



Candidate Perspectives Survey 2026

Iowa legislative candidates on campaign climate, representation,
and election system reform.

19 candidate responses

19 candidate profiles

Report generated October 15, 2026

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About this report

This report summarizes responses to the Better Ballot Iowa Candidate Perspectives Survey 2026, completed by Iowa legislative candidates. Ten questions used a 1–5 scale; respondents could add an open-ended comment to each. This document presents aggregate results followed by a one-page profile for every candidate.

19

RESPONSES

19

OPEN TO A MEETING

Respondents

CANDIDATE	OFFICE SOUGHT	OPEN TO MEETING
Shawn Olorundami	Iowa State House District 1	Yes
Marilyn J Mentzer	Iowa State House District 15	Yes
Mike Jones	Iowa State House District 32	Yes
Troy Clark	Iowa State House District 39	Yes
India May	Iowa State House District 58	Yes
Lucas Hewitt	Iowa State House District 61	Yes
Brian Bruening	Iowa State House District 64	Yes
Matt English	Iowa State House District 66	Yes
Tracy Ehler	Iowa State House District 79	Yes
Polly Denison	Iowa State House District 84	Yes
Elinor A. Levin	Iowa State House District 89	Yes
Nick Salazar	Iowa State House District 96	Yes
Andrew Fitzgerald	Iowa State House District 98	Yes
Mike Frantz	Iowa State Senate District 3	Yes
Samy El-Baroudi	Iowa State Senate District 17	Yes
Tony Thompson	Iowa State Senate District 23	Yes
Jim Vowels	Iowa State Senate District 29	Yes
Molly Donahue	Iowa State Senate District 37	Yes
Janice Weiner	Iowa State Senate District 45	Yes

Average ratings by question

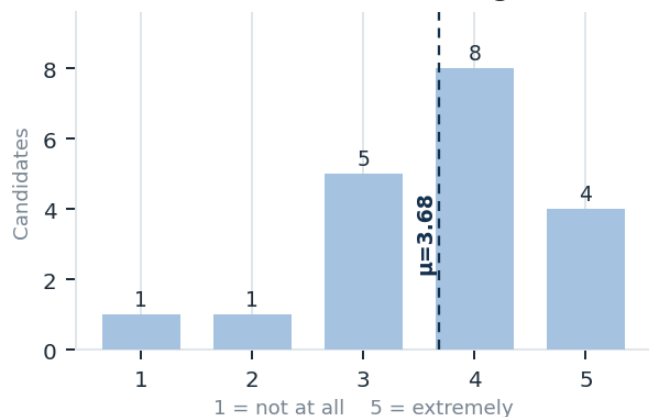
Mean and median of each 1–5 question, in the order the questions were presented. The endpoints of each question's scale are noted beneath it.

QUESTION	N	MEAN	MEDIAN
Negative campaigning As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems lowans face? <i>Scale: 1 = not at all → 5 = extremely</i>	19	3.68	4
Fear of being primaried As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on? <i>Scale: 1 = not at all → 5 = extremely</i>	19	2.74	3
System represents lowans How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of lowans? <i>Scale: 1 = not well at all → 5 = very well</i>	19	2.05	2
Barrier to running In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run? <i>Scale: 1 = no barrier → 5 = major barrier</i>	18	4.06	4
Voter empowerment In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average lowan feel to engage in the political process? <i>Scale: 1 = not at all empowered → 5 = very empowered</i>	19	2.37	2
Majority-winner importance How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote? <i>Scale: 1 = not important → 5 = extremely important</i>	19	3.74	4
Local election control When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities? <i>Scale: 1 = not important → 5 = very important</i>	19	4.11	4
RCV familiarity What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting? <i>Scale: 1 = not familiar → 5 = very familiar</i>	19	4.21	4
Single Open Primaries familiarity What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries? <i>Scale: 1 = not familiar → 5 = very familiar</i>	19	3.63	4

