



## Candidate Responses to ODVC Questionnaire

*Elected officials make critical decisions about the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families—including decisions about education, health care, community living, and civil rights.*

*To learn about the platforms of Ohio’s key candidates, ODVC sent a questionnaire to each candidate for Governor, U.S. Senate and Secretary of State. We have received the following responses. As additional responses are received, we will post them to the ODVC website.*

### **GOVERNOR CANDIDATE**

#### ***Responses from Gov. Ted Strickland, Democrat***

*1. Will you include people with disabilities as part of your political team and as advisors on relevant issues?*

**Yes.**

*2. Do you believe that people with disabilities should be the primary decision makers in their own lives?*

**Yes.**

*3. Would you support Visitability legislation (single-family, new construction with one no-step entrance, accessible bathroom on first floor level, 32” doorways and aisles maneuverable by a person in a wheelchair)?*

**I would support working with the General Assembly, the Residential Construction Advisory Committee, and the Board of Building Standards to move toward increased visitability.**

*Fact: People with disabilities often face barriers to polling places and to voting equipment as well as attitudinal barriers to the election process. While absentee voting is an option, every citizen has the right to go to their polling location to cast their vote with privacy.*

4. *What would you do to ensure equal access to the voting process by people with disabilities?*

**I will work with the Secretary of State to make sure that physical barriers are eliminated and poll worker training addresses attitudinal barriers.**

*Fact: Approximately twenty-seven percent of non-institutionalized people with disabilities aged 18 to 64 live in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 8.8% of men and women without disabilities. The median income for this disabled population is \$27,200 as opposed to an average of \$57,800 of citizens who do not have a disability.*

*Housing that is affordable and accessible is not readily available.*

5. *What would your policies do to increase the availability of affordable, accessible and safe housing for Ohioans with disabilities?*

**I would like to build on the success of the following initiatives from my first term:**

- **Creation of the Homestead Exemption for permanently disabled Ohioans to exempt \$25,000 of home value from property taxation. This resulted in an average savings to homeowners of \$400 year.**
- **Launching of a rental housing database to assist seniors and people with disabilities. OhioHousingLocator.org now provides over 1,600 rental unit listings, serving over 21,000 site visitors to date.**

*Fact: According to 2008 statistics from the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, Ohio ranked in the bottom ten states with regard to long term care living arrangements (institutional placements versus community based placements with supports and services). In 1999 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that confinement in an institution is a violation of civil rights, when life in an integrated, community setting with supports and services is possible.*

6. *What policies do you support to facilitate Ohioans with disabilities to live in their own homes and communities versus in institutions, nursing homes, developmental centers, and ICF/MRs?*

**I believe that Ohioans with disabilities should be able to chose the setting in which they live. To this end, during my first term I have:**

- **Established a unified long-term care budget and enrolled more than 5,500 Ohioans in home and community based services.**
- **Implemented the Money Follows the Person Program, which enables Ohioans to return home, invests in long-term services, and supports system change. As of March 19, 2010, the transition program assisted 494 Ohioans transition home with targeted outreach to Ohioans with mental illness and children in residential treatment facilities.**

- **Provided over 1,252 residents of nursing facilities immediate access to PASSPORT, Assisted Living, PACE, and the Residential State Supplement Program through the Home First provision in Ohio law.**
- **Eliminated the 1,800 participant limit for the Assisted Living Waiver in Ohio law.**
- **Established the Aging and Disability Resource Center.**

*Fact: Medicaid waivers allow people to live in their communities and “waive” institutional placement driven by Medicaid rules. Waivers exist for people with developmental disabilities under the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and for individuals with physical disabilities under the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Currently in Ohio there are waiting lists for most of these waivers.*

7. *What would you do to eliminate waiting lists for waivers?*

**I believe that we should do our best to support older Ohioans and people with disabilities who prefer to live independently in their homes. Therefore, during my first term I have:**

- **Eliminated the waiting list for the PASSPORT program for FY 2010, as well as the Assisted Living and PACE programs at the Ohio Department of Aging, as of the end of March 2010. As of February 2010, 592 people who need and are eligible for home and community-based services are on a waiting list for these three services.**
- **Increased the budget for developmental disabilities waivers. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of total dollars committed to Medicaid Waivers: a 10.72% increase from 2007-2008, a 12.28% increase from 2008-2009, and despite a reduction of 8.85% in state GRF for FY 2010, waiver expenditures increased by 18.51%.**
- **Increased the number of Individual Options waivers by 3,418 participants or 29.4% and Level One waivers by 3,033 or 90.7%.**

*Fact: It is estimated that 75% of people with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed—far below the rate of people without disabilities.*

8. *What steps would you take to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Ohio?*

*I believe that people with disabilities have talents and skills to contribute as members of Ohio’s workforce. For this reason we have taken the following steps during my first term:*

