



## 2020 Wyoming State House and Senate Candidate Survey

Wyoming Rising invited all general election candidates running for state house and senate seats in Wyoming to complete a short survey of seven questions reflective of Wyoming Rising's mission:

*As Wyoming citizens, we advocate for civil liberties, quality public education, affordable health care, protection of the environment, and participation in government.*

Fifteen candidates responded. Each question required a response of AGREE, NEUTRAL, or DISAGREE. Comments were optional and included here exactly as submitted, with no corrections to spelling or grammar. Not all respondents commented on every question.

Find the [full listing](#) of candidates at the [Wyoming SOS Election Center](#).

We appreciate the candidates who took the time to engage with Wyoming voters,  
Wyoming Rising Leadership Team  
[www.wyomingrising.org](http://www.wyomingrising.org)

## Candidates Who Responded to the Survey

- **James Byrd**, Democrat from Cheyenne running against Affie Ellis (Rep) in Senate District 8
- **Liisa Anselmi-Dalton**, Democrat from Rock Springs running against John Kolb (Rep) in Senate District 12
- **Edward Cooper**, Republican from Ten Sleep running against Theresa Livingston (Dem) in Senate District 20
- **Theresa Livingston**, Democrat from Worland running against Edward Cooper (Rep) in Senate District 20
- **Wendy Degroot**, Libertarian from Casper running against Charles Scott (Rep) in Senate District 30
- **Landon Brown**, Republican from Cheyenne running unopposed in House District 9
- **Justin Winney**, Republican from Bondurant running against James Roscoe (Ind) in House District 22
- **Levi Shinkle**, Democrat from Thermopolis running against John Winter (Rep) in House District 28
- **Tim Chesnut**, Democrat from Laramie running against Andrew Ocean (Rep) in House District 46
- **Cindy Johnson Bennett**, Independent from Cody running against Rachel Rodriguez-Williams (Rep) in House District 50
- **Bill Fortner**, Republican from Gillette running unopposed in House District 52
- **Kevin Wilson**, Democrat from Lander running against Lloyd Larsen (Rep) in House District 54
- **Joseph Porambo**, Libertarian from Casper running against Patrick Sweeney (Rep) in House District 58
- **Michael Gilmore**, Democrat from Casper running against Kevin O'Hearn (Rep) in House District 59
- **Lindsey Travis**, Democrat from Green River running against Mark Baker (Rep) in House District 60

Q1: I value civil discourse in hearing from and exchanging ideas with all constituents.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20	x		
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30	x		
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22	x		
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50	x		
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52	x		
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58	x		
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

**James Byrd:** promoting, the key word here. Not a fan of "cram-down" legislation unless absolutely necessary.

**Edward Cooper:** Input from constituents is vital to properly represent the wishes of the district.

**Theresa Livingston:** We need to listen to everyone. This is how we get better.

**Wendy Degroot:** Someone in office is suppose to represent their constituents. Not follow their own agenda.

**Justin Winney:** It is important to listen to people. You never know who the good ideas will come from. One of the reasons I was successful in Command of two Navy ships was an ability to listen and distill good ideas into action. In my campaign I have said "Your voice matters" and I mean that. I will listen to people and when a good thought comes up I'll do something with it.

**Tim Chestnut:** I have always been and will continue to be the most accessible as possible

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** Civil discourse is a hallmark of our democracy, creating and perpetuating independent thinking and healthy exchanges of differing experiences and philosophies. Without the capacity to have compassion for others - being able to respect someone else enough to listen to their ideas, we lose valuable societal connectivity. We become jaded by small mindedness no larger than our own personal bubble. Diversity in thought, life experiences, familial bonds, etc. is the life blood of a thriving society. Civil discourse is how we learn about each other

**Kevin Wilson:** I've been knocking on the doors of independents, republicans, and democrats in my district. When it comes down to it, we mostly agree that we want a state that less subject to boom and bust moving forward.

**Joseph Porambo:** I feel civil discourse is important and covered by our Constitution, it should remain peaceful, and at no time should result in looting and burning.

