

Member of the Legislature – District 4

Matt Butler (Republican)

<https://www.facebook.com/votemattbutler>

Robert Hilkemann (Republican)

<https://www.facebook.com/votehilkemann>

Steve Howard (Democrat)

<http://stevhowardforlegislature.com/>

Nicholas Pestello (Nonpartisan)

<https://www.facebook.com/nick.pestello>

Stacy Ryan (Republican)

<http://www.stacyryanforlegislature.com/>

Questions List

Other	Tax	Healthcare	Parental Rights	Abortion/capital
Biographical	Legislative Focus	Justice system	Amendment	punishment/etc.
Motivation	Immigration	Decency	Personal Story	Homosexuality
Qualifications	Voter ID	Jobs Creation	Constitution	Past President
Sustainable	Urban/Rural	(Legislature)	Family	Anything else?
Development	Gambling	Children's Laws	Personal/Political	
Revenue/spending	Education purpose	Conflict of Views		

Other - Information about making contact with the candidate.

Matt Butler	Contacted by resident of the district. Tue, 1 Apr 2014 08:29am, questionnaire emailed. Waiting for response. Sat, Apr 12, 2014 12:19 am, reminder email sent by Mail Chimp. 4/19, 7:06pm reminder email. 4/19-20 various emails back and forth, Answers copied from email response received Sun, 20 Apr 2014 9:28pm.
Robert Hilkemann	Contacted by resident of the district. 3/31, spoke with wife, given email address. Questionnaire emailed Mon, 31 Mar 2014 4:20pm. - Answers copied from email response received Sat, 5 Apr 2014 08:40am.
Steve Howard	Contacted by resident of the district. Mon, 31 Mar 2014 4:43pm, questionnaire emailed. Waiting for response.
Nicholas Pestello	Contacted by resident of the district. Waiting for response.
Stacy Ryan	Contacted by resident of the district. Mon, 31 Mar 2014 4:28pm, questionnaire emailed. 4/19, 7:06pm, email sent asking why there was a delay in responding. Waiting for response.

Biographical - Please include biographical information you consider important for voters to know and/or reference your website.

Matt Butler	I am an experienced CEO, having owned Hunt Transportation at 108th and "I", operating in the lower 48 and Canada at the time. Also Happy, Yellow, and Checker Cab. My undergraduate degree is from KU, Master of Science from Creighton School of Law, and I am a graduate of Harvard Business School.
Robert Hilkemann	I am a native Nebraskan from Randolph, Ne. I graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University. I taught school for three years at Table Rock, Ne. I chose to enter podiatry and graduated cum laude from the Illinois College of Podiatric Medicine. I began my practice of podiatry in 1977 and grew it into the Foot and Ankle Center of Nebraska. After 37 years of practice I retired from podiatry in Dec '13. I have been married to Julie, for 43 years. We have three adult children, Todd, Elizabeth, and Sara all graduates of Millard High School and married. We have eight grandchildren
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	http://www.stacyryanforlegislature.com . I am a lifelong Omahan, and have lived 28 years in District 4. I graduated from UNL with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1980. I worked in my family's business, Streck Labs, resigning my position as Operations Manager to start my family. I graduated from Creighton University School of Law with a Juris Doctor in 2005. I have four children, graduates of Marian, Skutt and Millard North high schools. I am married to Brad Focht.

Motivation - What has motivated you to seek this office? What do you hope to accomplish?

Matt Butler	I hope to move the state to a form of zero based budgeting, and make our tax structure more competitive against other states.
Robert Hilkemann	I want to be part of the legislative process. Early on in my career I worked closely with the legislature on three scope of practice issues and then served as the Chairman of the State Board of Health from 1986-88. I appreciated working with the senators and now that I am able to dedicate the time and energy necessary to be a senator I am seeking this office.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I am motivated to seek office because of "pass it and they won't notice legislation." I am frustrated with the laws that are passed costing the taxpayer more than they benefit. For example, the "excessive absenteeism", or truancy law, was introduced with the knowledge that Nebraska has a historical 95%+ school attendance rate. With the passage of this law the taxpayer has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on court appointed lawyers, court time, the addition of extra prosecutors and there is a current effort to add another juvenile judge. The addition of a judge would cost the Douglas County taxpayer another \$1,200,000 just this year. This "pass it and they won't notice legislation" must stop and this is only one example. Reasoned laws with justification and a cost versus benefit attitude is what I want to see come out of the Legislature and why I am running.

Qualifications - What three qualifications do you bring to this office?

Matt Butler	Education, experience with start-ups as an entrepreneur, and experience running mature companies.
Robert Hilkemann	I bring a life time of experience. I was raised on a farm, taught school, practiced medicine for 37 years and built a small business. I have learned to listen to people and be responsive to their needs. I am retired from my practice so serving in the legislature will be my full time commitment.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Law degree, business experience and my tenacity for fact finding.

