



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

Caitlin Knutson – Candidate for LD 2

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 leaders take an oath to uphold our Constitution which demands freedom of religion for all and prevents the government from establishing a religion or interfering with the free exercise of religion. Leaders have a responsibility and obligation to uphold these rights and liberties and speak out against any form of hate or discrimination.

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

Antisemitism is wrong and it includes prejudice, hostility and discrimination toward Jewish people and communities. Antisemitic discrimination is prohibited under federal and state laws.

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?

One of the reasons I am running for office is to restore civility in our public discourse. As a veteran teacher I have been honored to help children of all diverse backgrounds and religions achieve their full potential. I teach my children to treat everyone with dignity, respect, and kindness and will bring that same experience and leadership to my work on the campaign trail and in the state Legislature.

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 that existing state and federal anti-discrimination laws should be robustly and equally enforced to protect all people from religious discrimination. There is danger in silence when any group is persecuted by others or the government because of their religious beliefs. I would use my voice and my platform to speak out against acts of hate and unlawful discrimination and ensure fair and equal treatment for all.

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 person deserves a safe community, and every house of worship deserves safety to practice their religion. I support the recent efforts in the Nebraska Legislature to provide safety and security grants to religious entities to ensure safety. I am proud to be endorsed by local law enforcement in my race due to my commitment to public safety.

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?

As a veteran teacher I know from firsthand experience in the classroom we can, and we must find a way for all students to have an opportunity to learn and thrive and that includes safe classrooms and a commitment to guard against discrimination of any kind. Our democracy has always acknowledged these tensions and worked to strike the right balance between majority rules and minority rights. Religious minorities deserve an

opportunity to practice their faith free from government interference and be welcomed in all aspects of our community and schools.

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?

I believe that Nebraska should ensure swift and full implementation of existing antidiscrimination laws and laws that have recently passed in Nebraska to strengthen Holocaust education because it is important we remember victims and survivors, teach truth, and ensure these dark tragic chapters are not repeated in our history.

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?

I support a pause on the massive tax cuts that primarily benefit the wealthiest and largest corporations that have significantly contributed to a structural budget deficit. I commit to balancing the budget and making sure our budget serves Nebraskans not Wall Street or partisan or corporate interests at the expense of our everyday Nebraskans. I would prioritize public safety, education, infrastructure, natural resources, veteran's programs, a strong safety net for the disabled, and workforce programs like healthcare, housing and childcare to help Nebraska families who are grappling with affordability concerns and address our states top challenges in workforce needs.

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?

A balanced budget and strong cash reserves are hallmarks of fiscally conservative and responsible budgeting. I am deeply concerned that in just a few short years state leaders have squandered a massive budget surplus and created a massive structural deficit and put too much pressure on raiding our reserves and other cash funds and trust funds away from their intended purposes. That is fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable.

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?

I did not support the deep cuts to the SNAP program in the recent federal bills and I do support efforts on the state level to restore access to basic necessities like food for veterans, the homeless, children, the disabled and others who cannot meet the new work requirements. I support universal school meals and efforts like WIC that support pregnant women and new mothers and their children. Nutrition programs are a win win- they have a significant return on investment for local retailers and ag producers, and they ensure access to nutritious food for those in need so they can live with dignity and have better learning and health outcomes.

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?

My husband and I are a middle-class family that are not wealthy. We know first-hand how challenging it is to make ends meet when raising children and see how the rising cost of basic necessities like housing, home insurance, food, gas, medical care, and childcare are really hurting families, small businesses, and family farmers across my district and all across our state. Nebraska has made strides in recent years to make housing more accessible and affordable through housing and tax credit measures, and I would protect those efforts from future budget cuts and work with my colleagues to further address affordability and accessibility to housing.

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 has a significant challenge with workforce needs. Solutions like childcare, housing, healthcare, education, apprenticeships, and job training are important to prioritize. I support legal immigration and value the contributions our immigrant neighbors make to our communities and economy.

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?

I am working hard to become a Nebraska State Senator and one reason I am running and working so hard is to restore civility in our public discourse. I am not afraid of different viewpoints. I am an enthusiastic learner. I will use my life experience as a teacher to ensure all Nebraskans who contact my office are heard, are assisted to the best of our ability, and will be happy to take meetings, visit community events, and stay in conversation and relationship with Jewish and other faith communities.

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?

My district is diverse with a substantial number of residents in our capital city of Lincoln, suburban and small-town neighbors, and many rural residents as well. I am a leader that brings curiosity, hard work, and empathy to everything I do. I will always be open to communicating with my constituents, sharing my perspective, and listening to theirs. I have travelled throughout my district and knocked on over 10,000 doors and have had the

honor to meet Nebraskans with all diverse kinds of perspectives and backgrounds. I will always be accountable and accessible to my district and community leaders across Nebraska.

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 these important and difficult conversations with an open heart and an open mind. I will proudly work with the Jewish community to learn more and be a strong partner whenever I can to strike the right balance for all.