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

Jesse Kiehl, running for Senate District Q

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's a reason men keep hitting women they live with: it works, they get what they want. We need to change that. Let's build an Alaska where no one feels trapped in a relationship—where Alaskans recognize the warning signs of abusive behavior and have the tools and options to keep themselves safe.

In the near term, that takes more emergency shelters and services so people can escape bad relationships. To do the most good, that has to include help beyond shelter, it has to include help for victims getting housing, work, and the resources to feed their kids. In the mid-term, we should take steps like improving the civil legal services fund so people trying to get out of terrible situations are not trapped by legal costs they can't cover. We also need accountability for abusers, which has to include both consequences and best practices for changing their behavior.

Longer term approaches include teaching kids about healthy relationships and warning signs of violence. We also have to strive for equal opportunities and equal pay, so those who today are trapped with an abuser because of limited education, skills, or resources are able to get free without being homeless or hungry. It's time for Alaska to take this scourge seriously and make the investments that make a difference.

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?

In Juneau we have the AWARE Shelter, including their longer-term transitional service facility Kaasei, which I was pleased to help fund when I worked for Sen Egan. In Haines, Becky's Place provides emergency shelter. While I have not visited recently, I strongly support providing these services with the resources they need. I've worked closely with staff at some of the programs as they've interacted with the legislature and the Assembly on various issues.

I applaud the prevention efforts that AWARE coordinates, including the Juneau Choice and Accountability Project, Girls on the Run, and Coaching Boys into Men. On the Juneau Assembly I supported utility waivers to help provide AWARE's essential services and youth activity grants that helped fund prevention programs. The State of Alaska has both greater resources and a greater obligation to keep Alaska families safe from domestic violence and sexual assault. I look forward to working with the Network on both legislation and the operating budget in support of this vital goal.

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 has an obligation to fund these essential services—from shelters to accountability to prevention. We also need to make sure the laws are up to date and working right. For example, on the Juneau Assembly we updated Juneau’s harassment law to include harassing behaviour by text or electronic communication. There is also a leadership role legislators must play in the community, speaking up and speaking out. I’ve been honored to speak at 1 Billion Rising rallies and to talk with school groups about men’s role in preventing partner violence. Changing society takes people at all levels.

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?

It’s important for schools to teach Alaska children about safety and healthy relationships. The opportunities to do that range from making sure each sex ed curriculum is medically accurate, to making sure schools have the resources to provide effective dating violence curriculum. I welcome ideas and expertise from the Network and its member organizations on how best to address the problems, because every Alaskan shares this responsibility.
