



KIM BARTLETT

House District 28 | Democrat

Please give a brief biography including qualifications and characteristics that make you the best candidate for House District 28.

A centrist from Thermopolis, I am running so that constituents of House District 28 have a choice at the ballot box. I believe in equality under the law, community service and that being an American means rights with corresponding responsibilities. While my protestant Christian faith informs my values, data drives my decision-making. I think that honesty, integrity, transparency, hard work and duty to others before self are core characteristics all legislators need. My educational background includes an undergraduate degree in general business with legal emphasis, two years at OCU School of Law and a graduate diploma from the University of Essex (Colchester, England) in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights. In recent years, I have been privileged to work as a citizen lobbyist with various state leaders, agencies, legislators and nonprofits on policy issues and ballot initiatives. While I spent the majority of my life in Oklahoma, I married a fourth-generation Wyomingite and love living in Wyoming.

My husband and I are small business owners, members of the Wyoming Native Plant Society, Wyoming Master Gardeners, Wyoming Naturalists and are active with People for People and Grow a Little Extra.

What is the answer to Wyoming's budget crisis, and how can the legislature help stimulate the economy?

Increasing revenues is always preferable to cutting services. Attracting new business should be a priority, and businesses look for states that improve their employees' quality of life as much as they look at taxes. The Wyoming Legislature needs to review our tax, education and healthcare poli-

cies, as well as our infrastructure needs including cell service and broadband access, to make sure we are providing a healthy, educated workforce with the quality of life and amenities new businesses are seeking. At the same time, we need to review our expenditures and make sure that our budget provides for the services we rely upon, without waste. We, as legislators, must be respectful of the dollars hardworking Wyomingites contribute, and utilize those dollars in a way that provides a sustainable fiscal path for all of Wyoming.

What is your solution to meeting the school finance issue in Wyoming, especially when it comes to cuts vs. generating additional revenue?

Having an educated workforce is of primary importance for economic growth and fiscal health. Because Wyoming has many rural communities, with the wide-open spaces we hold so dearly, the per-student cost of education is going to be higher than our surrounding states. Our students deserve the best education we can provide them, to prepare them for the stiff competition a global marketplace creates. We must reward our diligent, conscientious teachers, staff and administrators who strive daily to furnish a world-class education for our children. We need to prioritize the best curriculum, technology and extracurricular opportunities we can, as well as safe learning environments to protect our most precious assets. We also need to remember that children learn from experiences, not walls. If we can increase maintenance funding and delay building costs in order to furnish a higher-quality education, we should. Our goal should be to help parents create young adults who have learned how to think critically, evaluate logically and treat others kindly.

What is your stance regarding transparency in state and local government, especially in regard to public notices, open meetings and public records?

Transparency in governance equals trust in government. Representatives of the people should communicate with their districts as often as

possible, to keep citizens apprised of the issues Wyoming is facing and the discussions surrounding the best possible solutions for those issues. I put a high value on public notices, open meetings and public records, and I am very thankful the Wyoming Press Association provides that information. With that being said, there will always be issues that cannot be addressed in open meetings, like personnel issues, ongoing investigations, conversations with attorneys, etc. Also, the right to attend open meetings doesn't provide a right to the public to speak at those meetings without being recognized. However, the default should always be toward open, public discourse, to build public trust.

How can you be an effective voice in Cheyenne to represent the interests of small, rural communities like those in Big Horn County?

All state legislators have the ability to promote their districts' concerns through committee participation, introducing legislation and negotiating with their fellow legislators. Legislators should prioritize communications with city and county leaders and constituents to understand their concerns and desires. Legislators must work hard to read proposed legislation, listen to and question agency personnel and lobbyists and seek to determine unintended consequences of statewide legislation. State legislators from rural districts should not be intimidated by those from urban areas, and should effectively express rural citizens' needs. Since Wyoming is a Home Rule state, municipalities should be extended deference when determining local issues.

One of the central debates within Wyoming political parties is whether parties should pursue a big-tent approach or require an allegiance to party ideology. What is your approach to the question of ideological purity versus diversity of thought? When do you feel it is appropriate to vote against your party?

Part of the reason I registered as a Democrat when I moved to Wyoming was the freedom the Wyoming Democratic Party allows its mem-

bers. As a moderate, I could best be described as Democrat-lite, but the party works hard to be inclusive, not exclusive. I was pleased that, at our state convention, party leaders made sure everyone's voice could be heard. Wyomingites recognize that bipartisan solutions are almost always best. We cannot restrain our legislators from working across the aisle to create the most effective policies. We cannot demonize our public servants that give so much of their time, energy and money to do the good work we all require as part of our social compact to strengthen our communities and provide for our neighbors who need a hand up. Our legislators can only speak freely and with integrity if we allow them the space needed to do what is necessary for our state as a whole, even when those decisions are not politically expedient or unpopular.

Are there other important issues facing Wyoming and your district that you would like to address?

Recently, property tax increases have become a concern to many citizens in House District 28. One way we can work to keep seniors in the homes they have worked for all their lives is to freeze property taxes for those with limited assets. People on a fixed income should not be subject to losing their homes over property tax increases they cannot control. Working with the Department of Revenue, county assessors and the Wyoming Taxpayers Association to find a solution that protects seniors should be an important goal for our state legislature.

Secondly, Wyoming needs to pass Medicaid Expansion. Healthy kids have better educational outcomes, and healthy adults are more productive for our businesses and economic growth.

Finally, as the Equality State, Wyoming must strive to provide equality under the law for all Wyomingites, including codifying exemptions for corner crossing and keeping public lands in public hands, supporting private property owners' rights and individual determinations regarding selling those properties, closing the wage gap, women's reproductive health rights, LGBTQ rights, and others.