- **Established a Medicaid Buy-in program for people with disabilities to gain access to health care, even when they work outside the home. Since its inception in April 2008, the program has proven highly successful, serving nearly 4,600 working Ohioans with disabilities.**

- **Established a work group in early 2008 to explore opportunities to improve employment services for people with disabilities. This work group has focused on the following specific employment-related issues for individuals with disabilities:**
  - **Improvements in the Transition Plan process (focused on transition from school to work);**
  - **Improvements in the understanding of Medicaid buy-in;**
  - **Improvements in the process of serving people with disabilities through One Stops;**
  - **Improvements in the integration of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors in Mental Health facilities;**
  - **Increased access to the Rehabilitation Services Commission’s services for people with chronic disabilities, particularly people with developmental disabilities.**
- **The Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission awarded \$7.3 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus projects in September and will soon invest another \$7.5 million to create jobs and increase independence for Ohioans with disabilities. These projects give Ohioans with severe disabilities opportunities to re-enter the workforce or maintain their employment. The projects provide more intensive services, valuable work experiences, and opportunities for self-employment to help Ohioans get better jobs faster.**

*Fact: Federal and state law requires that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment (in buildings and classrooms alongside their peers who do not have disabilities), and that appropriate supports and accommodations are provided in those settings to ensure success. Further, these laws expect that students with disabilities are educated within the regular education curriculum.*

*9. How will you ensure that these laws are enforced in Ohio and that students with disabilities are educated in the regular education environment with the regular education curriculum?*

**During my time as Governor, I have focused on the importance of education and have implemented education reform. The foundation of this reform has been my strong belief that we must offer student-centered educational opportunities focusing on the whole child and meeting individual students’ needs. In fact, we have changed the operating standards for Ohio’s schools to require this student-centered education for all children.**

**Additionally, we implemented the Medicaid in the Schools program. Over 500 school districts and community schools have enrolled. Almost 300 schools are submitting and receiving Medicaid reimbursement for services delivered to over 26,000 children.**

*Fact: Many Ohioans with disabilities rely on public transportation to go to work, to medical appointments, to shop, and to do simple daily activities. Ohio's transportation systems are often cumbersome, and in many areas of the state, non-existent. Without it people with disabilities must rely on family or be confined to their homes.*

*10. What would you do to expand access to affordable transportation for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas?*

**While there is still progress to make in this area, I am pleased that we were able to direct federal stimulus dollars for rural transit to enable 18 counties and local governments to purchase ADA-accessible mini-vans and full-size vans.**

### ***GOVERNOR CANDIDATE***

***Responses from John Kasich, Republican***

In lieu of survey we are sending the statement below on behalf of the Kasich Taylor Campaign:

**Ohioans who have disabilities and their families are a vital part of the fabric of our state. The respect and support we show them is a reflection of who we are. As governor, one of my priorities will be to ensure that we provide the best services possible to those in need. Across a wide variety of issues we will come together to marshal our resources and ideas to create common sense solutions. Fundamentally, I believe these solutions are about expanding choices and opportunities. Currently, Ohio's system to help those with disabilities is inefficient and fragmented. We will scour the country for examples of the best ways to provide these services in a comprehensive and integrated fashion.**  
Michael Hartley, Deputy Campaign Manager, Kasich/Taylor for Ohio

### ***GOVERNOR CANDIDATE***

***Responses from Dennis Spisak, Green Party***

*1. Will you include people with disabilities as part of your political team and as advisors on relevant issues?*

**YES**

*2. Do you believe that people with disabilities should be the primary decision makers in their own lives?*

**YES**

3. *Would you support Visitability legislation (single-family, new construction with one no-step entrance, accessible bathroom on first floor level, 32" doorways and aisles maneuverable by a person in a wheelchair)?*

**YES**

*Fact: People with disabilities often face barriers to polling places and to voting equipment as well as attitudinal barriers to the election process. While absentee voting is an option, every citizen has the right to go to their polling location to cast their vote with privacy.*

4. *What would you do to ensure equal access to the voting process by people with disabilities?*

**I would work with the Secretary of State to see that all polling places be accessible to all persons with disabilities.**

*Fact: Approximately twenty-seven percent of non-institutionalized people with disabilities aged 18 to 64 live in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 8.8% of men and women without disabilities. The median income for this disabled population is \$27,200 as opposed to an average of \$57,800 of citizens who do not have a disability.*

*Housing that is affordable and accessible is not readily available.*

5. *What would your policies do to increase the availability of affordable, accessible and safe housing for Ohioans with disabilities?*

**I believe in bringing in jobs to Ohio that pay a "living wage", so that all people can have affordable, accessible, and safe housing.**