**Michael Gilmore:** it is always best to understand both sides of an issue. I find you make much better decisions.

**Lindsey Travis:** While we may not all agree on issues, it is important as an elected leader to listen to all constituents and consider their opinions when making decisions.

Q2: I foresee a permanent reduction in fossil fuel tax revenues in Wyoming.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20	x		
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30	x		
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22		x	
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50		x	
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52	x		
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58	x		
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

**Edward Cooper:** Oil and gas will return but coal production will likely be stifled for years to come.

**Theresa Livingston:** Fossil fuels & other minerals have been a rollercoaster for Wyoming's Tax revenue for many, many years. We need new revenue

**Wendy Degroot:** I need to see how much it rebounds. I am not certain it will fully recover so we need to not just talk about diversifying our economy. We need to act on it. I have many ideas and if only a couple work or even one, it is worth it.

**Justin Winney:** There are those that put great faith in wind energy. I am mixed on that, it is a good part of the system but it is less predictable. If Small Modular Nuclear Reactors get going that will reduce fossil demands, but that remains to be brought to fruition. In the meantime petroleum as a motor fuel will remain important.

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** I foresee a current reduction in fossil fuel tax revenue, however there aren't enough non-fossil fuel energies in use right now to make not using fossil fuel economical or permanently not viable for the world at large - fossil fuel is an international market. Wyoming is taking a huge revenue hit because of its historically disproportionate reliance on fossil fuel revenue and will continue to in the foreseeable future due to the low prices. That means Wyoming desperately needs to find other revenue sources as soon as possible, something the Legislature has not embraced in the past that I support going forward.

**Bill Fortner:** This has been evident for the last ten years.

**Kevin Wilson:** This is certainly the case and it is due to global market forces out of our control, consumer preference for cleaner and cheaper fuels and energy sources, and a growing concern for the environment from people of all walks of life. It is time to stop the CPR on the extractive industries and start diversifying our economy and revenue streams.

**Joseph Porambo:** I feel as legislators we must look at it this way to prepare for it. I would always hope that these revenues would return but we have to plan for all possibilities.

**Michael Gilmore:** not forever, but I do think coal is losing its luster worldwide

**Lindsey Travis:** Wyoming has an abundance of fossil fuels, but the demand for them has decreased. Because of this, I don't expect that tax revenues will simply bounce back.

Q3: I will support legislation that develops new revenue sources in order to maintain or increase funding for primary, secondary, and higher education in Wyoming.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20	x		
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30	x		
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9		x	
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22		x	
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50	x		
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52			x
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58	x		
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

**Edward Cooper:** New revenue sources will be critical to maintain our quality education system.

**Theresa Livingston:** Education is key. I would like to see Wyoming develop more vocational programs in our high schools so we can have a productive workforce in Wyoming for all trades. I can never find a plumber... Our property taxes are really low compared to 49 other states. We need education dollars.

**Wendy Degroot:** Again this falls into the diversification of our economy.

**Landon Brown:** I think before we dedicate revenue, we need to have a serious discussion on what we want our students to learn and how much that will cost. Our education system is one of the highest costs per pupil in the country yet we don't see the correlation between money and academic success and career readiness across the board in K-16

**Justin Winney:** I strongly support education. The word "New" with revenue sources is mixed in my mind. I believe that the classroom must be protected, that doesn't mean we cannot find efficiencies in the system outside of the classroom in order to reduce expenditures on education. In the end there may be a need to develop further funding but there is work to be done first.

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** The Wyoming Constitution guarantees K-12 and the University of Wyoming certain funding standards. However, those standards have been challenged in the Wyoming Supreme Court in the past and may be challenged in the future due to the lack of revenue. I support keeping the current standards, but think increasing them at this time of severe revenue shortfall would be an improbable heavy legislative lift. I suspect even keeping the current standards will be a contentious battle. A pressing educational funding loophole is funding for community colleges like NWC which are not in the Wyoming Constitution. These are significant community institutions that serve rural areas like our own that would not otherwise have access to education that supports economic and civic growth.

**Bill Fortner:** I believe the education system in Wyoming is a monopoly and should be diversified with school choice which in turn will create competition driving education costs down.

