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COMPLETE

Page 1: Welcome to the 2020 Legislative Candidate Survey

Q1

Name & District

Name	Denise "Mitzi" Epstein
Legislative District	18
Office Sought	State Representative

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Q3

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an economic crisis with many Arizonans losing their jobs or dealing with a reduction in income. What strategies would you support to help Arizona workers and families recover from this economic crisis?

Increase Arizona's weekly unemployment benefit (which at \$240 is the second-lowest in the U.S.) to closer to the national average of \$490 per week.

Eliminate barriers to enrolling in and maintaining food support benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Replenish and create a designated funding source for the Housing Trust Fund to assist low-income residents and those at risk of eviction or experiencing homelessness.

Increase state-funded childcare subsidies to enable more parents to return to the workforce.

Other (please specify):

Unemployment Insurance is both a bridge for individuals to their next job, and an economic stabilizer. A study commissioned by the administration of President GW Bush showed that Unemployment Insurance benefits created 1.75 million jobs during that recession. When people have the money to pay their rent and put food on the table, they support their local economy, their local small businesses. Small businesses want customers, and UI benefits empower people to be customers. All of Arizona needs these economic tools to help our recovery be more robust and to make the recovery happen faster. In the last recession, Arizona's recovery lagged behind other states. We also have and continue to have just about the lowest UI cap. By empowering people who were working before the recession to be local customers, they choose the best businesses to meet their needs and wants, rather than using crazy big programs that give large bailouts to huge corporations.

Q4

When the new legislature convenes in January, it is very likely lawmakers will be facing a significant revenue shortfall in order to maintain current ongoing funding of state government. If that is the case, would you support raising new revenue by raising taxes or reversing past tax cuts – like previous tax cuts for corporations or the wealthy – in order to avoid making budget cuts to things like public education, healthcare and other priorities?

No,

Other (please specify):

I answered no, because this is not a Yes-No question. It deserves a thorough answer. For too many years, the Arizona legislature balanced the budget on the backs of children and teachers. We've got to stop cutting education, and we've got to stop asking those who make the least to pay more in taxes, like increases to the sales tax. Pundits around the Capitol say, "The Legislature increases the sales tax to pay for things because the poor don't have any lobbyists." Well they have me! I am here for all the hard-working people in the middle who are tired and fed up with carve-outs and tax shenanigans. We must prioritize caring for our children and seniors. Good jobs and good health go together. A thriving economy depends on a quality education system and a healthy workforce. Cuts hurt everything -- the economy and people. We need a new day in Arizona when lawmakers are willing to discuss tax policies. I am ready, willing and able to convene large bipartisan stakeholder groups to improve our tax structures. Discussion of tax policies must start with a thorough analysis of our current tax structures. Year after year, too many legislators propose tax changes that make themselves look good, without considering the big picture of how their proposal affects the whole economy. The ITEP analysis of "Who Pays" shows that Arizona puts far too much of the tax burden on those who make middle and low incomes. Our tax code is riddled with loopholes and carveouts for small, special interests. If we continue policies that put too much burden on hard-working people in the middle, our economy cannot thrive.

Q5

Which of the following do you support to create a fairer tax code for all Arizonans?

Repealing targeted, special interest sales tax exemptions for certain luxury items like country club memberships, fine art to out of state purchasers, and private jets.

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Enable legislators to evaluate whether tax credits are providing the desired return on investment by requiring corporations who claim tax credits to provide sufficient information on the jobs and economic benefits they are providing in exchange for the tax credit.

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Requiring a sunset date for all new tax credits and sales tax exemptions to require the legislature to review each tax break every five years to evaluate whether Arizona is receiving the desired return-on-investment for the tax giveaway.

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Other (please specify):

When taxes are not fair, it puts a drag on the economy because some must carry too much of the tax burden. Retirees who are living on their investments need to be considered so that inflation does not destroy their retirement plan. Seniors are very wary of changes in capital gains taxes for good reasons, so I would not use a broad stroke to repeal capital gains tax cuts. I believe in using accountability and transparency measures to assure the taxpayers of Arizona that tax cut programs deliver results. If not, they must be terminated or modified.

Q6

The effects of discrimination against Black, Latino and American Indians have lingered and manifested as racial inequalities in Arizona's economy today. What steps would you take as a state lawmaker to create a more racially equitable and inclusive economy? (500 words or less)

I have listened to the community and in consultation with colleagues in the House of Representatives, we added a new work group, "Racial Justice Work Group" to make changes to stop systemic racism. It is not a one-time event. The way to make changes that matter is to confront the problems with determination to act now, and to keep taking steps forward.

The Racial Justice work group has worked with many people and organization to develop 5 specific bills to address police reform, including mandatory body cameras and outside oversight on the use of force. The work continues.

By making changes to our criminal justice system, Arizona can improve safety and save money. Other states are addressing earned release credit reforms and compassionate care changes that have had good results. We need to examine what works and act on it.

Even at the youngest ages, children's lives can be affected by bias or racism in schools. Diversity training needs to be improved in all school systems, along with diverse employment strategies in schools. This is true not only for Black, Latino and Indigenous People, but also for the disability community.

Q7

Please share what your priorities will be as a state lawmaker to strengthen Arizona's workforce and economy so that all Arizonans have better opportunities to move up the economic ladder? (500 words or less)

We need an economy that offers great opportunities for every Arizonan. That goal demands an excellent public education system from pre-school through higher education in college or other skills schools. It also demands a business environment that helps Arizona businesses to grow.

From listening to small business owners, I know that the costs of shutting down and re-opening due to the pandemic are a lot to bear. If we are honestly "In this together," then it makes sense to pursue programs that help small businesses directly.

Diversity in our economy is our strength. Arizona has improved opportunities in bioscience and healthcare, aerospace and defense, and of course, technology and manufacturing. I started my career in manufacturing, so I know firsthand that manufacturing can make great jobs.

With insightful leadership, Arizona can continue our growth in high-tech green jobs too. One source reports that buildings in the United States are responsible for 39% of CO2 emissions, 40% of energy consumption, and 13% of water consumption per year. That makes green building a source of significant economic and environmental opportunity, as they provide long-term cost savings for businesses.
