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

Jennifer Johnston House District 28-- Anchorage Hillside, Turnagain Arm, Girdwood and Portage

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?

There is a lot of work to do to end Alaska's epidemic levels of sexual assault and domestic violence. We need to continue to increase education and prevention efforts directed at our next generation. It is important that parents, pastors, educators, coaches, and role models all play an active role in helping young Alaskans identify warning signs of dangerous behaviors and learn appropriate relationship boundaries. We all have a role to play in creating a violence-free generation.

We also cannot take our attention off those currently experiencing violence. The Governor and Legislature need to ensure that service providers, prosecutors and public safety officers have the resources they need to provide for safety, accountability and rehabilitation. When all sectors have appropriate funding and resource levels, they can effectively break down silo walls and work together to find systematic change. Both victims and offenders benefit from a seamless continuum of services, and Alaska can build this network by coordinating efforts of our justice system and care providers.

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?

Early in my career I was on the Board of Alaska Center for Families. As a Board member and eventual chair, I became very aware of children in need of safe havens, so that they could have the resources to stabilize their environment. Additionally, during my time on the Anchorage Assembly, I toured numerous services and facilities and worked closely with providers in Anchorage. I'm prepared to continue to work to understand the causes of DVSA and attempt to make sure effective organizations are getting the resources they need to adequately provide for prevention. Additionally, I will continue to fight to make sure those working in our justice system have the resources they need to hold offenders accountable.

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?

The Legislature plays an integral role in ensuring public safety and preventing domestic violence and sexual assault. It is important that the Governor and Legislature work together to make sure resources are available to fund effective prevention programs and to make sure nonprofits have the tools necessary to meet the needs of victims. We are also responsible for ensuring that Alaska's laws reflect our priorities, and that we are listening to those on the frontlines when they ask for innovative legal paths to increased prevention and accountability.

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?

Schools certainly play a role in educating students to the dangers of sexual assault and domestic violence, and to help identify children in need. The passing of Erin's and Bree's Laws were important steps to make sure curriculum is accessible to schools throughout Alaska, and to help teachers and administrators increase their awareness of their role as reporters of abuse. Church leaders, coaches and mentors also play a critical role in preventing and identifying abuse. By having free, publicly available educational resources like Green Dot and 4R's, we allow all adults to take an active role in better equipping and helping young people. We don't know who will best reach each individual child experiencing violence, which is why our young people deserve to have a multitude of safe, prepared adults in their lives that they can go to in their time of need.
