

DFL Senior Caucus Endorsement Questions for Federal Offices

The DFL Senior Caucus promotes the active participation of Minnesota seniors in the political process, giving a voice to seniors in Minnesota elections and politics. Our goal is to affect public policy by bringing focus and accountability to senior issues, and by working to elect public officials who support these issues.

Responses to the questions below must be submitted in the online form accessible by clicking this link: [Federal Office submission form](#).

The DFL Senior Caucus will revoke an endorsement if:

1. You are not endorsed by your convention, or
2. You support a candidate who is running against a DFL-endorsed candidate.

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provide in the first question on the form.

Age Discrimination

Studies show that seniors are among the most discriminated against groups in employment. Yet they are the one group that receives less protection by federal EEOC law. If you are discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc. you only have to prove that one of many factors that went into the decision to fire you was the fact you were in a protected category. On the other hand, because of different language in the age discrimination law, SCOTUS ruled that if your protected category is age, you have to prove that you would not have been fired except for your age (which is vastly harder to prove).

Question: What will you do to stop this discrimination against seniors?

Preserving Entitlements for Seniors

The GOP continues to work on proposals to significantly tighten eligibility for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

Question 1: How will you work to oppose those efforts?

Question 2: Would you support using the CPI-E (elderly) for increases in recognition that costs go up more quickly for the elderly than accounted for by the regular CPI?

Keeping Seniors in their Homes

As the nation ages, more seniors and people with disabilities need help navigating the increasingly complex health and long-term care systems and accessing services to stay in their own homes in order to avoid more expensive care in nursing homes. Further, work-force shortages and low wages for direct care workers are reducing access to in-home services. Many seniors have modest retirement incomes that are too high to qualify for financial assistance from Medicaid but have too little income to afford long term care insurance or to move to assisted living facilities. In order to qualify for Medicaid services including in-home care, seniors must spenddown most of their assets and contribute a large proportion of their monthly income to their medical and long-term care costs leaving too little to live on to remain in their own homes. Low-income housing or other public housing subsidies are extremely limited. Individuals and families eligible for insurance subsidies such as the Affordable Care Act have fewer asset and income restrictions. Many experts cite these disparities and say the current guidelines for seniors and people with disabilities are too restrictive.

Question 1: How would you work to change current Medicaid eligibility requirements for seniors to make sure they have enough left to live on to remain in their homes and apartments?

Question 2: What will you do to work toward affordable and viable community-based services and long-term care assistance programs for those just outside of Medicaid eligibility standards?

Question 3: How will you work to provide additional federal subsidies and funding for affordable housing for seniors?

Question 4: How will you work to address current workforce shortages of direct care workers for in-home services?

Mental Health Services for Seniors

According to the National Council on Aging, between 25-30% (or twenty million) older adults have reported significant increases in anxiety and depressive mental health disorders since April 2020 and that less than 50% of older adults with mental and/or substance use disorders receive treatment. Millions more likely go undiagnosed. In addition, 2022 data estimated that about 5.7 million adults over the age of 50 were estimated to require treatment for a substance use disorder.

Question: What will you do to address these issues??

Family and Volunteer Caregiver Support

Volunteer family and community care givers are a huge source of care for seniors who want and need to stay in their own homes, providing billions of dollars of support that would otherwise eventually fall to government responsibilities.

Question: How will you work to support volunteer and informal family and community caregivers to assist frail seniors to stay in their own homes?

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is an enormous problem. The Elder Justice Act of 2010 took seven years to pass, despite having bipartisan support. Congress failed to renew the Act after the authority to finance many of its programs expired in 2014. The Federal Trade Commission found that investment scams for people age 60 and older have increased by 175% since 2021. The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) received nearly one million complaints in 2022, with reported losses exceeding \$10.3 billion. Headlines across states continue to report concerning trends among elder abuse cases and preventable tragedies. The Elder Justice Reauthorization and Modernization Act of 2023 has been introduced but the bill remains trapped and stalled because no Republican has agreed to co-sponsor either bill, despite a long history of bipartisanship around this issue.

Question: How will you work to pass this bill?

Accessibility

Question: What changes in the ADA should be made to better assist seniors with accessibility and to strengthen enforcement of the ADA laws?

Reducing Drug Prices

Drug prices remain an enormous problem for seniors. Recent changes have allowed CMS to reduce insulin prices and negotiate prices for Medicare of a few drugs, however much more is needed.

Question 1: What possible solutions would you support?

Public Safety and Gun Violence

Question 2: What do you think the federal government can do to increase public safety and reduce gun violence?

Question 3: What will you do to address these issues?

Volunteer Driver Disparities

Volunteer driver programs are a critical service for seniors who depend on them for meal delivery, ride share programs and transportation to medical, shopping, and other appointments, particularly in rural areas. However, volunteer drivers are limited to a federal tax deduction per mile of 14 cents, rather than the standard 65.5 cents per mile, and volunteers must pay taxes on

any payments above that amount creating a barrier to recruitment. The Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act of 2023 authored by Klobuchar and Stauber increases the 14 cents per mile rate for charitable use of an automobile to the standard business mileage rate (65.5 cents per mile in 2023) for automobiles transporting persons (other than the taxpayer) or property on behalf of a charitable organization.

Question: If elected, how will you work to get this bill passed?

Immigration and Border Issues

Immigration should be recognized as an important workforce resource for direct care of seniors and people with disabilities.

Question 1: What is your stance on resolving current immigration problems at the border, including methods and resources to reduce illegal entry while providing humane shelter and timely decisions for people following current legal processes for immigration and requests for asylum?

Question 2: How would you work to change the current system?

Restoring Social Security for Government Retirees

Reagan's Windfall Protection Act took away around \$6,000 per year from the Social Security benefits a government employee would be entitled to, based on their Social Security contributions and work history. University studies have advised that the WPA be rescinded because it is unfair. The federal Government Pension Offset is somewhat similar and applies to the Social Security benefits of spouses of government employees. In the 1990s, the federal government ordered state and local governments to make sure their employees knew about the WPA and GPO so they could try to avoid it. Almost no government did that.

Question: What do you propose to do to resolve this issue?

DFL Senior Caucus Communications

Question: How will you keep the DFL Senior Caucus informed on issues relevant to seniors and to solicit our input? (Posting on social media is not sufficient.)

Universal Health Care

The DFL Senior Caucus supports legislation for government sponsored "universal" healthcare, wherein "universal" means all persons are fully covered for healthcare.

Question: What can you do to bring us closer to Universal Health Care?.

Climate Change

Climate change is hurting worldwide economics and political stability. We must dramatically reduce the burning of fossil fuels and manage other greenhouse gasses to avoid some of the worst effects. The difference between 1.5 and 2.0 degrees C of global average temperature rise is substantial. The former can no longer be avoided, but the latter is still possible if we act fast. Much has been done; much more is needed, and now. We care about the future for our children and grandchildren, but some of the unfortunate effects are with us today too.

Question: What are your ideas for mitigating greenhouse-gas emissions?