Sustainable Development - In some venues, the term "sustainable development" is tied to the UN Agenda 21 thinking. Others consider conservation of natural resources to be tantamount. Where would you place yourself on environmental issues and why?

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	We need to preserve and protect our environment.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Ask a farmer or rancher and he or she will tell you about "sustainable development." The same goes for hunters and fishermen. Common sense would tell anyone that if our natural resources are to be enjoyed for generations, they must be used in a way that promotes "sustainability." UN Agenda 21 only serves the interests of environmentalists and big government, handing over control to a supposed elite few.

Revenue/spending - By comparison to many other states, Nebraska is in good financial condition. What will you do to maintain that? What revenue sources would you pursue? How would you define your philosophy on spending?

Matt Butler	Never allow our state's Balanced Budget requirement to be repealed. Put us on a pathway to implement zero based budgeting. Limit constitutionally the amount of the money government at all levels can siphon out of the state and local economies.
Robert Hilkemann	I am a fiscal conservative. We can't spend money we don't have and we need to make sure we are spending our money wisely. I hope we can generate more revenue by spending cuts and not through tax increases.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	To maintain and improve Nebraska's financial state I would re-examine the tax code to improve the business climate by reducing regulation to encourage economic growth. Finding waste and cutting spending is also necessary to refocus our priorities.

Tax - What taxing policies do you recommend? For example, should property tax issues be left up to the counties or should the legislature develop "formulas" that work in both urban and rural areas? Should military retirees be exempt from income tax? Why?

Matt Butler	I intend to eradicate Nebraska of the income tax. Everyone would be exempt from state income tax. Property taxes must be functions of local government and local voters.
Robert Hilkemann	The property tax is a function of our local governments, not state. I believe we need to look at all sources of tax revenue and determine a better way to equalize the tax burden between urban and rural areas. I believe retirement incomes should be marginalized for income tax purposes at a level that encourages our military retirees to stay in Nebraska.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	We need to examine our entire tax structure with a focus on reducing income taxes without burdening local government. Property tax issues should be left up to the counties, however, state legislation often burdens our counties. Military retirees should be exempt from income tax as well as persons relying on social security.

Legislative Focus - In what issue areas do you see yourself introducing legislation?

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	I am probably best qualified to work with health related issues. I feel strongly that we need excellent public schools which provide opportunities to encourage all students reach their maximum potential. We need to concentrate on industrial type trades to help prepare a strong labor force.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Tax reform, crime and corrections, juvenile issues, probation administration, the court system, education, disability rights, government accountability and public records, substance abuse, mental health.

Immigration - *What role should each level of government have in the immigration issue? From city, to county, to state, to federal?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]		
Robert Hilkemann	The immigration issue is a federal issue - until the federal government decides to enforce immigration standards and determine some pathway to citizenship for illegal residents - the states will always be deciding what benefits to include or not provide for people who reside here illegally.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response	Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Federal: Secure the borders and enforce strict penalties against employers hiring illegal immigrants. I am opposed to taxpayer funded benefits to illegal immigrants.		

Voter ID - *Should photo ID be required for voting? Why or why not?*

Matt Butler	Absolutely, yes.		
Robert Hilkemann	Yes, I believe in photo ID.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response		
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response		
Stacy Ryan	Yes. I believe providing identification in order to vote is not a hardship.		

Urban/Rural - *What philosophy drives how you view the diverse needs of urban versus rural residents? An example situation would be the amount of money allocated to road repairs in low population areas where it takes lots more miles of road for fewer people than in the city.*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]		
Robert Hilkemann	I was raised in rural Nebraska and have been an urbanite my entire professional career. I understand we need to work together as a state to have good roads and communications.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response		
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response		
Stacy Ryan	We are all Nebraskans and we are all in this together.		

Gambling - *Discuss the pros and cons of government having more revenue from gambling.*

Matt Butler	I see mostly cons, similar to my views on legalizing recreational marijuana.		
Robert Hilkemann	I do not support the expansion of gambling in Nebraska.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response		
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response		
Stacy Ryan	I do not support expanding gambling in Nebraska.		

Education purpose - *What do you consider the purpose of public education to be, and do you think Nebraska schools are fulfilling this purpose? What is the state's responsibility concerning "No Child Left Behind"? At what level should the federal government's "Common Core" issue be decided for Nebraska schools and why? Would you support (e.g. with vouchers or tax credits) alternative schools (whether charter, home school, private school)? Why or why not?*

Matt Butler	I oppose common core. Curriculum should be left to local school boards. I would be in favor of eliminating the State Board of Education, the Learning Community, I think no child left behind is a failure, and while I conceptually favor vouchers, I am opposed to raising property taxes to pay for them.		
Robert Hilkemann	I do not support Common Core. I do not believe a voucher system should be utilized; it would be cost prohibitive and would lead to higher property taxes. I believe we should study the concept of charter schools. Home schooling should be continued in its present form.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response		
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response		
Stacy Ryan	Parental choice in the education of children is of paramount importance. Nebraska has resisted Common Core while other states are now dropping it. I do not support Common Core. We need to support educational choice whether by funding or allowing alternative schools with a focus on providing a quality education for all Nebraska children.		

