

1. Please provide some basic information about yourself.

Name: James Todd

Position you're running for: KS State Senate District 8

2. Please briefly tell us why you are running for public office.

I am running to help increase healthcare access in Kansas, advocate for disabled, immunocompromised, and older populations that have been affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19), support Johnson County public education, partner with workers and small businesses as they rebuild the economy, and ensure all Kansans are treated equally.

3. (State & Federal) Over the past decade, Kansas City has started to become recognized as a midwestern technology hub. There are multiple programs in place to allow this to happen, which should lead to high quality, high paying jobs. If elected, what types of policies would you support or advocate to continue the creation of startups, growth of the industry, and/or attraction of technology companies looking to relocate or expand to the Kansas City area?

By it's very nature, the technology sector is dynamic and everchanging. A cornerstone of the industry is the startup, where new ideas and applications begin. I have a friend that created a startup here, sold it, and was moved to San Francisco. This is not uncommon and it is in the regions interest to keep talent here. A big reason why people move is because of the investors. Silicon valley has a lot of people that invest in technology and they want to bring the talent closer to them so they can oversea their investments. Therefore, it is important for the Kansas City region to support it's own network of investors and angel investors that will encourage top talent to stay in the area. During the last session of the Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit program was up for renewal, I supported and voted for it in 2016 but my opponent did not vote for it this year.

4. (State Only) During the past few legislative sessions, education funding has been prioritized through new reforms to computer science and STEM education, allowing qualified courses to count as a high-school graduation credit. Due to COVID-19, funding proposals for computer

science and STEM initiatives are in jeopardy. What, if anything, do you think needs to be done regarding education funding? How would you fund your ideas?

My parents are both teachers in the Kansas City, Kansas public schools, my father is teaching middle school math. I understand the importance of education and specifically the importance of investments in STEM programs. In Kansas, the legislature does not make decisions on allocation of money within the budgets of the school districts. While I am willing to be an advocate for STEM education, it is largely up to the districts to continue to make investments in STEM. I will work to maintain funding levels and not let education experience cuts during the pandemic.

5. (State & Federal) Finding talent is one of the most critical challenges that Kansas City technology companies face. Workforce development programs and STEM education are two ways in which the state can help address this concern. What do you believe can be done to fill the void to ensure companies can find the qualified workers they need?

COVID-19 creates difficulties in the short-term but also a degree of opportunity. Many people have been leaving the big cities because of the virus or lock-down restrictions that exist. When you can work remotely, you can work from anywhere. This certainly must apply to some degree with the tech sector. As people look to possibly relocate in the short-term we should showcase our city show the quality of life that can be enjoyed here.

Once the COVID-19 risk reduces, it is important to get people to our city so they have a chance to see how good living in Kansas City is. The Kansas Department of Commerce should start a program, similar to what other states do, of actively going out to market the State and recruit workers. Kansas should have booths at tech conferences selling the benefits of the State and the Kansas City Metro.

6. (State Only) COVID-19 significantly changed the budgetary landscape we faced at the beginning of 2020. Though we are all hopeful for a speedy economic recovery, funding will

have to be prioritized in the meantime. What are your top three budget priorities, in order of importance to you? Please include a brief description of each priority.

1. Education. Education funding accounts for nearly 60% of the Kansas State budget. In addition, Kansas is operating a Supreme Court order regarding education funding.
2. Roads. Kansas has been dealing with budget shortfalls for a decade now and the roads have not been maintain like the could be. This last session a new transportation bill was passed with money to improve road quality.
3. Healthcare. Kansas is one of 12 states that have not expanded Medicaid.

7. (State & Federal) Regarding the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, how important is the technology business community to economic recovery, and which measures can speed the positive impact of this industry on the economy?

The tech sector has been important to recovery. In part, because workers often have the ability to work remotely. While other sectors of the economy have been shut down tech workers have not only continued to work, but with products like Zoom, have allowed non-tech sectors to continue to operate as well. The Kansas Supreme Court held hearings over Zoom. The dynamic nature of technology continues to meet needs for people in our community. It is important to me that they not be overly burden by regulations so that new technologies can be developed and brought to market as quickly as possible.

8. (State & Federal) If the federal government makes additional funds available for infrastructure, where would you prioritize that spending? Alternative energy, repair bridges, increase freeway capacity, increase airport person and freight capacity, smart infrastructure, public transportation, or other?

Bridge repair and general highway repair would be first. As a stated in a previous question, Kansas has been dealing with budget deficits for an extended period of time and needs to make up for funds that have swept out of the transportation budget in the past.

9. (State Only) In 2019, the California general assembly successfully passed the California Consumer Protection Act. This legislation regulates how companies can collect, store, and sell consumer data. Federal pre-emption is looming and will likely mirror similar legislation to the General Data Privacy Rights passed by the European Union in 2017. If more states continue to pass similar legislation, compliance could become a difficult and expensive task for any online business. Do you support state legislation on this issue or would you prefer a Federal privacy law to preempt states' laws and to cohesively protect American consumers and businesses? If you prefer a Federal law, do you support giving the FTC the resources and authority it needs to be the enforcer of the federal law, or do you believe plaintiffs' attorneys should be empowered to bring class-action lawsuits against companies?

I think federal legislation is the better course of action. As you stated in the question, a patchwork of laws creates a compliance nightmare for companies. If we are passing a federal law then I think it is reasonable for the FTC to have primary enforcement responsibility.

10. (Kansas Only) The Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit program was not renewed in the 2020 legislative session and must be renewed in the 2021 session to continue. The return on this investment has been exceptional and provides the necessary capital to grow new companies and attract outside investors to Kansas companies. What is your view on the Kansas Angel Tax Investor Credit and other economic development incentive programs?

I support the Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit. I voted for the extension of the Credit when I was in the Kansas House of Representatives. My opponent did not vote for it this year.

11. (Missouri Only) In the last legislative session, funding for the Missouri Technology Corporation (MTC) was significantly decreased - allocating just \$1 million in this fiscal year. In 2016, MTC funding totaled \$17 million. MTC programs include MissouriTechLaunch (co-investment program), Seed Capital Co-Investment, and the Missouri Building Entrepreneurial Capacity program (MOBEC Grants). These programs will struggle to remain, if at all, with the cuts in necessary funding. Would you support future funding increases for MTC, or do you



have recommendations for policies the state of Missouri can adopt to support the future of new tech businesses and startup support organizations?

N/A