

# Questions for the Candidates Where Do They Stand?

*Nevada Business Journal sent questionnaires to the five major candidates for governor of Nevada (Bob Beers, Jim Gibbons, Jim Gibson, Lorraine Hunt and Dina Titus) to see where they stood on several important issues. Jim Gibson and Dina Titus declined to participate. Here are the responses sent in by the others.*



**Name:** Bob Beers

**Age:** 46

**Political Party:** Republican

**Amount of funds raised for this campaign:** \$60,000

**Bio:**

Grew up in Las Vegas, graduating from Clark High and UNLV (BS Business Administration with Distinction, 1987). Certified Public Accountant, business consultant since 1989. Married (Sarah) with two children. Elected to Nevada Assembly in 1998 and Nevada Senate in 2004. Current vice-chair of Senate Finance Committee.

**Should state employees be allowed to unionize?**

Local government unions enjoy an unfair set of bargaining advantages never granted to state unions. I voted against extending these same advantages to state unions because it would require tax hikes. Last year, Congressman Gibbons said he was in support, earning his campaign a state union's endorsement and a \$5,000 check.

**Should PERS be changed from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan?**

PERS' unfunded liability has grown from \$2 billion in 2000 to almost \$6 billion in 2005, because of investment losses at the beginning of the decade and recent rapid expansion in local government compensation. The Legislature will have to look at an equitable way to move to a defined contribution plan.

**Should the Clark County School District be deconsolidated?**

End the monopoly. CCSD is an accident. No one ever imagined we'd have the fifth largest district in America. Deconsolidation will empower teachers to get another job when they end up working for a bad manager. Happy teachers produce greater academic performance.

**What is your position on merit pay for teachers?**

Yes. The argument against – that it will really be principal's-pet pay – has been invalidated by technology. We have the ability to objectively measure changes in student performance at the student level and aggregate them at the teacher level. A principal's tools are about to be revolutionized.

**Do you support the proposed amendment to Nevada's Constitution known as TASC (Tax And Spending Control) For Nevada?**

I am the sponsor of TASC, so yes. Without TASC, we will be vulnerable to the kind of abusive tax hikes we saw in 2003. Americans For Tax Reform recently published a study finding Nevada's tax hikes from 2002 to 2005 were second-highest in America at \$508 per man, woman and child.



**Name:** Jim Gibbons

**Age:** 61

**Political Party:** Republican

**Amount of funds raised for this campaign:** \$3 million (approximately)

**Bio:**

Born, Sparks, NV. Master's degree, Mining/Geology, University of Nevada. JD, Southwestern University School of Law. Practiced law as mining and water-rights attorney. Veteran, Vietnam and Gulf Wars (19 medals, including Distinguished Flying Cross). Three terms in Nevada Assembly. Sponsor, Gibbons Tax Restraint Initiative. Introduced Education First Initiative. Congressman, 1997-present.

***Should state employees be allowed to unionize?***

Employees should be allowed, but not required, to join a union. At the same time, as governor, I will ensure that Nevada remain a "right to work" state.

***Should PERS be changed from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan?***

I agree with Governor Guinn on this issue. Right now, PERS's unfunded liability is a huge liability to taxpayers and we must address this problem. We need to uphold the state's contractual obligations to current participants while moving to a defined contribution plan in the future.

***Should the Clark County School District be deconsolidated?***

A taxpayer-funded study is being done on this issue by the Nevada Legislature. We need to examine the results to determine whether deconsolidation will benefit students, parents and taxpayers. I am committed to improving test scores and graduation rates. Right now, the system is failing our students and our taxpayers.

***What is your position on merit pay for teachers?***

We need to recruit, reward and retain good teachers. I fully support merit pay for teachers. Just as we do in the private sector, we should have the ability to reward those whose results deserve those rewards. That will improve teacher morale and our children's education.

***Do you support the proposed amendment to Nevada's Constitution known as TASC (Tax And Spending Control) For Nevada?***

Last month, I met with TASC representatives and gave them several questions that need to be addressed concerning the language in their petition. I am committed to limiting government spending and do not believe that the size of government should increase faster than the ability of taxpayers to fund it.