



Kerry Tipper: Candidate Questionnaire for Endorsement

1. Tells us a little bit about yourself, why you are running for office and what are your top priorities?

I grew up in Lakewood, which makes up almost all of the house district seat that I'm running for. Like many Coloradans, I grew up in a bicultural and bilingual home. My father was a combat veteran and public high school teacher in Jeffco and my mother is a Costa Rican immigrant. I'm the first lawyer in my family and have worked in both the private and public sector. As an attorney I've represented human trafficking victims, survivors of domestic violence, and I've prosecuted civil rights violations and consumer fraud scams. I also worked at the Attorney General's Office here in Colorado where I represented state agencies that regulate health care professions. I never imagined running for office but I was inspired by my father, and after Trump's election I felt that I had to take action. After over a year of declining health, my dad died last year a few weeks after Trump was inaugurated (it was a tough start to the year). Our family's experience in healthcare was eye-opening, particularly given that we were lucky. He had Medicare and VA benefits, and I am attorney who, at the time, was working in healthcare. All I could think was, what do people with less do? The system is so broken, and people lose everything. After my dad died, we were exhausted and angry. If Trump had not been elected, I wouldn't have channeled those feelings into running for office. But something about seeing him (his conduct and rhetoric) elected to the highest office made me realize that it wasn't enough to be upset at the system, I wanted to do my part from within to change it. Overall, this is an opportunity to serve my community, bring people together, and strive daily to improve lives. I am committed to connecting with residents on a personal level and ensuring that I am accessible and responsive. My top priorities are healthcare and public education.

2. For our organization co-governance is critical in order for us to change the status quo in politics in our state. What is your plan for working with community if elected and what is your vision for co-governance?

Government has to go to the people and meet them where they are and on a schedule that is accessible to them. We have to build a diverse and collaborative table of voices that doesn't assume we know what the issues in the community are that need to be addressed, rather it asks the community what are the issues they are most concerned about and how best can we address

those issues. I've also done my best to make myself accessible to people by giving out my cell phone number and email and by answering all questions posed, even if I know the answer is not what the person asking wants to hear.

3. Would you support moving Colorado to a just and equitable transition that moves Colorado to 100% Renewable Energy economy? If yes, explain your position, timeline, how, and if you would prioritize the voices of communities of color and workers in this transition and how you would advance this issue once in office.

Yes, but want to make sure the voices of rural and working class Coloradans are heard and incorporated. To that end, my biggest concern is re-training and re-investments in communities affected by lost jobs/industry. I also want to be conscious of how this transition will impact ratepayers. I don't know what timeline is feasible, but would be looking at one that best addresses these two major concerns.

4. What is your position on trade, specifically on NAFTA and TPP? How would you work to ensure trade deals protect workers both in the US and abroad?

NAFTA resulted in lost US jobs and suppressed US wages. While it may have been good for U.S. corporations, it hurt U.S. workers by shifting jobs to Mexico and exploiting workers and lower environmental protection laws. On a state level, we should be looking at ways to ensure worker protections and increase wages. I support labor friendly laws and local control of minimum wage.

5. Payday lenders who charge interest rates of +200% APR trap more than 12 million Americans in a cycle of debt and desperation each year. Will you support a 36% interest rate cap (Initiative 126 proposes this change as a ballot measure, would you publicly endorse and support this initiative)? How would you work to ensure and strengthen consumer protections? Additionally, how will you ensure banks, credit unions, and alternative lenders are equitably distributing lines of credit and resources to all people?

Having worked on consumer protection issues in the past, this is one I feel strongly about. I do support capping payday loan interest rates at 36% and think we should be doing more to actually prevent people from ever resorting to payday loans in the first place (e.g. combining small loan with financial literacy programs). I'm interested in learning more about the ways in which we can ensure banks, credit unions, and other lenders are distributing lines of credit to individuals with little or poor credit history.

6. What policies do you support to ensure corporations and the 1% pay their fair share in taxes, and how would you address the increasing wealth disparity? Do you support repealing the GOP tax cuts on billionaires and corporations?

