

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

2010 Legislature Questionnaire

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John Kowalski

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BIO QUESTIONS

Name:

John Kowalski

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Date of Birth:

May 15, 1959

Occupation/Main source(s) of income:

General Business Management Consultant, & President of Pivot Productions, Inc.;
Executive Producer & Host, The John Adam Show

Previous occupations:

President & CEO, Kowalski Construction, Inc.;
Institutional Asset Financial Reporting Analyst,
Harris Trust & Savings Bank;
United States Navy

Education:

BS Communications, Northwestern University;
Course Work, J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of
Management, Northwestern University;

Family:

Single, plus 2 rescue dogs!

How long have you lived in Arizona?

35 years, excluding military & college years

What is your party registration and how long have you been registered as a member of that party?

Republican

Previous public offices you've sought/held:

None

Civic organizations in which you've been active?

Chairman of the Board & President, Arizona Small Business Association
 Board of Directors & Vice President, Enterprise Network
 Ambassador & Media Personality, Greater Phoenix SCORE
 Board of Directors, Phoenix Theatre
 Master of Ceremonies, Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure

Are you using public funds in your campaign?

No. I do not think it is fiscally responsible for candidates to use taxpayer money, especially during a severe budget crisis, to finance their campaign for a government job.

Do you have any sort of a criminal record or any outstanding civil judgements? Please be specific.

No

BREAKING THE ICE

What is the best piece of political advice you ever received?

Build relationships with all of your fellow legislators and get to understand their point of view. - Sen. Ken Chevront during a meeting in his office near the end of the last session.

What is your favorite book (besides a spiritual text)?

"I'm OK, You're OK". The title alone implies a great starting point for Arizonans to unite for a common purpose to solve our challenges.

What favorite movie has meaning for you?

"Back To The Future". One of my favorite scenes is near the end of the movie when the writing on a piece of paper that Jennifer is holding "erases" and she asks Doc, "what does this mean?" Doc replies, "it means the future hasn't been written yet; it can be whatever you want!" (paraphrased)

[What is your favorite place in Arizona?](#)

Dobbins Lookout Point at South Mountain Park. As a kid growing up in Phoenix, I remember noticing the edge of the city lights growing farther and farther out every year from that little stone lookout point.

[Which Arizona political figure past or present do you most admire and why?](#)

John Rhodes, Jr., for being the driving force behind congressional authorization of the Central Arizona Project.

[If you could choose any great American, past or present, as your closest adviser, who would it be?](#)

Benjamin Franklin.

ISSUES

[Has state government been spending too much money, the right amount, or not enough? Specifically, how would you change the state's approach to spending?](#)

The key word regarding government spending is accountability. Like a small business is accountable to its customers to provide a good product/service at a fair price, government should be accountable to its citizens for managing tax revenues in a responsible way and spend only what it receives. Specifically, government should spend just enough to achieve its primary purpose and nothing more.

[Name one state agency or program you believe gets too much money. Why?](#)

My father taught me that "when business is bad...cut the overhead, and when business is good...cut the overhead!" I would apply this philosophy to the administrative costs of all agencies. By definition, all agencies and programs are getting too much money because State expenditures exceed revenues.

Name one state agency or program you believe gets too little money. Why?

Any State agency or program that is designed to improve the landscape for businesses to create jobs in Arizona should be candidates for additional funding but only if it can be shown that the return is far greater than the investment.

If you favor further state tax cuts, name one tax that should be cut and why.

Personal property tax. A reduction would strongly encourage businesses to purchase the machinery, equipment, furniture and supplies that is needed to grow and provide jobs.

If you oppose further tax cuts, name one strategy you would pursue to boost the state's economy.

In addition to cutting the personal property tax, the strategy to boost the state's economy is to position Arizona as one of the top States to start, locate, and grow a business. This can be accomplished through public/private collaboration regarding tax policies, regulations, and providing capital to small businesses. I also propose changing the way Arizona promotes tourism to be less sensitive to fluctuations in the economy by providing multiple channels for visitors.

Did you support or oppose the May 18 sales-tax measure?

In general, I do not support any tax increases because they are easy solutions that require no imagination to solve difficult problems. However, given the extreme circumstances of the budget crisis, not only did we need to do everything recommended by those who opposed the tax increase, but we also needed to temporarily increase the tax revenues in order to close the immediate deficit. The fact that the increase will expire in 3 years requires us to come up with innovative ways to replace those tax revenues, including implementing the strategies I described in the question above.

