



Candidate Questionnaire for the 88th District Michigan House of Representatives

Name: Greg VanWoerkom

Email: greg@votevanwoerkom.com

General:

1. Why are you running for office?

I approach the job as a public servant working to improve the quality of life for the people of West Michigan. I work everyday understanding and solving the problems facing West Michigan whether it is in economic development, reducing poverty, restoring our environment, improving education or helping a constituent who is having trouble with their government. As a rotarian, I embrace the motto, "Service over self." I am working to build a greater community here on the lakeshore so my kids will want to live and raise a family here.

2. What qualifications/experience do you feel you possess that will enable you to fulfill the responsibilities of the elected office you are seeking?

I have served as State Representative for two terms. I believe that a big part of elected office is being able to approach and understand a situation through different lenses. I worked for Congressman Bill Huizenga as District Director headquartered in Grand Haven and Congressman Pete Hoekstra as his Director of Public Policy. I have served on various local boards including School Board President of Western Michigan Christian and on United Way of the Lakeshore. I am a small business owner and raising three children here on the lakeshore.

3. Have you ever run for political office before? If yes, please explain.

I am currently serving my second term as the State Representative of the 91st district. I am Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government and serve on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services.

4. With all the challenges currently facing our State and Nation, what skills would make you the best candidate to represent the new 88th District and Northwest Ottawa County?

I think some of the most valuable skills that I have come from the wide background and experiences I possess. I grew up in the district, I've raised a family here, I run a business here, and I've represented west Michigan as your State Representative for many years. I believe that this broad range of experiences has given me the tools to better represent you in Lansing. The ability to understand the problems Michiganders face every day and work to address those.

5. If elected, what would be your top priorities and why?

I believe that the most pressing issues to our state are:

Rising Cost of Everyday Items - It is clear that families are struggling right now with inflation. I voted for individuals, families, and retirees to keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets as government policies and excessive spending have contributed to rising costs. As we emerge from the pandemic, we need to continue to focus on the economy and ensure we create an environment of economic growth.

Education - the government response to the pandemic has left our kids behind academically. I voted to get our schools open and provide resources like literacy coaches to get our kids back to where they need to be and ensure their futures remain bright.

Economic Development and General Policy:

1. Please describe your general economic development philosophy for our State and Northwest Ottawa County?

Too often our government is reactive and not proactive when it relates to economic policy. I have supported policies that work to remove barriers to growth and create an ecosystem that encourages and supports entrepreneurship.

I believe that our next major employers are the ones currently here working hard to build their businesses. Let's give them the tools they need to succeed and remove the roadblocks.

2. What is your tax policy in regard to supporting and enticing economic growth and development?

Job creators need certainty to make the investment decisions needed to grow and hire. We need a simple, fair, competitive and low tax structure that encourages growth.

3. How would you address the perception of over-regulation of business by government? Please give specifics.

Government needs to work to address over-regulation rather than simply changing the perception of what is reasonable regulation. During my time in the legislature I have worked to remove unnecessary regulation on businesses. As a small business owner myself I have seen firsthand how unnecessary regulations can impact Michigan businesses. There are several major, transformational projects that are delayed or will no longer happen because of DEGLE and other agencies.

4. How would you address and resolve the challenges our small businesses and entrepreneurs are facing in securing and retaining financing of their businesses working capital and growth needs in the current economic climate?

In the most recent budget cycle I worked to secure \$30 million in funding for the business incubator program. This funding works to create business incubator grants and supports the groups that work with these early-stage businesses to make sure that they thrive in our state. I hope that these efforts will continue to bring jobs to our state and expand upon the variety of successful businesses throughout Michigan.

5. What ideas and policies would you support to help *rebuild our existing* workforce as well as *attract and retain* workers to assist businesses fill the many technical, skilled trades and entry level positions that are going unfilled today?

There are many common sense policies that I think would greatly assist in rebuilding our state's workforce. One of these policies is ensuring that families have the necessary access to child care. Recently, I was a part of a package (HB 5041-48) that works to increase access and the quality of Michigan childcare. Also, as the chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government I have worked to support childcare programs such as Tri-share that have been impactful in our community. I have also supported the GoingPro program that has been successful in training the workforce while on the job earning a paycheck.

6. With the emphasis of the last few years moving toward regionalization of Economic Development and Workforce Development, how do you plan to ensure the needs of the new 88th District, and more specifically Northwest Ottawa County, are met.

Economic development and workforce development are both areas which have been my top priorities. In the earlier questions I touched on some of the economic development aspects. Workforce development organizations are essential to our state and I have been greatly supportive of these groups. This year, Michigan Works awarded me with legislator of the year for my work in the budget that helped them continue to provide their services across our state.