*Fact: According to 2008 statistics from the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, Ohio ranked in the bottom ten states with regard to long term care living arrangements (institutional placements versus community based placements with supports and services). In 1999 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that confinement in an institution is a violation of civil rights, when life in an integrated, community setting with supports and services is possible.*

6. *What policies do you support to facilitate Ohioans with disabilities to live in their own homes and communities versus in institutions, nursing homes, developmental centers, and ICF/MRs?*

**Support a Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act to create a voluntary, budget-neutral national insurance program to help adults who have or develop functional disabilities to remain independent and in their communities. Employees would have the option of enrolling through monthly \$30 payroll deductions. Individuals over 18 who had contributed premiums for five**

**or more years would then be eligible for benefits if they are unable to perform two or more activities of daily living (e.g., eating, bathing, dressing). Those benefits could be used for housing modifications, assistive technologies, personal assistance services, transportation or other supports to increase the ability of those with disabilities to find and keep jobs, and remain in their homes and communities.**

*Fact: Medicaid waivers allow people to live in their communities and “waive” institutional placement driven by Medicaid rules. Waivers exist for people with developmental disabilities under the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and for individuals with physical disabilities under the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Currently in Ohio there are waiting lists for most of these waivers.*

7. *What would you do to eliminate waiting lists for waivers?*

**Be committed to streamlining the current application and appeals procedures to reduce the confusion that surrounds these important programs. Hire more staff and to invest in technology to expedite final decisions.**

*Fact: It is estimated that 75% of people with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed—far below the rate of people without disabilities.*

8. *What steps would you take to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Ohio?*

**I believe the state government must recruit, hire, retain and advance workers with disabilities. I believe in providing private-sector employers with resources to employ workers with disabilities and encourage private sector employers to use existing tax benefits to hire more workers with disabilities.**

*Fact: Federal and state law requires that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment (in buildings and classrooms alongside their peers who do not have disabilities), and that appropriate supports and accommodations are provided in those settings to ensure success. Further, these laws expect that students with disabilities are educated within the regular education curriculum.*

9. *How will you ensure that these laws are enforced in Ohio and that students with disabilities are educated in the regular education environment with the regular education curriculum?*

**Work with the Ohio Department of Education to see that Ohio follows all Federal and State Laws that pertain to students with disabilities. As the father of two sons with autism, this already a main focus and goal of mine.**

*Fact: Many Ohioans with disabilities rely on public transportation to go to work, to medical appointments, to shop, and to do simple daily activities. Ohio’s*

*transportation systems are often cumbersome, and in many areas of the state, non-existent. Without it people with disabilities must rely on family or be confined to their homes.*

*10. What would you do to expand access to affordable transportation for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas?*

**Some options that can increase transit options for people with disabilities include flexroutes, which allow for fixed transit routes to add on additional stops as needed, and voucher programs, which allow riders to decide who drives them, where and when.**

**By combining transportation services to different special populations as well as the general public, people can be served by routes that are close to where they live rather than routes funded by the agency that serves them. Communities may want to explore the use of vehicles, such as school buses, that are only used part time to provide services for people with disabilities. Strategies that partner transit providers with volunteer or paid individual drivers to provide needed transit are another option to consider.**

### ***SECRETARY OF STATE CANDIDATE***

***Responses from Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, Democrat***

*1. Will you include people with disabilities as part of your political team and as advisors on relevant issues?*

**Yes. I just recently advocated for a blind friend to become a part of my city's transportation and pedestrian advisory body. Access to polling places is a relevant and pressing issue for Ohio's disabled. I received many calls in previous years as a Columbus City Council member from people who have had difficulty with access to polling places. I advocated to the Board of Elections to work to eliminate the problems.**

*2. Do you believe that people with disabilities should be the primary decision makers in their own lives?*

**Yes.**

*Fact: People with disabilities often face barriers to polling places and to voting equipment as well as attitudinal barriers to the election process. While absentee voting is an option, every citizen has the right to go to their polling location to cast their vote with privacy.*

*3. What would you do to ensure equal access to the voting process by people with disabilities?*

**I will work with all 88 County Boards of Election to make every polling place accessible for all. As Chief Elections Officer, my staff must provide information and assistance to the Boards in complying with federal law. I would consider employing a disabled access expert to advise Boards on how to comply with the law without overly impacting their already stressed budgets.**

### ***U.S. SENATE CANDIDATE***

***Responses from Eric Deaton, Constitution Party of Ohio***

*1. Will you include people with disabilities as part of your political team and as advisors on relevant issues?*

**I will choose the best people available to me each time I pick somebody. There will be no discrimination since I'm looking for the best fit to make my team successful. I know that there are many well qualified individuals that have some sort of disability and they will be given equal chances based on the criteria for each position.**

*2. Do you believe that people with disabilities should be the primary decision makers in their own lives?*