Healthcare - *What responsibility do you see the state government having with regard to health care for the needy?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]		
Robert Hilkemann	The state, along with the Federal government, provides health care to the needy through Medicaid. We need to evaluate the program to ensure that the program is running as efficiently as possible and find areas that we can cut spending without affecting the quality of health care being delivered to Medicaid recipients.		
Steve Howard	waiting for response		
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response		
Stacy Ryan	The government should provide for the most needy of Nebraskans and educate those who qualify for assistance.		

Justice system - *What improvements would you recommend to the justice system? For example, what should be done about the so-called "good time" laws, if anything? Would you approve or disapprove of faith-based solutions being offered? Would you consider certainty versus severity of sentencing? (Click here for information)*

Matt Butler	Enforce and carry out the death penalty as prescribed, require earning of good time", eliminate "automatic" good time.
Robert Hilkemann	The good times law should be strictly adhered to, even with good time law some prisoners which have a violent history should be evaluated as to their possible return to society. I am aware of a non-profit prison program (Prison Entrepreneur Program) utilized in Texas that has a very low rate of recidivism.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	The justice system should improve transparency and accountability. Our judicial retention system should encourage public participation. Good time should not be automatic and the courts should be applying our habitual criminal statute. There is a place for a "good time" law, but reducing sentences should be earned not mandated. A good time law should never be applied to a violent criminal.

Decency - *Should decency laws, including things like sex trafficking, be written at the national, state, county, or local level? What should they include? Who should enforce them?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	Decency laws should stop sex trafficking which is a major problem here in Nebraska. Laws should be in place or enacted and then enforced by the appropriate agencies.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Given the nature of the problem we need cooperation between state and local government. Sex and labor trafficking should be dealt with at the state and national level and there should be collaboration with county government. Sex trafficking is a little known, but real problem in Nebraska.

Jobs Creation (Legislature) - *How can the legislature help in job creation? What would you do to make the state more business friendly? What specific ideas do you have for jobs?*

Matt Butler	Again, I see taxation as a competitive issue, and it will likely always be a fluid, changing issue.
Robert Hilkemann	The legislature should, along with all governing bodies, should try to make Nebraska a business friendly environment. We should emphasize our good work force. We need to keep taxes as low as possible and not pass needless regulations that burden our employers.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Small businesses in Nebraska provide 96% of our jobs. Reducing regulation and income taxes, both corporate and individual, are good first steps to becoming more business friendly.

Children's Laws - *When writing laws that affect children, what plan do you have to prevent damage to good home situations from rules designed to protect children from bad home situations?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	[not answered]
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Juvenile laws must be well researched and drafted to prevent causing harm while accomplishing their objective.

Conflict of Views - *When you run into a conflict where your personal views don't agree with your political party, your constituents, a lobbyist and/or some group that has previously generously funded your campaign, how will you decide what to do?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	"To thine own self be true" - I am accountable for any vote that I make, I must vote as my conscience dictates. While we are representative to the people in my district for input, I will vote what I think is the best for the people I represent.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I took measures not to take money from lobbyists or one-issue groups. A law school education taught me to consider issues from all sides and support my argument with facts. I am always interested in hearing an opposing view and am open minded but I will stick to my values when making a final decision on legislation. I will represent my district.

Parental Rights Amendment - *Do you oppose or support a Parental Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? Why? (See www.parentalrights.org for proposed language.)*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	I believe in parental rights. In my brief review of the attached material, placing this in the constitution will create the debate of who are parents etc. - I believe we will need to leave this in the hands of the court system.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	[not answered]

Personal Story - *Please briefly describe a situation where you had to stand alone for what you thought was right when the momentum was pushing the other way. What was the result?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	[not answered]
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I am not afraid of doing what is right even though that stance might be unpopular. I established a website to educate the voter about the judicial branch of government, and have been threatened and harassed and directed to remove it. My website still exists and is constantly growing in viewers.

Constitution - *Regardless of the position sought, "upholding the Constitution" is part of the oath of office. What does taking that oath mean to you?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	[not answered]
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Upholding the constitution means that I support the principles established by our government: individual liberty, rule of law and state's rights are just a few.

Family - *What role has your family played in your seeking this office? In holding this position, how do you foresee it affecting your family?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	My family fully supports me in this decision. My children are all adults and in their own careers. My wife of 43 years is working hard to help me get elected. She will be a valuable asset as I serve the people of this district and state, she will engage the citizens as well.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	My family has always discussed politics, the world, local issues and history as a matter of course. This experience further supports the notion that one must get involved to protect our fundamental rights as citizens. My family supports me 100%.

