

# County Candidates Questionnaire – 2018

## Washington County (Brenham), Texas

Your Name **Cecil R. Webster, Sr.** \_\_\_\_\_

Position you're seeking **State Representative (HD-13)** \_\_\_\_\_

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

*For too long the Texas Legislature has not been supportive of issues which are important to the future of hardworking Texas families, especially those in our rural communities. One such issue is the need to fully fund public schools. Instead of doing this, the Texas Legislature has placed public education on a roller coaster that is about to derail, while it lays tracks for using public funds to support private schools. While state outlays for public schools are decreasing, local property taxes must be increased to meet an ever increasing student population and support unfunded state mandates on public education. These moves are destroying (purposely, I believe) our public schools, in both urban and rural areas. Likewise, through action or a lack thereof, the Texas Legislature is refusing to ensure that all citizens have equal access to quality, affordable healthcare. This is especially detrimental to citizens in rural communities for its community hospitals and clinics are not viable financially. A third example of the Texas Legislature failing Texans is in not establishing a 'living wage.' Our young folks are leaving rural communities in droves for they cannot make a living in our rural communities. A living wage and other quality of life improvements are need to address these concerns. But these issues are not important to the leadership in the Texas Legislature, or to other statewide elected leaders. So I am running to help change that. New members in the Texas Legislature like myself who truly care about people can be the change that is needed.*

**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 have worked in the military and defense sector as a soldier and as a civilian for 30+ years. I have led and managed soldiers and civilians, high school graduates and PhDs, unskilled workers and highly skilled technicians, small groups of 5 people to large organizations with several 100, offices with budgets from \$30,000 to \$300,000,000, and with offices dispersed nationally and internationally. Throughout it all, I have a proven track record of successfully guiding these offices and businesses through a myriad of performance-based standards, on time and on budget. This success would not have been possible without being well versed in the key competencies listed. Although a state representative does not apply these same competencies in the daily conduct of his/her legislative duties, it is important that the state representative have a firm understanding of these issues. I have that understanding from first-hand experience.*

**3. If you are elected, what do you consider to be the top priorities to work on?**

- **Increased Public School Funding**
- **Affordable Healthcare for All**
- **Living Wage**

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

*Regional, strategic planning for the future is lacking, despite efforts of local economic development boards (which are more focused on their respective county or city). In many of the communities in rural House District 13, our local economic growth is agriculture based. We obviously need and depend on agriculture, but from a tax base perspective, it limits growth that comes from higher taxing operations. On top of that, these operations are run by an aging population, with these communities being some of the oldest, age-wise, in Texas (see a recent report in The Fayette County Record). After high school, our young folks are leaving for urban areas with better quality of life amenities, higher wages, and more diverse opportunities. Many of our farms and ranches are being subdivided and turned into weekend and summer homes and retreats for elites from Houston, Austin, and other places. While this creates limited opportunities in the service industry, it further exacerbates real economic growth in our rural communities. A regional, strategic plan that looks at and encompasses all the counties in an area (e.g., HD-13) is needed for data has shown that economic growth in a nearby community will lead to growth in our communities as well.*

5. What could you do as an elected official to help small businesses in the community?

*Small businesses are the backbone of our local communities and are critical to economic growth nationally. We need them and we must do all we can to support them and to help them grow. I fully support efforts to eliminate needless, non-value added regulations that have been imposed on them. At the same time, however, we must ensure that those whom they employ are protected from unsafe work conditions, and that their products meet minimum safety standards. While it may seem that these actions are examples of government over-reaching its bounds into the private sector, the government does have a responsibility to its citizens to protect them from unscrupulous businesses practices that adversely impact the business sector as a whole.*

6. What is your opinion of offering economic development incentives to lure capital investment and jobs to the community?

*I fully support communities in being able to offer economic development incentives to lure capital investments and jobs in local communities. As I alluded to in #4 above, communities should be able to extend these investments and incentives across 'county lines' for economic growth nearby inevitably leads to economic growth within. These are decisions that those entities must make. Likewise, the governor has a statewide economic development fund for incentivizing companies to relocate or establish businesses in Texas. Too often these funds concentrate on already well developed urban areas. This has very little positive impact on our rural communities; just the opposite happens when our young folks leave our communities for jobs in those areas. I would like to see a percentage of these state economic development funds set-aside specifically for use in rural areas.*

**7. How important do you feel the relationship is between Washington County government officials and City of Brenham officials, City of Burton officials and the unincorporated communities? How could these relationships be improved?**

*All the elected and appointed officials within a community should have a good and cooperative working relationship with each other. As a state representative (although this is not a criterion), I would encourage each entity to become familiar with the personnel and operational policies and issues of the other. Examples of this relationship extends from fire and police protection to public education to transportation to healthcare. As is evident with our state and federal elected leaders whom seldom talk to, less alone socialize with each other, not knowing your counterpart is counter-productive when assistance is needed, especially in natural disasters or other emergencies. If that is not happening with our local elected and leaders, I would strongly urge them to do so for it will help to alleviate problems and misunderstandings in the future.*

**8. Do you support the Washington County Chamber's "Government Advocacy Policy Statements"?** (The 2017 version is attached.) This will be a key document for our community's advocacy activities at the state level. Does it include any policy statements you do not agree with? Is there anything you would suggest adding to bring to the attention of state leaders during the upcoming legislative session?

*Yes, I support the Washington County Chamber's "Government Advocacy Policy Statements." There was one area of the policy (healthcare) that I wish to clarify my position on, if the intent was not embedded within the framework laid out by the Chamber. The lead paragraph for this section specifically states that the Chamber "supports an environment in which health care remains affordable to employers." Employees must also be included in this framework for if the employee cannot afford the offered healthcare or if it provides minimum benefit, employee (and company) productivity will suffer in the long run.*

**Return by January 31, 2018 to:  
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