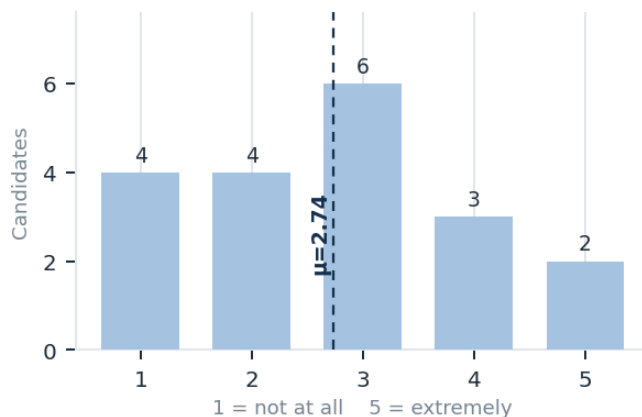
How candidates answered — questions 1–5 (of 9)

Every question used a 1–5 scale. Bars show how many candidates chose each value; the x-axis notes what 1 and 5 mean for that question, and the dashed line marks the mean (μ).

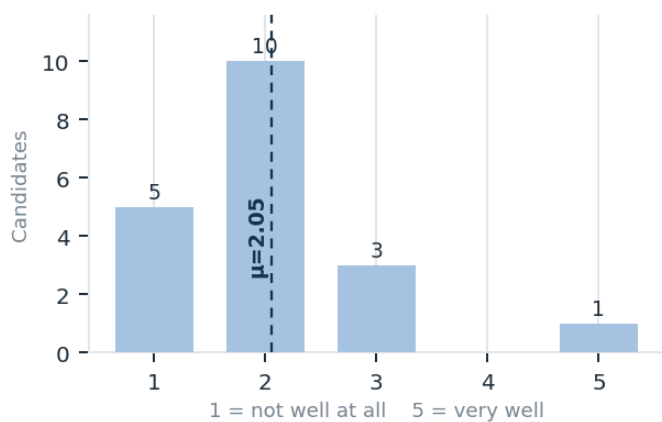
Negative campaigning's effect on collaborative thinking



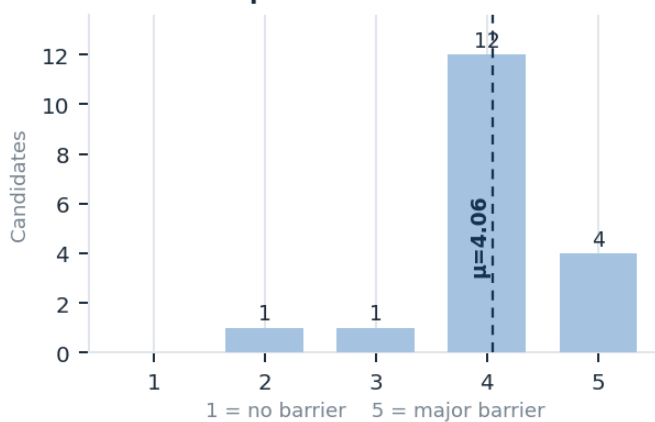
Fear of being primaried vs. voting one's conscience



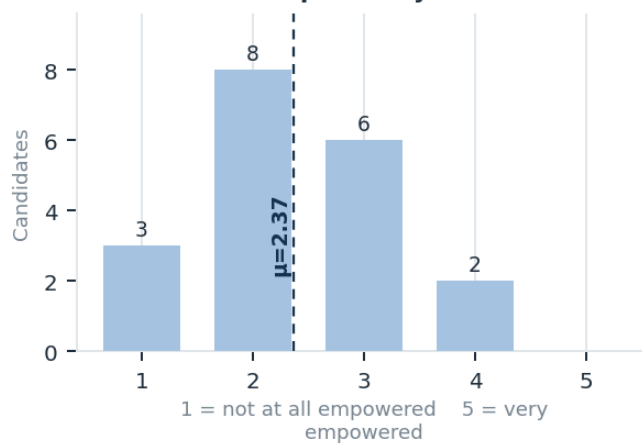
How well the system represents lowans' needs



