

## NASB Legislative Candidate Questionnaire 2022



NAME: Ben Hansen – District 16

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1. **Local Control** - With so many decisions from the legislature impacting local boards, NASB is interested in your view of local control. Regarding education, what decisions do you feel are best made at the school board level vs. the State level?

- *I believe local control should be prioritized in the decision-making process of what local school districts think is in the best interest of their communities and students. However, in certain instances, state level control can be incorporated. In my opinion, this occurs when there is a concern or problem among many different schools throughout the state that may need to be addressed through legislation.*

2. **School Funding** - Every year the legislature makes decisions about the way schools are funded, making predictability of funding a challenge. What changes and/or adjustments, if any, do you think the Legislature should address?

- *Equitable funding throughout the school districts of Nebraska has been one of the top concerns among schools and constituents in my district. The more I understand and study TEEOSA formula funding, the more I find it to be confusing and perhaps an outdated approach to how we provide funding. Some states have had positive outcomes by moving more towards a mixture of TEEOSA-like funding and per-pupil based funding. I think an approach such as this would be beneficial to be looked at closer to see if it might work.*

3. **Role of Education in the State** - What role do you think PK-12 Education plays in the future success of the State and your community?

- *It is my belief when a student graduates with the tools, skills and education needed to succeed in life, it greatly improves their chances at doing just that. There are other social and personal factors that may impede their chances at success that our schools cannot account for, but I feel a quality education only improves the likelihood of success in the future for both the student and the State as a whole. If the student has a positive experience with their school and community, it only improves the probability they will return to our state to work, stay, and build a family.*

4. **Educational Workforce** - Educational workforce continues to be a challenge across the State from teachers to bus drivers. What would be your plan to address this challenge?

- *I do not personally believe that lowering the standards for those who can teach is the right answer, which is the route many states have taken to recruit more teachers. Some others have taken more constructive approaches, such as Florida recruiting military Veterans to teach without a license to help the teacher shortage. But I believe we need to look at the root cause of the problem which, according to multiple nationwide surveys and my own personal interactions with many educators, has been the diminishing control over what and how they teach. They are also regularly exposed to a continued trend of disrespectful student behavior and parental hostility. One survey of 15,000 educators revealed a growing trend of students verbally and physically harassing teachers, as well as parents engaging in online harassment and retaliatory behaviors for teachers simply doing their jobs. I think addressing these concerns, either administratively or legislatively, would help.*

5. **Mandates** - School districts continue to be challenged by the increasing unfunded mandates put upon them by the State and Federal government. What is your response to mandates and the State's role in them?

- *It's hard to answer the question based on how broad it is. I would need to know which unfunded mandates we are talking about to discuss whether they are beneficial and worth the cost, or not.*

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