Is Arizona's budget too reliant on the sales tax? If so, what should be done to change the mix of revenues? If not, what should the state do to prevent cyclical drops in its revenue?

Not necessarily. Politically feasible, revenue-neutral reform proposals suggest that the reliance could actually increase. One change to the mix of revenues would be to re-examine user fees so that direct beneficiaries pay for some services.

Are there any circumstances under which you would favor a tax increase to offset future state budget deficits?

I would apply a "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" rule...obviously we would do whatever is necessary to deal with war and famine, etc. Tax increases are a fallback for a lack of imagination and innovation which are what built our great State.

Arizona's budget has a structural imbalance, meaning state spending obligations for the next several years outstrip the projected amount of tax collections. The state has already cut \$2 billion out of spending. What is the way forward to make the budget balance?

Arizona cannot cut its way to greatness. The political discussion has been about either cutting services, or raising taxes (or a combination of both) by about another \$1B in order to balance the budget again next year; this is essentially a no-win scenario and I believe we are having the wrong discussion. The alternative is to grow the economy and create jobs. I am working with the leaders of the business community to develop a plan to provide much needed capital for small businesses that will result in economic growth and job creation as quickly as possible.

Should Arizona take the lead in fighting global warming even if the federal government doesn't? If so, how?

Arizona should do what it does best and that is to take the lead in developing the technologies that will resolve many of the world's problems, including global warming.

What action does Arizona need to take next to deal with the problem of illegal immigration?

Arizona has already taken significant action regarding illegal immigration to bring this issue to the attention of the federal government. While that is being resolved, it is time to focus on growing the economy and creating jobs.

Did you support SB 1070 - the state's new immigration law? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What changes, if any, would you make to the law?

I support SB 1070 in that Arizona needed to take some action to protect itself given that the federal government has failed to act. The bill was not perfect and there have been unintended consequences that we now must address, especially to ensure its constitutionality. Enacting legislation is not unlike a business rolling out a new product; it is important to consider the messaging and the marketing in order to be successful.

[If you could only introduce one bill in the coming legislative session, what would it be?](#)

Legislation requiring that at least a small portion of the State's Pension Fund be responsibly invested locally in Arizona companies without assuming any more risk than the fund currently accepts. It is common knowledge in the investment community that virtually all of that money is invested in companies located in other States and even other countries. Either we believe in the future of Arizona or we don't; it's time to at least put a small fraction of our money to work right here in Arizona to grow the economy and create jobs.

[Name one unsuccessful bill during the 2008 legislative session that you believe should have become law.](#)

HB 2250 sponsored by Speaker Adams. While the legislature was addressing other issues, this bill was not given the attention it needed and we lost another opportunity to grow our economy and create jobs for Arizonans. HB 2250 needed improvement and could have resulted in Arizona being positioned as one of the top States to start, locate, and grow a business. Unfortunately, this important piece of legislation wasn't given the attention it deserved.

[Should the Legislature act to reduce the influence of state and federal courts over state government? If so, how?](#)

The legislative branch of government should only act to protect its constitutional rights to maintain the system of checks and balances.

[What, if anything, should the Legislature do to improve health care for its citizens?](#)

Given the current budget situation, health care could be improved by charging a nominal co-pay for AHCCCS participants. This would partially close the underpayment gap to doctors and hospitals and reduce cost shifting to the private sector.

[Did you favor the federal health-care reform law signed by President Obama this year?](#)

I support health care coverage for all Americans but the solution should come from the private sector not the federal government.

[Do you believe federal health-care reform will improve access to health care? Why or why not?](#)

The health care reform package is so complex and far-reaching that I don't believe anyone can accurately predict whether or not it will improve access to health care. There has simply not been enough time to evaluate the potential outcome.

[Do you believe federal health-care reform will place a burden on the state? Why or why not?](#)

All federal mandates place a burden on the State unless they are appropriately funded.

[Do you support using state funds for bioscience research?](#)

Bioscience as an industry will play a major role in Arizona's future, and may be "the rising tide that lifts all boats." In general, I support a level playing field for all businesses and allow the free market to determine where to invest capital. I support public/private collaboration to ensure that if any taxpayer dollars were necessary to benefit any particular industry that there is a direct economic benefit to all Arizonans that far outweighs the investment.