Political climate as a barrier to qualified candidates

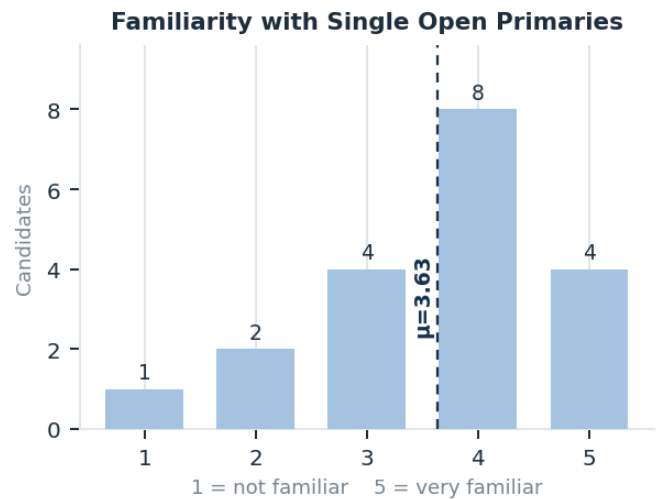
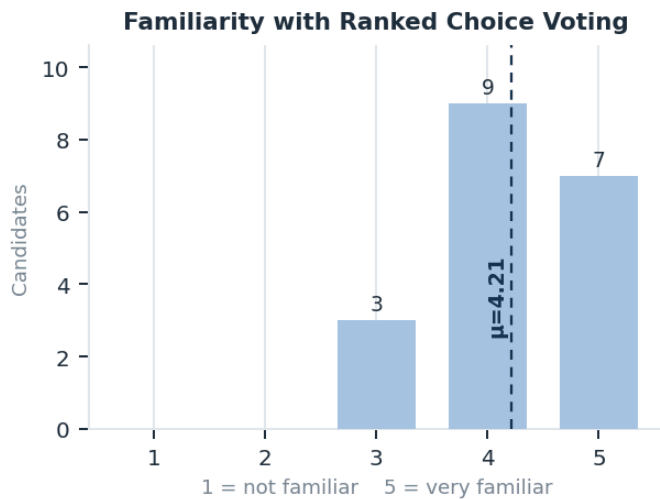
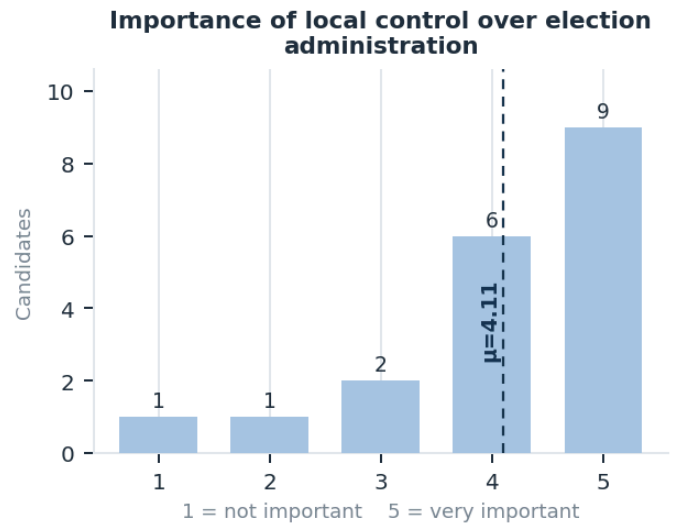
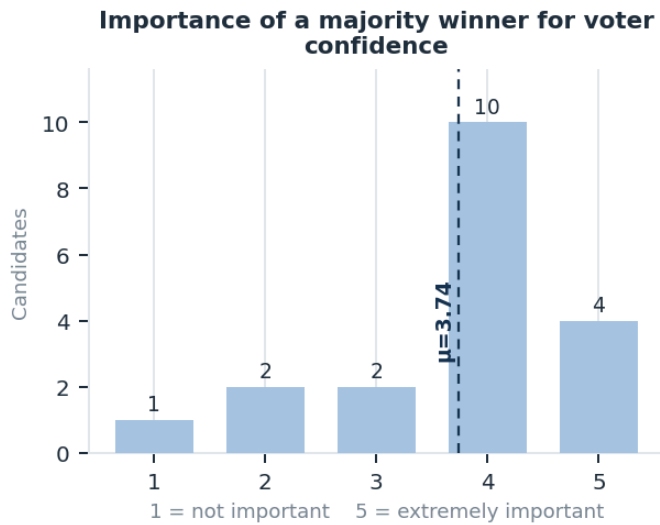


How empowered lowans feel to engage politically



How candidates answered — questions 6–9 (of 9)

Scales are 1–5 as labeled on each x-axis; the dashed line marks the mean (μ).



