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COMPLETE

Time Spent: 00:25:13
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Page 1: Introduction

Q1 Please provide your name.

Blair Lynnette Koch

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Q2 Why are you running for State Legislature?

I am running for HD 43 to see my district be better represented, to make sure our schools and infrastructure are funded.

Q3 What do you believe is the most important issue related to growing business in Billings and what are your suggestions for addressing that issue?

I believe one of the most pressing issues for growing business in Billings is a livable city. We need to continue the awesome support for biking and trail routes and outdoor recreation in Billings, as well as affordable housing opportunities.

Q4 In the 2017 Legislative Session, local option authority was supported by the Billings Chamber, City of Billings, Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Partnership, and numerous other organizations across the state. Under what conditions would you vote for a local option authority bill?

I would vote for local option if addressed toward specific needs and targeted on certain purchases (groceries and other certain purchases should remain sales tax free).

Q5 Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts are an important economic development tool for our community. How will you work to ensure one of local government's most useful funding mechanisms is preserved?

I would like to see that Billings' TIF districts are leveraged for scale to bring more living wage jobs and industry to the area. If these dollars are used for the best interests of tax payers for the long term, I would like to see state, federal and private partnerships grow for economic development of Billings.

Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Q6 In 2016, Yellowstone County hoteliers remitted \$3.5 million in facility use taxes to the state. That year our regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, which markets and promotes our area as a travel destination, received \$350,000 (just 10%) from the state to market and promote tourism in our area. Will you work with the Billings Chamber and lodging partners to ensure more money is returned to the areas generating lodging tax revenue? (Y/N)

Yes,

You may provide additional context if appropriate.:

I firmly believe tourism of our wonderful city and region is key!

Q7 MSU Billings is an essential economic driver for our community and surrounding area. Not only does MSU Billings provide educational opportunity for Montanans, it also assists with workforce development, an increasingly important challenge facing our community. How will you help to ensure MSU Billings receives adequate funding for facility updates?

As an MSUB Alum, I am proud of it's standing in the community and will work across the aisle and with colleagues to champion for needed funding. A big goal I share with Billings and beyond is to see completion of MSUB's new science building!

Q8 The Billings Chamber, City of Billings, Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Partnership, and other community partners, are working with Hammes Co. on the development of One Big Sky Center, comprised of two development districts and anchored by a regional convention center. If a state funding source were identified and developed, under what conditions would you support the inclusion of state monies in the funding mix for a regional convention center in Billings?

I would like to see a final proposal from OBS and see support from the city and economic development. That said, if state funding were to become available, I believe such a center is needed and could foster future economic opportunities and a more lively downtown for Billings and would support funding.

Q9 Sixteen percent of Billings workers are employed in the healthcare arena resulting in a total direct and indirect economic output of \$2.6 billion annually. Do you believe that cutting state reimbursement to hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers is a way to address state budget shortfalls? (Y, N)

No

Q10 Throughout the legislative interim and November 2017 Special Session the re-evaluation of Montana's funding mechanisms was a topic of discussion. What are your thoughts on the need to identify new revenue sources to address a shifting economy and our infrastructure needs?

I am glad to see the discussion of raising funds be brought up after so many years of slashing revenue. I believe we need to explore a more progressive taxing structure- especially with Montana now facing rising income inequality faster than any other state.

Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Q11 Billings, and the greater Yellowstone County area, has the largest legislative delegation in the state and there is great potential to work together toward regional specific initiatives. How do you plan to work with all members of the Yellowstone County area delegation for the betterment of our business community during the 2019 Legislative Session?

Yes! This large legislative body is something to be proud of and I believe all elected have different skill sets and points of view to draw from. If elected, I look forward to making relationships with the body of the legislature to move Billings, Yellowstone County and Montana forward. I believe we are all there to make positive change and would only want to be a part of that.

Page 3: Finalizing Questionnaire

Q12 If you have not sent the Billings Chamber a high-res image you would like us to use, please upload a photo here. **Respondent skipped this question**
