

## Angi Aramburu Response to Questions

**A state district judge has said the state funding for public schools is out of whack, creating a system where the quality of education in Texas depends in large part on where you live. What's the solution to this?**

When we rely heavily on property taxes for public school funding, it creates extreme inequity between districts because there are tremendous variations in taxable property wealth across the state. Those that already have less, end up with less, and those in wealthier districts find themselves supplementing the other districts through the Robinhood system.

Education funding should be equitable with an expectation that every student receives the same amount of funding, regardless of where they live.

Solutions include making sure that all money allocated to schools goes to the schools and is not diverted to other projects. Additionally, Districts should receive funding for the number of students zoned for that district, and not tie that funding to attendance or standardized test scores which disproportionately affects those from at-risk backgrounds. We also need to make sure our limited tax dollars are not being diverted to private schools.

### **313 Enterprise Fund**

**For years, chambers of commerce have promoted the use of Chapter 313 funds for economic development purposes. These are tax abatement and incentive funds used to lure companies here. This past session the program expired. Should the state of Texas continue to operate these economic incentive funds, and if so, with what kind of oversight?**

Chapter 313 is worthwhile if the focus remains on bringing new businesses to Texas, which is its purpose. When it is evident a company is going to build here regardless of 313, going so far as to start building before it applies for the incentive, then it should not qualify because it obviously doesn't require it.

We must keep in mind that it is one of the largest tax breaks in the state, and takes money directly from our already underfunded schools. Therefore, an oversight committee would be beneficial to ensure that businesses are beginning to pay their taxes once the incentives have expired, and that they aren't abusing the system that allowed them to start or move their business here. The committee would also ensure that the business is meeting job and wage goals and providing reliable work hours.

The key is to make sure that the incentives come with expiration dates so these new businesses help the Texas economy with employment and a thriving business, while also participating in the tax system that allows them to thrive.

## Population Growth

**It is predicted that the San Antonio region will see an influx of over a million people by the year 2040. How should the state plan for growth? How should we prepare the states infrastructure for this influx?**

Currently, many projects in San Antonio are reactionary. Neighborhoods are being built for population growth without improving or expanding the roads to deal with influx of traffic, and new schools aren't being built to prevent existing schools from being over-populated.

We need to fund and plan for future infrastructure to ensure that the city is prepared, rather than playing catch up. Things we should be considering include developing better public transit, including a light-rail system; greenscaping; and building with climate change in mind.

By 2035, GM will only sell electric cars with other manufacturers sure to follow. There are companies building charging stations for these cars in San Antonio right now, and we should be partnering with them so we can create a plan that works for our community.

Some of the largest tech companies in the world are moving to our state. Let's work with them to create secure technology that allows us to do things like register to vote online. If we can pay taxes online, surely we can register to vote.

Pro-active planning will save money and provide a higher-quality of life.

## International Trade & Border Security

**Mexico is our state's number one trading partner and The Texas-Mexico border is a hot spot for international trade and commerce. Today, Texas does not recognize that fact enough and is spending hundreds of millions dispatching state troopers and Texas Guard troops to that area in the name of immigration and border security. Is that necessary? Is it sustainable? And should the federal government pay Texas back for the expense?**

The constant dispatching of law enforcement is a wasteful expense for Texans. If the current border security departments are unable to handle the mission at the border, then reevaluating that department is in order. Texas is in a unique position to need to partner with the federal government to ensure border security, however it is essential that the two are not on completely different pages. One hand can't be doing something entirely different from the other.

I support the Bipartisan Border Solutions Act which would expedite the asylum process, provide better detention conditions at the border, and ensure at least minimum standards are being met regarding legal service provision and access to counsel for asylum seekers.

## Property Taxes

**Runaway property taxes remain a top issue among residents of House District 122. What is the problem and what is your solution?**

As an alternative to a state income tax, Texas has used property tax to balance budgets and create funding. This results in pricing elderly people out of their homes and preventing younger first-time homebuyers from being able to afford single-family homes.