[Do you support the use of school vouchers? Why or why not?](#)

I support initiatives that give parents greater choice, and that result not in just more options but higher quality outcomes from those options.

[Should the AIMS test continue to be required for graduation? Should it be toughened?](#)

Yes, and AIMS HS Science should be included in the graduation requirement.

Would spending more money on public schools increase the quality of education in Arizona? Why or why not?

The issue is not necessarily about how much money is spent; rather, it's about how the money is spent. I have spoken with many teachers who agree that while more money is needed to hire more teachers, those funds could come from more efficient use of the money already available. These teachers are stunned at how much money is wasted because administrators do not have the business background needed to effectively manage the budgets.

Is it prudent to bond for school construction or would it be a better path to pay as you go for construction? Why do you feel that way?

Debt financing is appropriate for capital improvements such as new building construction.

Do you support using state funds to keep the Arizona parks system open? If not, how would you propose to fund it?

The world-class geographic beauty of Arizona is vital to our tourism industry and provides a low investment, high return opportunity to increase State revenues. I propose changing the way Arizona promotes tourism to be less sensitive to fluctuations in the economy by providing multiple channels for visitors. One way to keep the parks open would be to re-examine user fees so that direct beneficiaries pay for some services, and to protect those funds from being "swept" into the general fund.

Do you support the passage of legislation that would require a presidential candidate to produce a birth certificate to be allowed on to the ballot?

It is my understanding that the current process for vetting presidential candidates provides sufficient due diligence; however, if I find there to be any deficiency in the process, I would work to close any gaps that exist.

Do you support legislation that would:

A) Prohibit or curtail abortion?

I oppose abortion because I believe that all life is precious.

B) Legalize medical marijuana?

Yes, provided there is sufficient regulation and medical supervision to prevent abuse and provide patients with the medicine they need.

C) Require presidential candidates to produce birth certificates to get on the Arizona ballot?

It is my understanding that the current process for vetting presidential candidates provides sufficient due diligence; however, if I find there to be any deficiency in the process, I would work to close any gaps that exist.

ARIZONA 2020 QUESTIONS

Earlier this year, The Arizona Republic Editorial Board produced a special project that called for greater strategic planning and the development of sensible solutions to some of the state's long-standing problems. As we prepare to make endorsements in the 2010 elections, we would like to better understand your vision for Arizona.

If you were to create a 10-year strategic plan for Arizona, what would be its most essential element? Why?

Diversify the economy to minimize the impact of economic downturns and to protect jobs. We can accomplish this by leveraging our strengths: world-class geographic beauty & climate, research universities, emerging technology industries, proximity to Mexico, and engaging our robust entrepreneurial community to come up with innovative solutions to our challenges.

What is the most significant obstacle to Arizona's future prosperity and how would you remove it?

Failure to focus on growing the economy and creating jobs. I encourage Arizonans to elect officials with the business experience needed to balance the budget, and position Arizona as one of the top States to start, locate, and grow a business so that jobs can be created as quickly as possible.

What should be the role of state universities in shaping Arizona's future?

Arizona's universities play a vital role doing the research that is needed to advance industries such as bioscience, solar, nanotechnology and others that are the key to providing high paying jobs for Arizonans.

[How can government best help businesses to prosper over the next 10 years?](#)

Provide a level playing field for all businesses to prosper and create jobs. By phasing out both corporate and personal income taxes, Arizona will be positioned as the ideal State in which to start, locate, and grow a business. Money that is not spent on taxes can be used to grow a business and create more jobs.

[How can government ensure that Arizona's students will have the tools they need to succeed over the next 10 years? What tools or skills will graduates most need?](#)

Government can help to ensure a high quality education for all of Arizona's students. The students of today are the entrepreneurs who will come up with innovative solutions to our challenges, and the skilled professionals who will work in the high paying, high tech jobs that I will work to create in Arizona. Graduates will need strong skills in mathematics, science, technology and communication. Every dollar we spend on education must be used as efficiently as possible to provide students with those skills.

[What should Arizona learn from the Great Recession?](#)

That we were all affected and are in this together...and together we will all emerge stronger and more united.

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