



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?

Prioritizing the well-being of the people in my district and speaking up for them, including the Jewish community, will always be a top priority. That means taking a clear stand against antisemitism whenever people's safety or rights are threatened. That may lead to uncomfortable confrontation and conversation with supporters or allies, but it is important that we hold equal standards of accountability to counter antisemitism and all forms of hatred. I will always try to prioritize healing and education because I believe ignorance is often the barrier to finding better ways to facilitate disagreement. A cornerstone of my perspective is the beauty of pluralistic America and the importance of maintaining it, even through difficult times and difficult conversations. I hope that my attitude and actions will always reflect that open-hearted belief.

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

Antisemitism is hostility towards Jewish people, particularly through the avenues of discrimination, scapegoating, and exclusion. Legitimate political speech is specific, policy-based, and grounded in facts. Antisemitism and, more broadly, hatred, as it exists in our politics, relies on innuendo and in-group/out-group dynamics or tropes that undermine the very possibility of political dialogue. Furthermore, a willingness to enter good-faith conversations and coexist in shared spaces is an important indicator of legitimate political criticism versus antisemitism, which thrives on echo chamber environments. Language that ostracizes, overtly accuses, or threatens the safety or rights of another is certainly crossing the line.

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?

Campaigns, especially in non-partisan races like the ones we have here in Nebraska, should be about the issues. Posturing to divide our communities along ethnic, religious, or racial fault lines in order to pit people against each other and gain votes is not appropriate and is an incredibly dangerous type of politics, not just for the safety of those targeted, but for the continued coexistence of our entire society. A commitment to the values of being a multi-ethnic, religiously diverse society is key to continuing to strive for the mutual well-being of all people.

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?

Ensuring the safety of all Nebraskans under threat of hatred and violence is an absolute. I view my role as a state senator as supporting policies that reasonably promote public safety and, when acts of violence, hatred, or bias occur, unequivocally condemning them while serving as a role model and, hopefully, an outlet for civil discourse and dialogue. Addressing security and education policy gaps as they arise and promoting pro-social behavior, especially among young people, is critical, and that is how I view my own personal job as a young person. Regarding the IHRA definition, I do have some concerns about whether that definition of antisemitism infringes upon legitimate political criticism of Israel. Because of that, I do not believe that we should codify it legislatively because free speech must be protected, and efforts, even if well-intentioned, that infringe upon it end up being counterproductive in the long term.

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?

Consistent engagement with communities under threat, combined with refraining from engaging in and actively condemning inciteful rhetoric, will hopefully help build a more inclusive political atmosphere and improve feelings of safety. All Nebraskans should have the opportunity to thrive in a welcoming state without fear of persecution for their religious beliefs, ethnic, or racial background. Ensuring that, as a partner with law enforcement, such threats are properly elevated, investigated, and action is taken. Continuing to balance that, though, as a crossroads for an open civic discourse and ideally acting as an outflow for many of those energies. Elected officials should be sufficiently accessible to the people of their district so they feel that, even without 100% alignment, there is a good-faith effort to advocate on their behalf in both legislative bodies and civic society. My perhaps naïve hope and assessment is that, with a little more listening from our elected officials, some of the tension and disillusionment with modern society that has given rise to an unfortunate and disgraceful normalization of political violence can be defused.

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?

Church and state need to be separated, especially in our schools, for this precise reason. Our public schools are meant for everyone, and legislation that has been attempted to be passed here in Nebraska and successfully passed in other regions of the United States threatens to shatter that public good and give substantial preference to majority religions. Personal expressions of faith have a place in public life and our culture, but should people choose to do so, which is why not establishing

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?

The Legislature needs to be very thoughtful on this front because, in my view, overstepping into the State Board of Education and local school board jurisdiction has been a point of tension, so collaboration between Education Boards and the Legislature is key. Now, my perspective on the actual issue of religious, and specifically antisemitic, discrimination in our school system is that part of its rise is due to its transgressive nature. Antisemitic phraseology and rhetoric have been mainstreamed and “memeified”, especially among younger people, in a similar way to how anti-immigrant and anti-black rhetoric was during my middle school years (2014-2016). I don't use those terms to make light of the situation, but to underscore how the information spreads and why it is difficult for authority figures to contain. The risk of taking too heavy a hand is that it legitimizes the transgressive nature of the discriminatory language and rhetoric, further creating a divide between the students harmed and those using the language or engaging in discrimination. So, like most anti-social behaviors, education, particularly in this case, world religions curriculum, would go a long way in preventing transgressive signaling, which thrives on ignorance masking itself as “forbidden” knowledge, from escalating into antisemitic worldviews and discriminatory behavior. Ensuring that support staff and educators have the tools and training to intervene when necessary, so nobody is left high and dry, is critical to implementing this approach on the ground.