I support progressive taxes that lessen the burden on low-income individuals and feel strongly that we need to secure better child-care, retirement, and health care options in Colorado. Half of our state's population at best is making ends meet, which means they're not saving for retirement or any sort of emergency. While I believe it's important to stimulate the economy and encourage conscientious businesses to bring jobs to Colorado, I see no reason to continue pushing the cost of doing business onto employees and taxpayers.

7. What kind of policies would you propose to address the fact that communities of color have been disproportionately the victims of state sanctioned violence perpetrated by police and our prison system?

As a civil rights attorney in Boston our section worked with Boston Police on these issues. We considered BPD allies, not adversaries, and worked closely with the department to identify bias and over-policing problems, as well as encourage and foster better relationships between the community and BPD. Overall, I support programs that build confidence between police and the community they serve. I support criminal justice reform efforts to move us away from criminalizing poverty, mental health issues, and substance abuse issues. Our focus should be on investing in programs that keep people from going to prison in the first place.

8. Would you support eliminating state preemption to allow cities and counties the ability to raise their minimum wage at a higher level than that of the state? What do you think the minimum wage should be?

I support local control of minimum wage, particularly given the differences in the cost of living across the state. For example, minimum wage in Denver would be prohibitively expensive for small businesses in rural La Junta, while a La Junta minimum wage would leave people in Denver destitute.

9. What policies would you move forward to protect all immigrants, documented or not, and refugees? Do you support a path to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants, not just those with DACA? Would you support Colorado becoming a sanctuary state?

I support policies that give everyone--regardless of citizenship--basic civil rights. This, to me, is the essence of sanctuary policies. I support a pathway to citizenship similar to DACA that requires satisfying some basic threshold criteria (e.g. passing a criminal background check).

10. FEDERAL: How would you work to stop increased funding to internal immigration enforcement and border enforcement? Would you work to divest from these agencies? How would you publicly fight to stop family separation?

We need to elevate “credible” voices like that of the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police that have publicly stated what we know is true: having local law enforcement doing the work of ICE is not only a drain on local law enforcement but detrimental to the ability of local law enforcement to protect victims of crimes. As state legislators we can also elevate our constituents’ stories and publically put pressure on our congressional representatives to pass a desperately needed immigration overhaul.

11. What would you do to ensure that affordable housing options are accessible in our state and how would you define who is eligible for affordable housing? Would you work to ensure that for any new development, a percentage of housing is affordable? What would that percent be? Do you support allowing local governments to control housing costs?

We need a multi-faceted approach to addressing the unaffordability of housing in Colorado. I believe a portion of new development (either units or a % of the total project price) should be affordable housing units. I would defer to MetroWest Housing on how they define what “affordable” in Lakewood means, but generally understand it to be a percentage of AMI. Depending on the type and location of development, I imagine the ideal mix would be 33% public, 33% income-based (AMI), and 33% market value, but I don’t know if this is feasible.

12. How would you ensure that all people have access to comprehensive health care, including accessible mental health services, habilitative/rehabilitative services, long-term care, and dental/vision?

We have to identify the cost drivers and pass measures to get those costs under control. Expanding coverage does us no good if the coverage is still unaffordable. In terms of universal coverage, I’d like to see whether a public buy-in that allows Coloradans to have access to a core group of services, including mental health support, rehab, dental, vision, and reproductive health, is financially feasible. Medicare should cover dental for our seniors. We have to prioritize funding programs that keep Coloradans from using the ER as their entry point for health care. Though I support the concept of a single payer system, I don’t think it’s feasible absent significant national buy-in, and I’m not optimistic that will happen anytime soon.

13. What steps would you take to dismantle systemic white supremacy? How do you see systematic white supremacy negatively impacting your life?

Every genuine investment in social services should be an attempt to dismantle systemic racism: e.g., funding public education (including full-day pre-K), guaranteeing affordable quality healthcare beginning with pre-natal care, investing in mental health and substance abuse programs, strengthening consumer protection laws, addressing environmental justice issues, protecting workers & raising wages, ensuring retirement and pension plan benefits, etc. While I am latina and grew up in a bicultural/bilingual home, I pass as white and reap the benefits of that privilege every day. I know this. Because I pass, people say and do things in front of me that they never would if they knew my background or how I identify. Bizarrely, this feels both empowering and isolating.