



ALLIANCE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Raymond Lesniak

1. Currently NJ unemployment rates are approximately 53% among people with disabilities. If elected, what efforts would your administration undergo to hire qualified individuals with disabilities as well as encourage the private sector?

My administration would review all positions available in government to evaluate which would be prime to hire people with disabilities. We would direct the civil service commission to review its civil service tests and locations to make sure all reasonable accommodations are made so that people with disabilities are not at a disadvantage from those aspects in competing for positions. The Commissioner for the Department of Labor and the DVSRS would be reinvigorated to review all resources to encourage, train, and publicize jobs to all sectors of the labor force. The DOL and other Departments would be encouraged to partner with foundations, for profit and non for profit sectors to put into practice best practices to ensure opportunities are created.

2. What steps should the State of New Jersey take to increase access to public transportation currently not served by NJ Transit? (I.e. Sussex County, Somerset County)

The Department of Transportation, public transportation, and Rutgers University as well as those in need of public transportation should identify the areas in need and currently not served and recommend steps that can be done based on best practices to increase access. Creative solutions will also be received and evaluated.

3. Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, people with disabilities still face accessibility barriers. For example, inaccessible stores, elevators broken at train stations and snow removal laws not being upheld. What will your administration do to fight discrimination and enforce the ADA?

State and County studies should be implemented where already done, begun where not, using the resources in place such as County Office of Handicaps, independent living centers and others. The results should be prioritized and implemented according to a reasonable accommodation standard. Where resistance is found and educating not successful then the attorney general's office should have resources allocating for enforcement. After all these years, all sectors of government and the private sector should and need to have a plan to meet ASDA requirements.

4. Do you support or oppose proposals to block grant or per capital cap Medicaid spending in NJ? What Medicaid services in NJ, if any, would you seek to eliminate under a block grant or per capita spending system?

The Federal Government to Block Medicaid would result in the denial of adequate services to not only people with disabilities but also to the growing numbers of senior citizens in the State. As the numbers grow from demographics and the Medicaid dollars remain the same or shrink over time due to inflation and future cuts, resources will shrink. New Jersey and my administration is opposed to any Medicaid cuts or block granting from the Federal Government.

5. If elected, what would your administration do to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the planning and implementation of emergency preparedness efforts on the county, state and local levels?

My administration would further encourage both the governmental entities for emergency preparedness on the State, County and Local levels to better prepare and practice their emergency plans and ensure that the non-profits that work with the vulnerable populations are included in those planning's and exercises.

6. In NJ, there is a shortage of accessible, safe and low-income housing for people with disabilities. How would you propose to increase the inventory of housing throughout the state?

The inventory for affordable housing should be increased through the settle-up of court actions, the encouragement of mixed use developments, and the increase in instruments such as the State Rental Assistance Program and the fight to maintain and expand the Federal Section 8 programs.

7. Persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities are victimized by sexual assault crimes at much higher rates than the rest of the population, and they are often targeted specifically because of their disabilities. What steps would your administration takes to reduce the risk of crimes committed against people with

disabilities? Would you direct your Attorney General's office to work more closely with disability agencies on training and prevention?

I would direct my administrations Attorney General's Office to work more closely with disability agencies on training and prevention. I would also encourage that education to take place in the educational system and also in increasing the elimination of bullying in a responsible manner that will enhance the quality of life for all.

8. In the *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states are required to eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. Do you feel the state is doing what it can do to fully implement this ruling? If not, what measures does NJ need to take?

New Jersey needs to do a better job in eliminating unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities. We need to look at the educational system; employment services; as well as adult support services. We should ask the State Council on Developmental Disabilities to take a like in bring all the interested parties together and developing a State-Wide Plan with specific recommendations for implementation.

9. If elected, would you support or oppose legislation prohibiting insurance companies conducting business in New Jersey from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions?

All people should and need to be covered by health insurance.

10. Do you support the proposal by the Coalition of Direct Support Professionals Living Wage, which would increase the salary of support professionals by \$1.25 per hour every year for five years, bringing the starting hourly wage to \$16.75 by the year 2022. This will attract more support professionals to the field and reduce the high turnover rate that is currently 44%.

All people need to have a living wage. We need to review the best studies of all the ramifications with increased minimum wages floors, the impact on the creation of jobs, the impact on increased taxes for those workers in government and in contracts with government, and the economy both in New Jersey but also Nationally.

11. State and federal law provide that students with disabilities have a right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Do you support or oppose increased funding to ensure that New Jersey public schools

and teachers have the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities?

I support increased funding for special education so we may move towards funding the mandated levels.

12. Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization. As a vital resource in the community, would you support additional funding for the 11 CILs in order to meet the increased demand for our services?

Centers for Independent Living do a commendable job with people with disabilities. It is funded by Federal and State Dollars. It is important the State Government and its Federal representatives work together to prevent cuts in the Federal Dollars coming to New Jersey for all its social service programs.

13. In April 2012, Governor Chris Christie made New Jersey an 'Employment First' state. It means that competitive employment is the first and preferred post-education activity for everyone, including people with disabilities. However, there are still approximately only 47% of the population of people with disabilities in NJ, ages 18 to 64, employed (compared to 79.5% of same age group in the general population). How do you propose to increase employment among New Jerseyans with disabilities?

See question 1.

14. If nominated by your party for the general election, would you commit to addressing the crowd at the NJ Disability Pride Parade & Celebration on Saturday, October 7th in Trenton?

Yes. And would help encourage a larger turn out as the NJ Disability Pride Parade and Celebration helps in the education of the tax payers as to the fact that people with disabilities are a valued and productive component of the community.