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Page 1: 2018 Candidate Survey

**Q1** What is your name? Which office are you running for and which district do you hope to represent?

Stephany Jeffers, Candidate for Alaska House District 12 - Chugiak, the Butte, and Fairview Loop

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**Q2** What is your vision for Alaska when it comes to reducing sexual assault and domestic violence? What steps are you prepared to take to get there?

Reducing the rate of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence in our state is the number one priority of my campaign and will be my main focus if elected. I grew up in Chugiak, and Alaska has led the nation in the rate rape, sexual assault and domestic violence my entire life. There are MANY steps I am prepared to take if I am elected:

1. Fully fund the testing of backlogged rape kits.

Alaska has a backlog of untested rape kits that have sat in evidence, unprocessed, for years. Representative Geran Tarr has been working hard to #EndtheBacklog in our state. She secured funding for most of it, but this is an issue of great enough importance that we need to ensure it is fully funded.

2. Follow through – make sure they're tested.

It's easy for people to throw money at a problem and think it's solved. Because the labs that regularly test these kits have an incredibly heavy workload, it may take a while before the Alaskan kits can be tested. I cannot stress how important it is we not forget about this, not lose sight of the goal, not think that funding testing is enough. We must follow through and make sure they get done

3. Make sure Alaska has its own lab in the future that can test these kits.

For decades we have led the nation in the rate of rape and sexual assault. How is it possible that we don't have a lab in this state prepared to deal with these kits once they are performed? As a former geneticist I can tell you it's not because of a lack of capable equipment. Turns out we have labs that are capable, but they are not certified to provide testing for evidence. We need to make that happen.

4. Set a deadline for future kits.

When victims turn in a kit they need to know that the end is in sight. We need to set a timeline in which future kits must be tested so that victims don't wait years without hearing anything.

5. Reevaluate how we define crimes like sexual assault.

I have two words for you – Justin Schneider. We need to look at how sexual crimes are defined and treated. For too long rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence have been "too hard to prosecute"... I am committed to reevaluating those laws and definitions so victims receive justice.

6. Make it easier to remove firearms from domestic abusers.

There are currently many hurdles that victims have to clear in order to have firearms removed from their abusers. Victims of domestic abuse are 5x more likely to die at the hands of their abusers if there is a firearm in the household. That stat jumps to 12x more likely if the firearm is used in the instance of abuse. I will work to make it easier for law enforcement officials to enforce gun restrictions on perpetrators of domestic assault.

Please don't hesitate to contact me for more details on any of these steps. This is just a start, but they are important steps to ensuring the safety of Alaskans.

[www.endthebacklog.org/](http://www.endthebacklog.org/)

<https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/who-can-have-a-gun/domestic-violence-firearms/>

**Q3** Are you familiar with local programs that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to victims across Alaska? Have you recently visited your local domestic violence/sexual assault shelter or victim services program? What is your plan to support these programs?

I am familiar with a number of local programs, but I am always interested in learning about more. I was able to attend Southcentral Foundation's recent learning lunch on Bree's Law. Just this weekend I had the opportunity to attend the AWAIC gala. I have many friends that have worked at AWAIC and a handful of ladies in my life who have had to use their services. I have also been grateful to have easy access to information that S.T.A.R. provides. In addition to steps outlined in my previous answer, my plan to support these programs involves making certain that programs that provide victims' services are adequately funded; and I intend start conversations with those providing help to victims to see how we can better meet their needs.

On a more personal note, I recently directed a friend that has been suffering from domestic abuse to the State of Alaska Victim Services department. I anticipate that I will be helping her navigate programs that can help her out of her toxic relationship in the next few weeks. So, yes, I plan to visit local domestic violence shelters and victim services programs in the next few weeks... not so much as a politician, but as an Alaskan woman seeking assistance for another Alaskan woman. This isn't an abstract problem. I haven't made addressing rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence a mainstay of my campaign because it's a flashy political point. This is a problem that personally affects me, my sisters, my students, and my friends. If elected, I will do absolutely everything I can to support these programs.

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**Q4** What responsibilities do you believe the Legislature and our elected officials hold in advancing efforts to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault? Would you be willing to maintain or increase the current level of funding for prevention and victims services?

I believe the legislature has epically failed at its responsibility to address the issues of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence in our state. It is the responsibility of the legislature to write a budget provides for the health, safety, and education of Alaskan citizens. It is the responsibility of the legislature to write laws that address, define, and treat domestic violence and sexual assault as the crimes they are. It is the responsibility of the legislature to provide law enforcement and prosecutors the legal parameters and financial resources they need to make certain that perpetrators are brought to justice. It is the responsibility of the legislature to ensure every Alaskan child receives an education that prepares them for life in Alaska; and it is clear at this point that that education must address issues of consent, sexual assault, and domestic violence. I would absolutely be willing to increase current levels of funding for prevention and victims services.

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**Q5** Alaska's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports that 1 in 10 Alaskan students had experienced sexual violence (being forced by anyone to do sexual acts) during the past year. Do you feel that sexual assault, sexual abuse, and dating violence prevention education should take place in our schools and in what way would you suggest enhancing efforts to educate Alaska's youth on these important subjects? Who do you think shares this responsibility?

Yes. Prevention education absolutely needs to take place in our schools. While I also believe it needs to be a part of conversations at home, education about sexual violence is imperative and should be a part of our school curriculum. As a state that has led the nation for decades in crimes that involve sexual violence, I believe we all share some responsibility in making certain it is addressed – legislators, educators, parents, coaches, and community. We cannot afford to stay silent.