communities, and ensure that faith-based and minority voices are reflected in the policy decisions I make in Congress. Building authentic relationships is essential to serving all constituents well, and I look forward to that partnership.

Brinker Harding: Consistently and genuinely. I've spent my career building coalitions across Omaha — across party lines, faiths, and backgrounds — because I believe relationships are the foundation of good governance. The people of NE-02 deserve a representative who knows their communities, understands their concerns, and remains accessible long after Election Day.

Denise Powell: As your Congressman, I will get out into the district and community as much as possible. I want to be present at community events in different faith-based and minority communities to hear about what people need from Congress. I'm also committed to ensuring my Congressional staff here and in DC is representative of our district; not simply checking boxes, but ensuring our team members are deeply ingrained and connected to the communities we'll be serving.

Crystal Rhoades: I already engage with faith-based and minority communities regularly. I attend services and community events, but more importantly, I knock on their doors and call them regularly to check in and see what's on their mind. I have lived and worked in these communities. I am the only person in the race, who does not come from wealth. I have lived and worked in north and South Omaha and have numerous connections to neighborhood associations, community groups, and faith based organizations. My commitment is to represent everyone in NE-02, protect religious freedom, and ensure all communities are treated with dignity, fairness, and equal access to opportunity and government resources.

Daniel Osborn: Like I said previously, I am committed to doing regular, open door town halls once I get to the Senate. In addition to targeting geographic areas in planning those town halls, I would be interested in working with faith-based and minority communities to uplift their thoughts and issues in an intentional way.

What does accountability to constituents mean to you in practice?

John Cavanaugh: Accountability means staying genuinely connected to the people of NE-02, not just at election time. One of my greatest strengths is listening and working with partners across our community and turning real-life concerns into policy. As a state legislator, I have been accessible to constituents and worked across the aisle to get things done. In Congress, I will hold regular town halls, maintain open lines of communication with community organizations, and be transparent about my positions and votes. Elected officials should be measured by results, whether the policies they champion actually improve people's lives.

Brinker Harding: A good representative remembers that the job isn't about them. Too many people arrive in Washington and start optimizing for their own re-election or their own career. The people who sent them there become an afterthought. On the Omaha City Council, I show up, do the work, and remain accountable to the people I represent. I don't always get it right, but I never lose sight of whose interests I am here to serve. That means making decisions based on what's right for Nebraska — even when it's not the easiest path — and supporting real reforms like banning Congressional stock trading, ending Congressional pay during government shutdowns, and passing realistic term limits.

Denise Powell: It means always being transparent with the community about what you are doing in Congress. Explaining why you voted the way you did, discussing why some things succeeded and why some failed. It means showing up to face your constituents and being honest with them. As your member of Congress, I want you to tell me what you need and want, and what concerns you most. I also want you to tell me when I get it right and when I get it wrong. We may not always agree, but I will always face you and have an honest, transparent conversation.

Crystal Rhoades: Accountability means I report to the voters. I've been in elective office for twenty years and I have never been confused about who I represent. In each of those roles I have had other stakeholders - judges, lawyers, interest groups, lobbyists attempt to influence, persuade, or bully me to bend to their demands. I never have because I report to the voters. There are many examples of this, but I will give you just one. As Clerk of the District Court, my office is tasked with processing civil commitments for mentally ill patients. Shortly after I took office I learned the County Attorney, the Board of Mental Health, and the District Court Bench were knowingly violating these patients rights by holding them for extended

periods without a hearing, not telling them their rights, not appointing public defenders, not sharing information with guardians - in short multiple civil rights violations. When I brought this to the attention of the stakeholders, they actively fought the reforms - including having the state patrol harass me and my staff. It didn't matter - I kept talking about it. I kept insisting it be resolved even in the face of intimidation and threats - because I report to the electorate. They are counting on me to fix what's broken and protect the vulnerable. That's the kind of accountability I will always provide.

Daniel Osborn: Accountability as an elected official means that the only people you answer to are Nebraskans. Not party bosses, not donors, just the people you are elected to represent. That only works if you make yourself available to feedback and criticism, which I would embrace in the form of regular and accessible town halls.

Optional

*Is there anything else you would like voters in the Jewish community to know?
(Optional; 100 words)*

John Cavanaugh: I am honored to seek the support of Nebraska's Jewish community and share your commitment to fighting antisemitism and building a just and pluralistic society. I believe deeply in Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, and making people's lives better guides my approach to public service. I will be a strong voice for the security and dignity of Jewish Nebraskans in Congress, a consistent defender of our democratic institutions, and a committed partner to the JCRC Omaha, the Jewish Federation, and the broader Jewish community in the important work you do every day.

Brinker Harding: In Congress, I will be a proud friend of the Jewish people around the globe and our 8,800 Jewish neighbors in Omaha. I will condemn antisemitism and hate wherever or whenever or from whoever it occurs.

Denise Powell: I know the past few years have been particularly challenging for the Jewish community here and across the country, and I've been heartened to see the way the JCRC has rallied to care for the physical and mental health of the

community. It's an honor to have the chance to earn your support and partnership, and I will always work hard - every day - to earn your trust.

Crystal Rhoades: This race has become a choice between myself and Cavanaugh. He has made his lack of support for Israel clear. He understands that if he is elected to Congress, Governor Pillen will appoint his replacement. This would grant the Governor the legislative votes necessary to proceed with redistricting CD2 and returning Nebraska to a "winner-take-all" system, effectively removing CD2 from competitive play. This outcome would be detrimental to Nebraska and our democracy.

Daniel Osborn: As an Independent, I answer to Nebraskans, not party bosses. I want the Jewish community to know that I am a fierce advocate for religious freedom and a zero-tolerance policy toward antisemitism. Whether it's securing federal Nonprofit Security Grants for our synagogues or fighting the normalization of hate in our politics, I will always stand up for the safety and dignity of my neighbors. My door is always open to the Omaha Jewish community because a stronger, safer NE-02 is only possible when we protect the pluralism that makes our district great.