

Ben Leman

State Representative District 13

1. Why have you decided to run for election at this time?

I am deeply concerned about the future of Texas. I believe our district needs a Representative that has a robust business background, has demonstrated success in standing up for conservative principles and understands rural Texas values. Due to the short 3-day notice of the previous Representative of District 13 to not seek re-election, I became very concerned about the level of qualified experience of the potential candidates that would enter the race. I do not believe it is enough for our Representative to simply agree with and vote for good principles. I believe we need a deeply qualified leader that has demonstrated success in bringing others along with them to support and fight for conservative principles. I believe my background demonstrates I am that leader and that I have the energy and passion to serve our district very well.

2. What key competencies do you feel you possess to be an elected official? Briefly describe your background in financial management, leadership, communications, understanding of labor/HR issues, understanding of local economic issues, ability to contribute to strategic planning and initiatives, etc.

I graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with a Business Degree in Finance and concentration in Accounting. I began my business career when I co-founded an oil and gas equipment manufacturing company in 1997. As CEO of Merrimac Manufacturing, Inc., I successfully navigated major growth rates on a very tight budget, growing the complex domestic manufacturing business over a 16-year period *'from just two of us in my mother's garage'* to over 100 employees, 25 stocking locations around the world and a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility located in House District 13. I sold the company in 2012 to a publicly traded company, where I continued to work for one more year as Vice-President, Pumps and Valves. I have managed small and large budgets during my business career as my company grew. The largest budget I have been responsible for was over \$100 million. As County Judge of Grimes County for 3 years, I was Chief Budget Officer of a \$19 million budget. In this capacity I was responsible for conducting a Budgetary Review Process and submitting a Proposed Budget for every department of the county. I am also co-founder and Chairman of TAHSR, a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting against eminent domain and fighting for private property rights and preventing waste of taxpayer dollars for the Texas Central Partners project. I have gained tremendous

knowledge and demonstrated success in all of these capacities with leadership, financial management and communications. Additionally, I have had to be intimately involved with HR/labor issues in my capacities as CEO and County Judge, so I understand them well. Strategic planning has been a major component of my experience as both CEO and County Judge. As CEO, I was responsible for drafting a full scale business plan and presenting it to the Board of Directors (on which I was Chairman of the Board) for approval. This required a tremendous amount of analytical skills, risk assessment, financial management, etc., to project out a 5-year business plan with accuracy. As County Judge presiding over Commissioners Court, we developed a full scale Strategic Plan (can be viewed on Grimes County Website: [www.co.grimes.tx.us](http://www.co.grimes.tx.us)) to guide our priorities over the next 5 years. It was a tremendous success and we were recognized in the May 2017 edition of Texas County Progress Magazine for being a leader in Strategic Planning and Initiatives.

3. If you are elected, what do you consider to be the top priorities to work on?  
Lower Property Taxes and other taxes, Protect the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, Strengthen Private Property Rights, Work to Fight Illegal Immigration

4. What do you consider to be the top issue affecting our region's economic growth?

I believe that in order to have significant economic growth we must match the skill set coming out of our local community colleges and high schools with the local economic demand. This was an issue that I had when I owned my business and met with many government and school officials to try and address. I believe it is still one of the biggest issues affecting our region's economic growth. In order for a resolution to occur, our business community must meet with our education community to consistently and regularly review what skill sets are needed. This allows the local educators to ramp up programs that are needed in a timely manner so kids can get jobs locally and quickly coming out of school. It also allows them to trim down, and save money on, programs that do not have local demands and avoids creating an abundance of skilled labor in an area that does not meet the need.

5. What could you do as a State Representative to help small business in this district?

Pursue an agenda to lower taxes and lower regulation so businesses can thrive and keep their money to re-invest in the local economy. Support programs that produce results with small business development.

6. What is your opinion of offering economic development incentives to lure capital investment and jobs to the state and communities in your district?

I owned a domestic manufacturing company that had to compete on the global scale. Foreign countries like China have a much lower cost basis than the U.S. for many reasons, including currency exchange, low labor regulations, low litigation concerns, low

environmental regulations, etc. This makes it extremely difficult for domestic companies to compete because it is not a level playing field. Consequently, these companies often leave our state and country to relocate in other countries to be able to compete much more effectively. Economic Development incentives like tax abatements are one of the tools domestic companies use to attempt to level the playing field, although it falls far short. I am in favor of using them as long as they are tightly monitored and open for any business to utilize. I do not believe the government should be able to pick winners and losers. That being said, too often tax abatements are made that are bad deals for the taxpayers, so they must be rigorously analyzed and measures put in place to avoid these bad deals for taxpayers before being used

7. Do you agree with the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Policy Statements?  
Yes, except I will list the areas I am uncertain at this point in time and will research further.
  - a. Higher Education: I am not familiar with the state funding goals adopted by TACC and CCAT, so I will need to research this and study additional state budgetary concerns before I can state my opinion. I am also open to reviewing any information you'd like to share.
  - b. Workforce: Although I am a big proponent of more vocational and technical training/education, I am not familiar with the initiatives and associated funding adopted by TACC and CCAT. I would have to research this more before I could form an opinion. I am also open to reviewing any information you'd like to share.