7. Would you support changes to term limits? If so, what changes would you support?

I am certainly open to a conversation about changes to the current term limits. This current ballot proposal combines two very complex issues into one proposal. I believe the ethics and financial disclosure side of the proposal is vital and that's why I am a sponsor in an ethics reform package that works to require transparency from your legislators. While many voters will only have the chance to read a short synopsis of what this proposal will do, I think there needs to be careful consideration before we make that decision.

Education:

1. What do you see as the most critical challenge facing Michigan's educational institutions in the next one to three years?

One of the most critical challenges that face Michigan's educational institution is helping students bounce back as we navigate this post-covid landscape. Results have shown dramatically worse reading proficiency among third graders which comes as a byproduct of covid and remote learning.

2. How would you suggest the current public school system be improved or changed in order to better prepare a world-class workforce, particularly a workforce possessing necessary high-tech skills?

I think that there needs to be serious consideration into how our schools need to adapt to better prepare students for the present workforce needs. I have worked on a bill that considers some of these high-tech skills required. HB 4326 would allow for coding to be considered as a foreign language credit in high school.

3. School Calendars do not currently allow time for career exploration, job shadowing, internships, or industrial arts for high school students. How would you address this issue?

Each child learns in their own way and are exposed to different experiences. I support efforts to have kids experience different job settings and have worked with local employers on potential co-op programs.

Environmental Policy:

1. What is your philosophy regarding additional regulations, fees, and taxes as they relate to environmental protection or enhancement?

We have done a good job here in West Michigan to preserve the areas that make us unique. These types of decisions need to be done on a case by case basis, but I do not believe we need stricter policies or tax increases at this time.

2. Do you support incentive programs that promote Brownfield redevelopment, and/or the revitalization of functionally obsolete or abandoned property? Why or why not?

Yes, I have been supportive of incentive programs such as Brownfield. I think that programs like this are able to revitalize areas in our district and also open up the door for economic opportunity. Similarly, in this year's general government budget we included significant funds for blighted property removal grants.

3. How would you contribute to protecting and preserving West Michigan's natural resources as an elected official?

I believe that the lakeshore and the abundance of natural resources in West Michigan are a big factor in what makes us great. I have worked behind the scenes to provide cleanup funding to get Muskegon Lake on track to be removed as an Area of Concern. I have voted for the creation of Ottawa Sands in Spring Lake and Dune Harbor Park in Norton Shores to preserve our shoreline.

4. What action/policy would you support to control invasive species of fish in the Great Lakes?

I have supported many efforts to create natural habitats and worked to prevent the Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes when working for Congressmen. Many of these policies need to happen at the federal level.

5. What is your position on Government's role in providing safe, clean drinking water for the public?

Providing safe, clean drinking water will always remain a priority as a basic need.

6. Specific to Grand Haven's Harbor Island, how would you provide support to the remediation, reuse and funding of the critical cleanup of that site?

I have begun conversations with local officials on the future of the site. Pending the direction of the project will determine the source of funding.

Housing Issues

1. West Michigan is facing challenges providing affordable housing options for young families and entry level workers to fill the many vacant positions in our businesses and industries. How would you proposed to support local communities as they work to address this issue?

The availability of affordable housing is an issue that affects many families in our community and across the state. This issue can impact our economy and our workforce.

There have been multiple proposals and measures presented in the legislature. I will continue to work through this problem with my colleagues.

2. Northwest Ottawa County welcomes tourism and is supportive of short term rentals that are controlled by local units of government through zoning. What is your position regarding short term rentals?

With short term rentals becoming such a vital part of our economy, I believe it is important to strike a balance between allowing the market to work and municipal governments regulating these rentals.

Transportation

1. What is your philosophy regarding mass transit and what would you do, if elected, to incent regional collaboration regarding mass transit, specifically along the lakeshore?

Effective and efficient transit systems can indirectly be a great economic contributor. Many people can benefit from a mass transit system, but I believe that such a system needs to be carefully considered based on the present needs of our district.

Tax Policy

1. What is your position on expanded taxation (such as services) ?

Oppose

Energy Policy

1. What is your position/plan for reliable, cost-effective energy for the State of Michigan?

We need to ensure we have low-cost, reliable energy in the state. To accomplish this, we need an all of the above strategy. I am concerned about losing the baseload production.

2. Do you support the current state position on fracking? Why or why not?

I do not see any changes happening in the near future, but believe natural gas production can be done in an environmentally friendly manner.

Please attach additional information regarding any endorsements or community and business affiliations

Endorsements:

Michigan Right to Life
Friends of West Michigan Business
AgriPAC
National Rifle Association
Michigan Chamber of Commerce
Michigan Freedom Network
Michigan Realtors
Small Business Association - Stamp of Approval
Michigan Retailers Association
Michigan Credit Union League