



**Candidate Questionnaire
Senate District 40**

About DFMC

Democracy for Monroe County (DFMC) is a political action committee dedicated to recruiting, training, and supporting fiscally responsible and socially progressive candidates at the local and state levels. DFMC is part of a nationwide coalition of grassroots groups allied with Democracy for America, the political action committee inspired by the presidential campaign of Howard Dean. We meet every first Thursday of the month. For more information about our organization, visit our website at www.democracyformonroecounty.org.

DFMC: Building and training the progressive grassroots.

Please return this questionnaire to chair@democracyformonroecounty.org by Sunday, March 27th at 6:00 pm, or wellsec01@bluemarble.net and robertdeppert@gmail.com.

About You

Name: Tom K. Pappas

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Question 1: Why are you running for office?

I am running for State Senator because the mantle of responsibility has fallen to my generation to effect the changes Indiana needs for the future. I am fighting for the Hoosier worker whose wages have stagnated, whose government no longer represents him, and whose quality of life has diminished. The state government is no longer responsive to local needs, whether it be ensuring Monroe County has clean drinking water or ensuring that citizens displaced/affected by I-69 extension have been fairly treated. I am running for this office because I can advocate for our local issues in the Statehouse without the baggage or animosities that a long political career can accrue while using my youthful energy to make our party bigger, stronger, and better able to fight for liberal ideas across Indiana.

Question 2: List your political experience (here and elsewhere), including any grassroots activity in which you participated or led.

I have run for State Representative when 20 years old with the support of Governor Joe Kernan and State Senator Jim Arnold, interned for then-Congressman Joe Donnelly, oversaw the grassroots operation and organized volunteers for Nels Ackerson for Congress in the “Donut” counties (resulting in the highest vote totals for a Democrat there in over 20 years), and volunteered for the Hendricks County Democrats since I was 18. I do not have as much formal experience as Senator Stoops, but I have learned what it takes for a Democrat to be successful in Indiana and how to organize people (especially young voters) to make a difference for the right causes.

Question 3: In what way(s) do you consider yourself socially progressive?

I am for equality. I am for equal civil rights for the LGBT community, for equal pay for equal work, and for giving every student the opportunity to reach their full potential. Finally, one of the greatest threats to our state and country is income inequality. Progressivism arose from the inequality of the 19th century and the need to redistribute wealth more equally. I would fight to increase the minimum wage to \$12/hour and expand the EITC from 9% of the federal amount to 20%. Those measures would reduce the number of Hoosiers in poverty significantly. Finally, I will work tirelessly for the creation of a low-income communal housing in the soon-to-be old IU hospital. Once IU Health has moved to its new location on 10th street, I would like to see the state invest in renovating the old hospital into a low-income housing community where the homeless and downtrodden can live, pay a meager rent, and work within the building as a cook, security, or some other type of job to begin to get them back onto their feet and help them get better jobs. This idea encapsulates all of what I believe a social progressive should stand for: aid to the poor, helping neighbors, equal opportunity, and education to make one’s self better off in this world.

Question 4: Describe your ideas for engaging citizens in more active participation in our community and our government.

Should I be elected, I will travel the state to engage millennials and encourage them to take part in Indiana politics. My generation, should they vote, would be the largest bloc of voters in the electorate. Convincing them to participate should be our party's main goal, and I want to demonstrate that one of their own is effecting the change we desire. Millennials are the future of Indiana, and we should attract them with policies that make them want to stay here, start families, and work for a long time.

To engage local citizens back into our community and our government, I want to hold biweekly meet and greets at local businesses where citizens can speak to me about any issues they are facing and see what I can do from Indianapolis to help them. Moreover, I want to work on the creation of more low-income housing that is communal based, which will create jobs and ownership over their pieces of the community. Drawing our hopeless, destitute neighbors back into the community will enrich us with their experiences and enrich them with the knowledge that they are not alone in their lives.

Question 5: Do you pledge to publicly support all Democratic Party nominees, including your primary opponent(s), should he/she prevail in the May Primary Election?

Absolutely.

Question 6: Because the Republicans have a super majority in the House and Senate, it is very difficult for any Democratic legislator to influence any legislation. How would you address this issue?

I intend to travel the state and argue for the creation of non-partisan districting commissions to make races more competitive. While I understand that District 40 is not competitive now, competition brings out the best in us, and our best beats conservatives' best every time. As for the current reality, I would propose legislation that other conservative legislatures have readily embraced. Kansas, which is not a liberal bastion, has a state EITC of 17% while Indiana offers only 9%. Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois all have minimum wages higher than ours. Iowa has a two-tier income tax that has a separate, higher rate for incomes over \$250,000 per year. Ideas like those can be used to shame Republicans into doing the right thing.

Should that not work, I will work on local issues at the Statehouse, trying to convince the Republicans to let Monroe County be the testing ground for new (progressive) policies that could be implemented statewide, such as the conversion of old office buildings/hospitals into low-income community housing. Currently, our Section 8 housing is individualistic, creating yet more separation for these people from the larger community. Giving them ownership and a sense of belonging in this world are the first steps to a successful citizen. Let Monroe County try this idea, and see if this

alleviates the burdens felt by Hoosiers all over the state. I truly believe that this line of argument could work on conservatives who want there to be less government dependence.

Question 7: There are many pieces of legislation that have been put forward to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals and certain groups of folks—for instance, the hate crimes legislation or the response to the RFRA legislation. Which of these efforts do you feel are the most important to address and how would you try to influence Republicans to be supportive of these efforts?

We must provide civil rights protections for the LGBT community, and I would use the Chamber of Commerce and other small business leaders to put pressure upon the Republican legislature to enact the basic protections that every Hoosier should enjoy. Ensuring civil rights is the most important piece of legislation facing our state.

Question 8: As an organization, the DFMC stands for making sure that the progressive voice is heard in Democratic politics. As important as that is, it is equally important to make sure that Democrats of all stripes are elected instead of Republicans. In our state, for a variety of reasons, electing Democrats is very difficult. How are you more electable as a Democrat than your competitor and how can you still represent the progressive voice?

I am more electable because I represent the youthful idealism of the next generation. I am young enough to believe that there are no limits on our potential but old enough to understand that Democrats do not have a monopoly on good ideas. I am for what works. Much like FDR, I want to fight for progressive ideas, and if something does not work, get rid of it and try another idea. The problem with our Indiana Democratic Party is that we are very good at saying, “Pence bad, Republicans bad,” but we have no clear path forward from our side. Where are our solutions? While running against bad ideas might get us across the finish line and get Democrats elected, we need to offer a clear, positive path for Indiana, one that people can identify with and understand. That will be our winning formula. As much as I did not agree with Mitch Daniels, it was obvious that he had a clear vision for Indiana, and we need to develop and advocate for our Democratic vision. I can be that advocate. My ideas that I shared in this survey and at the candidate forum are just some of the ones I have developed or heard others (many of whom were millennials like myself) advocate for in our community. Our State Senator, whoever he may be, has the unique opportunity to be progressive yet pragmatic, fighting for our liberal ideals while moving the needle in Indiana to the left. We have to rise above the shouting that the Tea Party does for individualism and pulling yourself up by your boot straps and argue across the state that we are for those people who are worried about paying for health insurance, scared of what might be in their drinking water, or desperate when deciding whether to pay their exorbitant rents or feed their families because their incomes will not cover both. Those are the people our State Senator can help, can direct the state government and its resources to help,

and can fight to secure all the funds and services needed to make that constituent succeed in Indiana and Monroe County.