

**1. Please provide some basic information about yourself.**

**Name:** Laura McConwell

**Position you're running for:** KS Senate District 7

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

To make a difference in the community I will serve. Having been mayor of Mission for 12 years, I learned how important it is to listen to your constituents, stakeholders and other electeds who serve the same; and look toward the future. It is important that we protect and fund education, provide a framework within which businesses can incubate and grow (we had a lot of startups in Mission), allow local control and maintain/improve our infrastructure. I want to make sure the state continues to allow us to do that and provide a support system for people to thrive.

**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?**

Kansas City is in a good place for attracting and growing technology and start-up companies. In fact over the last 50 years Johnson County has been about 80% of the new company startups every year. The state's role should be to provide tools that help local economic development officials and their organizations to attract, help grow and retain businesses. I think David Toland as Secretary of Commerce, has made positive changes to the department and is willing to listen to local professionals about what is needed. Specifically, Kansas is getting back into the marketing of our State as well as placing consultants across the county to help attract companies. Additionally, the Enterprise Center of Johnson County should continue receiving county funding to assist startups and tech companies.

**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?**

Kansas will be in survival mode for the next few years and needs to recover economically and to recoup revenues in order to maintain current funding for K-12 and post high school education. I will support the renewal of \$1M for engineering scholarship next year. I also support KC Rising for growing the economy of our metropolitan area and believe that the progresses in the Human Capital area are vital. JCCC is about to come on board with increased career tech opportunities. I also support the College Now program being used by JOCO schools which is a wonderful opportunity to inspire first time college attendees and further grow STEM programming.

**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?**

I am impressed with the Career Tech program at KCADC. KDOC marketing needs to also include attracting families. Additionally, there is a company called Jopwell that helps companies find diverse talent. I think the states and locals should consider a joint partnership to have them market this region for diverse talent.

**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.**

Education - maintaining funding and commitment to the Cannon settlement and restoring funding to higher ed are critical not only to foster an educated/skilled workforce but also to

create opportunities for those moving/raising their families in Kansas

Healthcare - we need to expand medicare to allow access to health care and mental health care for many of our families who cannot otherwise afford it.

Infrastructure - failure to maintain existing infrastructure costs us more down the road; and we need to find more opportunities to continue to expand broadband.

**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?**

Many tech businesses are the shining stars of the pandemic because with social distancing people have been forced to shift and consider other ways to do their work and/or deliver their services. Technology has allowed us to stay connected and carry on our lives whether by expanding use of tele-medicine, allowing remote court hearings/trials, or social gatherings. People are adapting. As an attorney, I appreciate that my clients do not have to take 1/2 day off work (which they can't really afford to do) to participate in a 10-15 minute proceeding.

**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?**

I would support infrastructure investment particularly broadband in Kansas. I would also support some money to hard infrastructure because it creates a lot of jobs.

**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 this is a federal issue and will need a federal solution.

**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?**

The Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit program has been a very valuable tool for our state. I strongly support its renewal.

**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