Shawn Olorundami

Iowa State House District 1

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Marilyn J Mentzer

Iowa State House District 15

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

I am running as an Independent/NO PARTY.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

Unfortunately, Party votes are focused on leaderships, not the priorities of Iowans.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

I reached out to my party, who discouraged me from running. I am so glad I was brave enough to run as an Independent/No Party Candidate. Voters are tired of a few making decisions for the many.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

Unfortunately many Party Chairs are running for office, which in many cases makes it uncomfortable for those of us inspired to run for office who many have different opinions.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

You are basing this question on a two party system which says a lot about the polling.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

Unfortunately, many election administrators are not able to be unbiased.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

Single Open Primaries would be a better choice for Iowans.

Mike Jones

Iowa State House District 32

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

No written comment.

Troy Clark

Iowa State House District 39

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

In this day of modern politics, sadly there is so much polarization. Too often, you must pick a side and stick to it or be on your own. We need to find ways to come back together on our love for people and what is right, and do what is best for our State.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

I think there are a great many very well-qualified people who would consider running for office if there wasn't so much negative and outright lies that are aired.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

I think far too many people are so disgusted with how things are that they don't engage because they feel "why bother!"

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

In State and local elections I think it is very important. However, for the President, I think the founders created a great system to make every State's people matter in electing our leader.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

Elections at every level should strictly adhere to State and Federal laws.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

India May

Iowa State House District 58

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 **5** 5 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 **5** 5 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 **5** 5 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 **3** 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 **4** 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 **4** 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 **4** 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Lucas Hewitt

Iowa State House District 61

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

Negative campaigning fosters suspicion and resentment, and is very difficult to ignore if elected. Plus it encourages others of the same party to also look negatively on the other party in general.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

A legislator's main concern should be the feedback of the people they represent - not whether party leaders approved or not.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

Relatively speaking, I think I does a fairly good job despite the obvious culture war/partisan idiosyncrasy. However, there is great room for improvement - long-term single-party rule fosters complacency.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

I've had many, many comments about how I'm either crazy or brave to run for office. I can see that attitude being a real deterrent to people who would be genuinely good in office.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

Lots and lots and LOTS of complacency, resignation and apathy - people just don't believe things can actually change so their engagement doesn't matter either way.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

Brian Bruening

Iowa State House District 64

brian@brueningforiowa.com

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

In my district, there is such a numerical advantage for Republicans, that it becomes a race to the bottom of the most extreme views.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

Matt English

Iowa State House District 66

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I have not experience any direct attacks, but the current trend in Republican spaces to call all Democrats communist is reminiscent of the Red Scare.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

This seems to be more of a Republican issue than a Democratic one. Based solely on what I see on social media and in the news Democrats have more a plurality of ideas while Republicans have become singularly aligned.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

There is too much party division and money in politics for realistic representation.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

It cost too much and make you a target for criticism.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

It is definitely a case by case feeling. Some are energized by the political process and others are drained by it.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Tracy Ehlert

Iowa State House District 79

Ehlert4IAHouse@gmail.com

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

Polly Denison

Iowa State House District 84

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems lowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Negative campaigning can make collaboration harder by turning political disagreements into personal conflicts. I believe we can disagree on policy, respect one another, and still work together to find practical solutions for lowans.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

Legislators should answer first to their constituents and their own judgment—not party leadership—and be willing to stand by their votes. However, for quite a few legislators, the fear of being primaried is very real.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of lowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

The system represents lowans unevenly. Too often, politics and party priorities get ahead of the everyday concerns of families. lowans deserve legislators who listen, work across differences, and focus on practical solutions to the issues that affect their lives.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

The current political climate can discourage qualified people from running because of personal attacks, harassment, fundraising pressures, and the impact on their families. We need to make public service a place where good people feel they can serve without sacrificing their personal well-being.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average lowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

lowans care deeply about their communities but don't always feel their voices make a difference. My experience is that people become more engaged when they feel listened to and see that participation can actually lead to results.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Majority support is important for voter confidence and legitimacy. Voters should feel that the person elected has earned the support of more than half of those who cast a vote.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

It is very important, as long as basic statewide standards for fairness and security are maintained. Local election officials understand their communities best and should have reasonable flexibility to make administration accessible and effective for their voters.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

I'm familiar with Ranked Choice Voting and understand how it works. I'm interested in learning more about its potential benefits and drawbacks before forming a firm position. Iowa currently prohibits its use in elections.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I'm familiar with the concept of Single Open Primaries, where all candidates appear on one primary ballot and all voters can participate regardless of party affiliation. I understand the potential benefits, but I'd want to learn more about how different models would work in Iowa before taking a firm position.