**Kevin Wilson:** I am proud to be endorsed by the WEA as I come from a family of educators. My mom and sister teach public school and they are my heroes. We must continue to provide an excellent public education system for the future citizens of Wyoming.

**Joseph Porambo:** As long as these sources do not result in additional taxes on our citizens

**Lindsey Travis:** Education is essential to the future of Wyoming and strong funding is necessary to maintain the quality education that our students deserve.

Q4: I support some form of Medicaid Expansion in Wyoming.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20		x	
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30		x	
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22		x	
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50		x	
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52			x
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58			x
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

**Edward Cooper:** I will need to study and educate myself on this issue.

**Theresa Livingston:** health care for all is what we need. I won't settle for anything else. We need to be a leading state for the people. Our people are our most important resource.

**Wendy Degroot:** I cannot support this until will see how we can fund this. We have to be economically responsible.

**Justin Winney:** Ensuring that health care is available is important. I have observed the Legislature struggle with Medicare Expansion. They have never been able to be confident that the federal government portion would be reliable in future years (clear indication has been presented in the legislature that federal funding is unreliable). This will be a tough nut to crack but worth continuing effort.

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** I would like to see Medicaid Expansion if Wyoming had the matching Federal funds. It doesn't which of course dovetails with creating new sources of diverse revenue. Medicaid Expansion would create more much needed health care coverage around the state. The current health care system is not serving people well and desperately needs addressing . Because health care intricately winds the Federal and State governments together, it seems to me, both need to be a part of a larger complicated solution.

**Bill Fortner:** I believe tax payers will end up picking up the tab.

**Kevin Wilson:** As a nurse, I support affordable and accessible healthcare for all Wyomingites. We have too many politicians in the pocket of hospital CEOs and pharmaceutical companies. We need more legislators advocating for patients and working people. We desperately need medicaid expansion and lower cost care in Wyoming.

**Joseph Porambo:** The state of the budget does not allow room for any expansion.

**Michael Gilmore:** yes Wyoming should have moved on expansion 8 years ago

**Lindsey Travis:** Medicaid expansion will ensure that more people will have access to necessary medical care.

Q5: I believe that the state government has a role in promoting pay parity between men and women in Wyoming.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20		x	
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30	x		
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22		x	
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50	x		
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52			x
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58	x		
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

**Theresa Livingston:** If we are going to profess to be the equality state then we must be equal in everything. If not, we need to give up that title & motto.

**Wendy Degroot:** We should be at this stage by now. There is no excuse in this day and age.

**Justin Winney:** The state performed a study a few years ago on this, it concluded there was little difference. I disagree, as I've observed my wife in the job market. How far into "directing" things should the state get? The legislature will have to take that on.

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** In 1869 women got the vote and the right to become legislators. It's well overdue that pay parity is a reality. Not having parity negatively affects every family in Wyoming. If a mom, sister, grandmother, aunt, or niece aren't paid the same as their equal counterpart they are taking less money home to their families. That means less money for groceries, after school programs such as sports or dance expenses, savings, rent, mortgages, etc. I can't imagine why the state isn't up in arms about the gross negligence this disparity creates for working families. They simply have less than they deservedly earn.

**Bill Fortner:** This should be left up to the employer. To me this falls under a constitutional right of freedom of choice.

**Kevin Wilson:** I agree with recent efforts at wage transparency in Wyoming and will support legislation that moves toward more just and equitable pay between men and women in the state. It is the Equality State thing to do.

**Joseph Porambo:** I think we have a role in promoting, but additional laws would not be the answer.

Q6: I support extending the life of aging coal-fired power plants in Wyoming that utilities have otherwise scheduled for retirement.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12	x		
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20	x		
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20			x
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30		x	
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22	x		
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28		x	
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46			x
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50		x	
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52		x	
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54			x
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58			x
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59		x	
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60			x

**James Byrd:** If there is a market then yes. Let's "shake all the fruit off that tree".

**Edward Cooper:** Clean coal and carbon capture technology needs to be pushed to the forefront to extend the life of these plants.

**Theresa Livingston:** Coal plants knew years ago that they needed upgrading. they didn't listen then when they had the revenue to fix their plants. It's too late now.

