



## State Legislative Races Candidate Questionnaire

**Deadline for submission: 5:00PM PDT, October 4, 2024**

The City of Bend has a vibrant business community, comprised of small, medium and large businesses. As a state legislator, you will play a crucial role in supporting and fostering its growth through the policies you adopt in Salem.

To help Chamber members understand your stance on business-related issues and Chamber priorities, we kindly request your responses to the following questions. **Please limit your answers to 250 words per question.**

Completed questionnaires will be posted on the Bend Chamber website in PDF format for both Chamber members and the general public to view.

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### Bend Chamber Priorities and Policy Principles

Whether reviewing local city and county ordinances or weighing in on legislative proposals in Salem, the Chamber has an active and effective advocacy program.

We are a 501(c6) organization and engage in direct advocacy at all levels of government. Our guiding policy principles, set by the Chamber Board of Directors, include:

- Re-build a state where businesses thrive in our community and ensure sustainable funding sources absent additional impacts on businesses
  - Increase the supply of attainable housing, prioritizing workforce housing at 80-120 percent AMI
  - Promote economic vitality, workforce development and innovation for a vibrant business community
  - Support for transportation and infrastructure projects to alleviate traffic congestion and plan for future growth
  - Increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare; and ensure adequate funding for K-12 public education
  - Advocate for a thoughtful balance between environmental sustainability and economic health
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**Please provide your name and answer the questions under each of the categories.**

**First / Last name\***

Emerson |

Levy

**Regulatory & Tax Environment**

1. How would you streamline bureaucracy and reduce regulatory burdens to make it easier for businesses to operate in Oregon?\*

Our state government needs to increase transparency and accountability, especially with our largest agencies. Oregonians deserve to know where their tax dollars are going and our partners carrying out state policy deserve to be paid in a timely manner.

Reducing bureaucracy will be a focus of my next term, for example I have talked to too many organizations that waited 8+ months to get funds and then needed to submit their reports outlying what they did with the state funds months later. We have the ability to address this in bills, for example, in the Housing Bill, we made sure that money went out through the pre-approval procurement process and money was out the door within weeks.

It's important that we address procurement at the bill stage and build in accountability and work with our new Attorney General/Department of Justice to get money out the door.

2. What are your thoughts on the state's tax system, is it efficient or does it need to be revisited and modernized?\*

Right now our tax system is ranked 28th for business in the country, however, in a recent survey done by Oregon Business and Industry only 17% of Oregon businesses think that the State Legislature cares about their business. We need to work to change that perception, especially as we are losing population in Portland, which will eventually affect our long term revenue for the state of Oregon.

I am proud to be endorsed by OBI and I am proudly pro-business. I do not believe the multiple taxes in Multnomah County are efficient. They have many additional taxes to pay in addition to other counties in the state. We need to build up our downtown core, and these taxes make bringing businesses back to downtown more challenging.

Additionally, we need to address the declining gas tax, which as cars become more fuel efficient the tax model is becoming regressive, because those with the most expensive electric cars, which are heavy and therefore cause damage to the roads are paying the least. However, we want to encourage electrification but we need to at the same time address if this is a regressive model, in order to have funds to plow the roads and maintain safety projects.

As to the CAT tax, I have been open and encourage the legislature to make sure that goods are not double taxed and look forward to continuing those conversations.

## Workforce Housing & Growth

1. What specific policies do you propose to accelerate housing development for growing communities in Central Oregon?\*

We need to make it easier to build more housing. We are short units in central Oregon and the state. The Governor has set an ambitious goal to build 35,000 homes.

As a member of the Housing and Homelessness Committee, we passed the largest housing package in Oregon's history, and passed UGB reforms to make it easier to build housing. Additionally, we passed increased LIFT Funds, with the majority of the projects, which build forever affordable /workforce housing, came to central Oregon.

I am bringing a bill to increase LIFT Funds (\$50 m) and allow the funds to go up to 120% AMI. Additionally, through the Department of Justice, the mortgages and underwriter process is now cleaned up and we will be able to access more markets. It is essential that we create legislation that is Freddie/Fannie and secondary market compliant.

I am also working on condo and wildfire insurance reforms to directly address housing costs. We cannot talk about housing without addressing insurance and insurance cost, both wildfire insurance and liability insurance, especially in the affordable housing market. I am bringing a few bills to help address these issues directly, including changing the ISO definition of fire to separate definitions of fire and wildfire.

2. What are your transportation and infrastructure funding priorities for the 2025 session?\*

It is important that we maintain our infrastructure, so that Oregonians can travel safely and businesses can move their goods and freight. Right now moving goods/freight is an increasing challenge.

My goals are to make sure that funds come directly to central Oregon for the projects that the cities I represent have asked for, including level grading the roads, safety projects on Highway 97 (including making sure we have a divide along the 97).

Bend and Redmond have asked for water and sewer infrastructure funding that will help unlock housing, including sewage in SE Bend and in the central District. Redmond has several transportation projects and CORE 3. These projects might change between now and when we craft the budget but I will always work alongside our cities to make sure their transportation and infrastructure needs are advocated for in Salem.

## Climate Protection Program and Environmental Stewardship

What is your position on the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Climate Protection Program? How would you work with DEQ in your role as a legislator to draft a program that has business input?\*

The Climate Protection Program is currently undergoing rule makings, which came from an Executive Order. Several legislators asked that the process be put on hold and allow the legislature to address CPP, however, it appears that rule making is going forward. I am deeply concerned based on the amount of time it takes to get a permit under Title 5, I am concerned that businesses will spend money to comply and not have the certainty of their compliance.

I am following this process closely, and I am concerned that this will increase rates for all businesses but per the newly released report by The Alliance of Energy Consumers, cost will go up for all businesses but highest for largest load users, which DEQ has created a sub category named ELITE, which will experience higher than expected up front cost. These are continuing conversations with DEQ and I will advocate for a program that works and that the funds from the projects go to programs that impact the state in a positive way.

Additionally, I have submitted a bill that requires DEQ to follow statutory processes to increase compliance time and another bill has been submitted that allows the use of receipts authority if the legislature is not seeing increased compliance from DEQ.

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