Elinor A. Levin

Iowa State House District 89

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems lowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Particularly in the age of year-round campaign cycles, the current system incentivizes headline-grabbing action, not thoughtful, negotiated positions and conscientious decision making. Then, votes on massive, complex serious proposals get turned into mailers that make electeds sound like monsters. Bills cross the floor that are pure fodder for campaign attacks.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

My colleagues, particularly those expecting close races for primaries, have ads run against them and hurtful op-eds written about them just for working on non- or bi-partisan ideas. This keeps great conversations from turning into actionable policy solutions.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of lowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Recruiting someone qualified and interested, who has the lifestyle and schedule to do this jobb well is hard enough. When they know that they and their family are likely to become targets of, often, hateful lies, it becomes nearly impossible.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average lowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

lowans pride ourselves on our politically engaged population, but when I actually talk to folks, most of them feel like they don't have a say in who ends up on their ballots, and they are frustrated by the fact that what they see during campaigns is often misleading and deisgned to stir up outrage. They want to be able to trust the people they vote for, and they want to feel heard. Beyond voting, I hear from WAY too many lowans whose legislators don't respond to them when they reach out about policy, about local issues, or about needing help.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

Elections need to be consistent in order to maintain confidence AND local elections should be administered at the local level in a way that is clearly communicated and logical for that municipality.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Nick Salazar

Iowa State House District 96

info@salazarforiowa.com

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

Andrew Fitzgerald

Iowa State House District 98

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

As a candidate we have to be careful in things we say and do because in the world of the internet, things can be cropped/edited to be taken out of context. This leads into candidates not talking about things that matter.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I may be different, but I don't care what leadership thinks. I do care what my constituents think. I already know that voting in the best interest for the people of D98 will likely leave me on my own after my term(if elected). The party system is broken and we need to break this norm.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

I answered it in my previous comment some. I don't think the 2 party system operates for Iowans at all.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

I found it fairly easy to run. Its the lack of support that makes it difficult for an outsider.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

Its mixed really. Some people are really excited but most just don't seem to care. Maybe its because I am just a candidate and not currently in office.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

It the current 2 party system, I find it important. But I do believe in ranked choice and having more options than just the two party candidates.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

Big fan of the STAR system of ranked choice.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

Mike Frantz

Iowa State Senate District 3

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

I hear voters all the time quoting campaign ads. Some ask if they're true and others accept them at face value.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

There are plenty of opinion polls that show the majority of voters have opposed passed legislation.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 no response

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

I hear from voters a lot that they don't believe they are being heard. This can lead to a decision not to vote.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

The bigger problem is the number of eligible persons who choose not to vote at all.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Samy El-Baroudi

Iowa State Senate District 17

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Sadly negative campaigning has become a fixture in politics. We need to return to a political environment that focuses on issues and to stop rewarding our politicians for negative campaigns.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

For a legislator who has aspirations beyond their current role or who will need caucus support to meet their constituents needs this is a major concern. It is vital that each legislator is empowered to vote in the best interests of their constituents and their conscience.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

Our current system focuses on party loyalty over constituent priorities. We see that on both sides of the aisle. We must hold our candidates and leaders accountable and ensure that there are viable options when the current leaders do not meet our needs.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

The time, and particularly the money required to run an effective campaign is a deterrent to many qualified candidates. This is particularly true when talking about young people running, especially if they do not come from a family of means. To engage young people we must remove some of these barriers.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

Most voters I talk to feel failed by the system and powerless.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

When running in a field with many candidates it is very difficult to win 50+% of the vote. We must make sure that when one constituency's votes are split that we have a way for that preference to be measured.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

I believe that voting is a state and local responsibility.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I am somewhat familiar with Ranked Choice Voting and believe it would help engage more voters. I look forward to learning more about this and learning from you once elected.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

I just read a short summary of what Single Open Primaries are. I look forward to learning more about it when we meet.