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 should eliminate tax incentives for data centers and reexamine existing policies on the books, which have cost us over \$ 900 million in the past four years. This step alone would stop significant bleeding in our projected shortfall. Second, I believe we need to restructure our tax code to be more progressive through additional income brackets; pursuing the last round of income tax cuts without revenue thresholds was irresponsible policymaking and a major reason we are in our current projected shortfall. While that restructuring conversation may take longer to see dividends, as it stands, there are nearly \$80,000,000 in tax loopholes that only top filers have access to on the books; these loopholes have been identified in previous legislation for closure, so I would support their closure for short-term stability. Speaking of which, I will prioritize protecting healthcare and education. If there is one lesson to learn from the general study of economic

development, it is that when you improve human well-being through health and opportunity for higher education, you see better outcomes across nearly all other metrics, so maintaining that strong human infrastructure will be critical to our state's future.

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?

As I mentioned, we need to be smarter about how we make policy. These income tax cuts will ultimately cost our state far more in the long term than if we approached them with revenue thresholds, as many other states have done when pursuing similar priorities. When we have a budget surplus, using that extra cash to plant seeds that will ultimately grow our state on the human side matters. I believe New Mexico's handling of its post-COVID budget surplus was admirable, using it as seed funding for a Child Care Wealth Fund. Looking at longstanding problems and fully committing to long-term solutions. Looking at state corporate tax incentive policy too, I believe the trauma of ConAgra Foods leaving has led to an overcorrection, at the expense of the state's long-term fiscal health. We only have so much control over the direction individual companies choose, so we need to ensure that the effort to chase economic growth doesn't cost the social services, education, childcare, and healthcare systems that support a high quality of life.

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?

Full participation in programs like SNAP and WIC should be the standard. I will be an advocate in connecting Nebraskans with food assistance programs, because when these services get cut, it is often children paying the price who are going hungry or not getting the nutrition they need. I would also like to build out a micro-grant program for community

gardens, similar to Minnesota's, to ensure widespread access to fresh, local produce. Finally, continuing to foster connections between local food banks, community leaders, and the state government is important so that when emergencies like the one experienced last Fall happen again, a response is already in place.

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?

First of all, Omaha and some neighborhoods in District 6 in particular have seen a recent astronomical increase in institutional investors buying up affordable housing stock, or starter homes. I believe that practice needs to be scaled back or banned to ensure that the existing housing stock is maximized. Second, I support efforts to direct state resources into affordable housing construction and other efforts to expand entry-level housing across the state; if we want to grow, people need a place to live. Finally, if the state pursues property tax relief, I will fight to ensure the aid goes primarily to homeowners and those who need it most. Closing corporate tax exemptions is a key part of this effort.

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?

Immigrants add so much to Nebraska, so ensuring that we have enough affordable housing and job opportunities to not only attract people here, but also keep young graduates here is incredibly important. I support a variety of measures to expand workforce housing, keep utility rates low, and widen access to much-needed programs like affordable childcare. This includes allowing Public Power Districts to charge residents a lower rate by raising rates for large consumers and creating a state childcare fund to ensure a sustainable future for early childcare education funding. Beyond just access to the essentials like housing and childcare, which build a robust community, continuing to strengthen the research opportunities being done at the University of Nebraska is essential to ensure that we can continue to make scientific discoveries here in Nebraska, which is the best path towards giving our economy the depth and dynamism that we need for strong growth. I take a lot of

inspiration from North Carolina's Research Triangle and how it has developed so well over the last decade as a potential model to adapt to Nebraska's circumstances. On the other end of things as well, we need to push back against legislation and policies that create hostile environments for refugees and immigrants and ensure safe housing standards are being enforced.

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?

First and foremost, I treat representation very seriously as the primary function of this service, and it's something that doesn't go away when disagreement arises. As a state senator, I have a responsibility to meet with and build relationships with constituents. This means an open-door policy, regular communication, and meetings, both during sessions and in between. I want to be the sort of state senator who is active in the community and accessible for everything, from quick phone calls to important events.

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 want to make sure that I am accessible across the district and do my best to combat blind spots in my outreach. A huge part of that effort, in addition to traditional communication channels, will be accessibility through social media, town halls, and participation in District events. I want to know what's going on, how I can help, and to be an accessible presence where I'm wanted. The goal of that relationship-building is to create diverse venues and avenues to get feedback on legislation, understand perspectives I may not have considered, and ensure that majority-backed bills don't end up infringing on civil or religious rights. I would like to serve on the Education Committee in the Legislature, so building these relationships is incredibly important to me because we deserve a school system where everyone can feel at home.

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?

Listening to lived experiences is first and foremost incredibly important to how I approach conversations about Israel. While my research background is in foreign policy and national security, in my role as a state senator, the human element comes first, so I want to make sure I'm available to understand people's experiences. Furthermore, I want to make sure that in our conversations more broadly, we clearly separate foreign policy from the local impact and safety of all parties involved. Maintaining and strengthening Nebraska as a place where we can have legitimate, fact-based political discussion across a wide range of viewpoints and topics is my priority and, in my opinion, more important than the Legislature's viewpoint on foreign policy itself. I want to embrace the non-partisan perspective of our legislature on this issue, and that means exercising restraint when action or speech may lead to further division, and taking a clear stand when people's safety or rights are at stake.