There are many avenues we could take to try and repair this issue, like ensuring businesses that received large tax exemptions and incentives begin to pay their share after their waiver expires and closing loopholes that allow large corporations to get by with paying little to no taxes. We also need more oversight on how tax dollars are spent to see if the outpaced tax growth is simply being held in a financial surplus or being used to benefit Texas and Texans.

## Workforce Staffing

**shortages have become a way of life during the COVID pandemic, what are some of your suggestions to help businesses meet this challenge?**

We need to be cognizant that rent in San Antonio rose 33% in one year, home prices are the highest they've ever been, and groceries had the highest inflation rate since 1982. Many two-income households are now relying on one income due to expensive and unavailable childcare, skyrocketing costs, and regular school closures. In the US, about 800,000 adults have died and an estimated 1.5 million have taken early retirement, removing a huge amount of working population that needs to be adjusted for.

All Texans deserve to be treated with dignity for the hard work they do regardless of the job or career. Things such as paying a living wage, offering flexibility in both location and schedule when possible, and offering paid sick leave are proven ways to keep employees and fill positions.

Further, in industries that require face-to-face contact, there must be safety measures to protect employees from covid. Most people are not willing to risk their health for a job.

## Casino Gambling

**Supporters of casino gambling say the revenue will greatly contribute to the Texas economy, especially since every neighboring state offers such gambling - New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. Opponents say we do not need to head down that path because of the harm it will do to the families who can least afford to gamble. Should Texas legalize casino gambling?**

We should do it if we can do it right.

Economic development is the primary argument for considering the legalization of casino gambling, and it could lead to a huge windfall for public school funding in Texas. However, studies do show that low-income families are most affected by casinos. Not just in the boost from jobs, but by the fact that they

are most vulnerable to losing money in gambling. A great deal of care needs to be given to where casinos are located, how they are regulated, and who gets the profits.

In terms of choosing a location, job creation is often touted as a primary benefit of building a casino. However, if it is built in a rural area and the available jobs require specific skills that are not readily available there, those jobs will be filled by outsiders. So yes, jobs are created and filled, but it isn't helping the residents of that area.

As for profits, if we allocate, say, \$100 million in tax revenue from casinos to schools, we need to make sure that amount is added to the existing budget and not simply used as a replacement for money that is reallocated elsewhere.

### **Medicaid Expansion**

**Texas leads the country in the number of uninsured children. Expanding Medicaid means the federal government is offering 90-cents on the dollar to cover children with health coverage. Do you support expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act? Why or Why Not?**

Why are we even discussing leaving money on the table from the federal government? Not only are we turning down \$3.5 billion from the federal government of our own tax dollars by not expanding Medicaid, we are leaving over 5 million Texans uninsured. These are people that make too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid, but cannot afford to purchase insurance on their own. Expanding Medicaid would provide a critical safety net that will bring more money to our state and provide health care to those that need it.

Texas should take care of their vulnerable populations and doing that means accepting this federal funding. We cannot act as though Texans care for each other when we won't opt into a program designed to help our neighbors.

### **Closing Statement**

First, thank you to the moderator for reading this first-person statement. I hope it's not too awkward.

I am a mom, small business owner, and active community volunteer. I have decided to run because I want to focus on the things that improve our everyday lives like:

- access to affordable healthcare
- funding education
- investing in infrastructure
- and effectively managing the covid pandemic.

Over the past few years there has been too much focus on divisive, emotional issues that only serve to create divisions in our community. I truly believe we are more alike than we are different, and I look forward to working alongside legislators from both sides of the aisle to solve our most urgent problems.

I am originally from rural Indiana and a hard-working, blue-collar family. I was the first in my family to go to college, and went on to get my masters degree. I'm not afraid of working hard or fighting hard to get what we need and deserve.

My family made the choice to move here to my husband's hometown because we love it - the culture, diversity, opportunities and affordability. Texan pride is contagious!

Thank you for inviting me today and for your kind consideration of my ideas and opinions.