**Yes—when the disabilities are of a physical nature only, but those with mental disabilities do require the guidance of family, POA or another responsible party.**

*3. Would you support Visitability legislation (single-family, new construction with one no-step entrance, accessible bathroom on first floor level, 32" doorways and aisles maneuverable by a person in a wheelchair)?*

**Homes are built for the people buying them and can be built anyway they want within reasonable building codes meant to ensure public safety. Our society shouldn't force private owners to build items into their homes that they don't want or require. Public access laws already apply to public places.**

*Fact: People with disabilities often face barriers to polling places and to voting equipment as well as attitudinal barriers to the election process. While absentee voting is an option, every citizen has the right to go to their polling location to cast their vote with privacy.*

*4. What would you do to ensure equal access to the voting process by people with disabilities?*

**Polling places should be selected that provide for this access up front. There should be no need for special construction if this is put into the planning process from the beginning. For exceptions there should be provisions made for the disabled voters to vote at the site in an adjacent location that is accessible.**

*Fact: Approximately twenty-seven percent of non-institutionalized people with disabilities aged 18 to 64 live in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 8.8% of men and women without disabilities. The median income for this disabled population is \$27,200 as opposed to an average of \$57,800 of citizens who do not have a disability.*

*Housing that is affordable and accessible is not readily available.*

5. *What would your policies do to increase the availability of affordable, accessible and safe housing for Ohioans with disabilities?*

**I am running for Federal office and do not find this to be a Federal issue. This is a state issue and at that level I do support some basic systems to help those born with physical handicaps. Handicaps in themselves do not mean that the individuals require public help. Public help is not something that should be guaranteed and should be based on needs. Those that can work should be helped to get jobs in fields that they can contribute to society in a meaningful way.**

*Fact: According to 2008 statistics from the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, Ohio ranked in the bottom ten states with regard to long term care living arrangements (institutional placements versus community based placements with supports and services). In 1999 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that confinement in an institution is a violation of civil rights, when life in an integrated, community setting with supports and services is possible.*

6. *What policies do you support to facilitate Ohioans with disabilities to live in their own homes and communities versus in institutions, nursing homes, developmental centers, and ICF/MRs?*

**When public funding is used to help those with disabilities it needs to be efficient and well spent. Facilities with staff on site and built to accommodate these individuals makes a lot of sense. Where the cost is no different to help one live in a private home, then that should be a personal choice. When the cost is much better to be in a special facility, then that should be the public offering. These public facilities should offer some means of providing for interaction with the public at large.**

*Fact: Medicaid waivers allow people to live in their communities and “waive” institutional placement driven by Medicaid rules. Waivers exist for people with developmental disabilities under the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities,*

*and for individuals with physical disabilities under the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Currently in Ohio there are waiting lists for most of these waivers.*

7. *What would you do to eliminate waiting lists for waivers?*

**Those already receiving this assistance should be periodically checked for compliance and their continued needs for it. Waivers in themselves are special conditions and there is limited funding available for them. With increased debts at all levels of government this will probably not improve much. Those who are financially able to provide for themselves should be doing so on their own.**

*Fact: It is estimated that 75% of people with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed—far below the rate of people without disabilities.*

8. *What steps would you take to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Ohio?*

**Training and a service to match their skills to jobs they can perform would be a great start. The cost of these programs would be more than off set by getting these citizens working and contributing to society instead of being entirely dependent on it.**

*Fact: Federal and state law requires that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment (in buildings and classrooms alongside their peers who do not have disabilities), and that appropriate supports and accommodations are provided in those settings to ensure success. Further, these laws expect that students with disabilities are educated within the regular education curriculum.*

9. *How will you ensure that these laws are enforced in Ohio and that students with disabilities are educated in the regular education environment with the regular education curriculum?*

**This is once again a state issue and not a federal one. Some disabilities will not interfere with learning in a regular classroom environment, but some do. When there is a negative effect on the normal student population at large, then special facilities and rooms will continue to be required. We can't afford to negatively affect the majority of the student's education for the minority of special student's benefits. We can offer the same educational level opportunities, but in a specialized manner that caters to the specific circumstances.**

*Fact: Many Ohioans with disabilities rely on public transportation to go to work, to medical appointments, to shop, and to do simple daily activities. Ohio's transportation systems are often cumbersome, and in many areas of the state, non-existent. Without it people with disabilities must rely on family or be confined to their homes.*

*10. What would you do to expand access to affordable transportation for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas?*

**These are really state and local issues and hat is who typically provides regional transit authorities. These systems, when available, do cater to those with disabilities. Overall, lower tax burdens for the people of our nation would help with increasing charitably to organizations that provide services such as this.**

**Those with disabilities will never find life fair and neither will their families. Extra effort and hard work in day to day life will always be required of these families, but remember that our rewards for a just and faithful life are in heaven and not on Earth.**