**Wendy Degroot:** Until we have an alternative this is what we must do to ensure that the people in this state do not have the burden of huge increases in their utility bills. I am open to new and better ideas but we must be reasonable fiscally.

**Justin Winney:** The current coal fired plants are not at end of life. They can be extended to a normal retirement point that is probably 10-20 years out still. In the meantime the state should get on with including the developing Small Modular Nuclear Reactor plants for these sites.

**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** Wyoming can't sell what most of the world isn't buying. Wyoming may be buying our coal now, but that's not enough to keep the industry afloat and viable in perpetuity. Coal's contribution to global warming is undeniable, even though there are different efficiencies when burning it. We're experiencing the current rash of fires that are negatively effecting our health and the economy. However, losing jobs right now is not in anyone's best interest. I support training for current coal workers so that they can create an alternate income. Although scheduled, these closures will be devastating to many families. I need to see more information on the schedule of closures, the number of people who will be effected, and how to schedule closures that includes retraining for coal employees.

**Bill Fortner:** As long as rate payers are not asked to pick up the tab in any way. That seems to be the direction were headed now with carbon capture.

**Kevin Wilson:** We need to start working toward a just transition for workers in the extractive industries who have lost their jobs or will lose their jobs due to planned plant closures. We need to start reclaiming abandoned mines, capping orphan wells, and providing programs for communities to retool our workforce for the jobs of tomorrow.

**Joseph Porambo:** I feel that this is an economic decision that these companies have to make. There are also safety concerns that have to be taken into consideration that these companies are better able to judge.

**Michael Gilmore:** this depends on what we have to give up to extend the life of a coal-fired plant

Q7: I support legislation that diversifies Wyoming's energy portfolio and actively supports the business environment for wind and solar development.			
	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
James Byrd (Dem), SD8	x		
Liisa Anselmi-Dalton (Dem), SD12		x	
Edward Cooper (Rep), SD20	x		
Theresa Livingston (Dem), SD20	x		
Wendy Degroot (Lbr), SD30		x	
Landon Brown (Rep), HD9	x		
Justin Winney (Rep), HD22	x		
Levi Shinkle (Dem), HD28	x		
Tim Chesnut (Dem), HD46	x		
Cindy Johnson Bennett (Ind), HD50	x		
Bill Fortner (Rep), HD52	x		
Kevin Wilson (Dem), HD54	x		
Joseph Porambo (Lbr), HD58	x		
Michael Gilmore (Dem), HD59	x		
Lindsey Travis (Dem), HD60	x		

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**James Byrd:** Nuclear, Solar, Wind, Geothermal, advanced coal tech, and anything else we can come up with. Innovation and diligence will only get us out of this fiscal hole.

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**Edward Cooper:** We need to be a leader in any and all Energy development.

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**Theresa Livingston:** We need to catch up with solar & wind energy. We need to be leaders in energy production. Other states will buy our power and we will prosper.

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**Wendy Degroot:** The problem with wind and solar is seen at our dumps. That is where these green ideas end up as they are not recyclable. Also at what cost do we build wind turbines? It hurts bird populations as well up taking up open land,

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**Landon Brown:** As long as the cost is not born by consumers and dictated by legislation.

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**Justin Winney:** Yes, clearly.

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**Cindy Johnson Bennett:** I support legislation that diversifies both Wyoming's energy and investments as a whole. Wind and solar are just part of the answer for a broader healthier revenue basis. With both wind and solar expansion, it's important that the placement of facilities are well thought out so as not to negatively effect wildlife migration corridors, and the significant scenic views that attract tourism. The remarkable open space splendor we appreciate as our Wyoming way of life.

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**Bill Fortner:** I don't believe therm ole hydro or hydrogen should be left out the mix

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**Kevin Wilson:** We need to find a way to encourage more diverse energy production while maintaining sustainable revenue coming into the state. I will fight to do that in the legislature.

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**Lindsey Travis:** Wyoming needs to set itself up for the future. While we have a lot of coal, the demand for coal is not what it used to be. Responsibly setting up wind and solar development prepares Wyoming for future energy demands.