Everyone questions - *(Regardless of what office is being sought, we ask the following questions so voters can better predict how you will handle tough issues.)* [This statement preceded the following questions on the candidate's questionnaire.]

Personal/Political - *To what degree should an office holder's personal principles be reflected in political decision making? To whom/what will you go for counsel in decision making?*

Matt Butler	[not answered due to limited time]
Robert Hilkemann	As previously answered, you can only be true to who you are - one's personal principles should reflect in all the decisions we make. I am planning to have a small group of personal advisors from different walks of life give me counsel on various issues as I see the need.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	My personal principles of honesty, integrity of purpose, and a conservative approach will be reflected in my political decision-making. I will ask my constituents and be available to listen to their opinions. My legal training and experience in researching issues has always required me to seek out knowledgeable and relevant sources of information.

Abortion/capital punishment/etc. - *What definition do you give for each of these terms: pro-life, pro-choice? How do you define yourself and how did you arrive at that view? How does your position relate to the death penalty, embryonic stem cell research, and physician-assisted suicide?*

Matt Butler	My answers to this topic can be found in the survey by Nebraska Right to Life. I am pro-life. I do not view the death penalty as a pro-life/pro-choice issues. See: http://nebraskarighttolife.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NRTLVG1404.pdf
Robert Hilkemann	I am pro-life!
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	Nebraska Right to Life had a mix up getting surveys out to all candidates. This will be remedied on both their Facebook and website. I am pro-life. Regarding the death penalty, I have researched this issue and found it to be expensive and inconsistent; a small county will not pursue it due to cost, while a large county will. This results in an inconsistent application of the law for the same crime. I support life without parole. However, if Nebraska retains the death penalty, it needs to be carried out consistently and lawfully. I am against both embryonic stem cell research and physician-assisted suicide.

Homosexuality - *Some consider same-sex relationships should carry the same rights and privileges as traditional marriage. Some view homosexuality as an issue of potential discrimination on the level with race or ethnicity. Some consider it a matter of personal privacy. Some say marriage, for numerous reasons, should remain defined by government as between one man and one woman. Some say children should be raised by a mother and a father and that they are being forgotten in today's discussions on the subject. With which group's philosophy do you most closely agree, and why?*

Matt Butler	My answers to this topic can be found in the survey by Nebraska Right to Life. I am pro-life. I do not view the death penalty as a pro-life/pro-choice issues. See: http://nebraskarighttolife.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NRTLVG1404.pdf
Robert Hilkemann	I believe marriage should be between a man and a woman.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I also believe that every citizen should be treated the same regarding health decisions, taxes and transfer of property.

Past President - *What key considerations did you use in deciding how you voted for President in 2012?*

Matt Butler	(Due to limited time, I will answer a few questions from each first page.)
Robert Hilkemann	Integrity - who had a vision for America that would restore some of the values we have seen diminish in the last years
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I voted for the candidate that most closely reflected my principles and values.

Anything else? - *Declare anything else you want voters to know about you.*

Matt Butler	I have been endorsed by 11 state senators including Omaha metro senators Scott Lautenbaugh, Jon Murante, and Jim Smith. Additional endorsements include Omaha City Council Member Aimee Melton, Douglas County Sheriff Tim Dunning, Sarpy County Attorney Lee Polikov, metro area school board members Justin Wayne and Mike Kennedy, Regent Hal Daub, the NRA.
Robert Hilkemann	I want to serve the citizens of this state. My entire career has involved listening to people and their concerns. I want to continue listening and being a voice for our district in Lincoln. I have not been in politics before, I am retired from my profession, so I will be a voice for the people. There are presently no licensed health care professionals serving in the legislature. My years of delivering health care will bring another voice to the legislature, particularly as it considers health care issues. My best asset are the qualities that were stressed by my parents growing up on a humble Wayne county farm -- integrity, honesty, hard work, and personal responsibility. These values have served me well throughout my life. I will serve the residents of District 4 and this state with those same values.
Steve Howard	waiting for response
Nicholas Pestello	waiting for response
Stacy Ryan	I have not been endorsed by special interests, associations or groups wanting to influence my decisions in the Legislature. My experience and work reflect fighting against laws that would harm or cost all Nebraskans. I have worked for a clinical research company and in the pharmaceutical industry gaining understanding of the cost of health care. I myself am handicapped and know the burden it places on the individual. I have a broad-breadth of knowledge from my experience in small business, working in the health care industry, and advocating for and educating the public about our legal system. I am not a practicing attorney and have no ties to the bar association. My integrity of purpose, independence, background and experience will serve my constituents and all Nebraskans in the Legislature.