Tony Thompson

Iowa State Senate District 23

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I think it depends a great deal on the individual candidate and it is tough to know what an "average candidate" is.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

I think it depends a great deal on the individual candidate and it is tough to know what an "average candidate" is.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

I think our current political system represents well the needs and priorities of a very small amount of Iowans.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

Far too many people don't even want to have a conversation about politics, let alone run for office.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

On a spectrum of engagement, there is a very small number that feel empowered to engage in the political process, and the vast majority either feel powerless or are completely disinterested.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Jim Vowels

Iowa State Senate District 29

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

It probably does affect some, but it shouldn't. Legislators have a job to do and should vote accordingly.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

Nearly every piece of legislation passed in recent years has come from outside sources. We're following a blueprint laid out by players who know nothing of Iowa, yet executed by those who should know better.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

Molly Donahue

Iowa State Senate District 37

donahueforrep@gmail.com

Open to meeting: Yes

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

No written comment.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 1 / 5

I represent my constituents, not the party.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

No written comment.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 5 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

No written comment.

As a candidate, how much do you think the average candidate is affected by negative campaigning tactics in their ability to think collaboratively about solutions to problems Iowans face?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

It depends on the district - in a tough district, people expect a negative postcard to voters on votes they have taken in the legislature - often "gotcha" bills. If people tell the truth in ads - something that voters may not otherwise know - that is one thing. But the barrage of negatives in competitive races takes a toll. With a thick enough skin, someone can stand up and say, "Here's the truth. Here's what I'm running on. Here's my record." But negatives stick with people - that's why they are used. It would be wonderful if campaigns could be run largely on positive ideas and policies - and searching for crosscutting coalitions.

As a current/potential legislator, how much do you think fear of being primaried would affect the average legislator's ability to vote their conscience on a bill that they disagreed with party leadership on?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

It depends on the party. I want people working with me who are genuine - not simply "yes men". None of us get smarter doing that and it doesn't help Iowans. Remember Lincoln's cabinet of rivals.

How well do you think the political system as it currently operates effectively represents the needs and priorities of Iowans?

1 2 3 4 5 2 / 5

With unlimited amounts of money allowed for state legislative races, it opens the door for special interests to throw in a lot of money - either for or against someone. The playing field is nowhere near level. The unfortunate degradation of local media (though those that remain are working hard) leaves people without the local perspective that used to help vet candidates and hold them accountable. Change how campaigns are funded (and corporations are NOT people) and revitalize local media.

In your experience when considering a run for political office, how much of a barrier does the current political climate pose to otherwise qualified candidates' willingness to run?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Some people are afraid to put out yard signs for their candidates - which in itself should be a warning sign. The safety/security issues are real. And if you think really bad negative ads impact a candidate - think of a candidate with kids, who go to school with other kids. Many people don't want to put up with that - and I understand why. Look at what happened in Minnesota last summer. I have great respect for those who put themselves out there - and understand why many who would be well qualified would choose not to.

In your experience interacting with voters, how empowered does the average Iowan feel to engage in the political process?

1 2 3 4 5 3 / 5

Our history of the caucuses allowed people to "kick the tires" and really get to know candidates personally. Caucuses have their pluses and minuses - that is a big plus. By and large, I think a lot of Iowans don't feel empowered - too many elected officials don't hold listening posts or show up for forums or town halls, which should be a must. However, small victories can empower people - showing up, having conversations, changing one mind, winning one election that then ushers in change - that starts to have an impact.

How important do you think it is for voter confidence that the winner of an election receive a majority (over 50%) of the vote?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

For the most part, it should be 50% plus 1. There are some times when there is a third candidate - completely legitimate - and then perhaps it is not an absolute majority but a plurality.

When it comes to local election administration, what level of importance do you place on local jurisdictions having freedom to make changes that work for their communities?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Restrictions imposed in recent years don't improve election security. Let a county have more than one secure, monitored drop box, for example. Let a county decide about satellite voting, for example.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Ranked Choice Voting?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

I've seen it at work in Alaska, for example, and in other countries. It tends to winnow out the extremes, which ends up being more representative of the majority. And yet, our colleagues have seen fit to ban it without trying it or fully understanding it.

What is your current level of familiarity with the concept of Single Open Primaries?

1 2 3 4 5 4 / 5

Voters can vote in a primary, regardless of political party affiliation or lack thereof. Enfranchises more voters.