

Megan Barry for Congress

The Jewish Observer Nashville - Questionnaire

1. Upon your victory in November, you will represent urban and rural residents in your District for the next two years. What are the top three priorities for you in Congress?

My top three priorities are protecting reproductive freedom, enhancing affordability and supporting economic development, and improving access to affordable healthcare.

In Congress, I will support the Women's Health Protection Act, which creates a federal statutory right for healthcare providers to provide abortion care, and a right for patients to receive such care, free of any bans or restrictions that states may try to impose to limit access. It would, in essence, codify the protections that were in place under *Roe v. Wade* and restore the right of every woman to access reproductive care – regardless of where they live. I would also support legislation that protects a woman's right to access IVF and birth control.

We need to continue to support and invest in infrastructure and jobs, bills like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This bill has brought over \$6.6B of investment into Tennessee including expansion of broadband in rural areas—while supporting small businesses and innovation. I will continue to push for investments in job creation and affordable housing, making it easier for young people and families to build wealth and achieve financial stability. I will work to cut taxes for middle-class families, ensuring they keep more of their hard-earned money. I will support the Working Families Tax Relief Act that would expand the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Healthcare should not depend on where you live but in my district, eight counties have only one hospital, and three counties have none. Tennessee leads the nation in hospital closures per capita. There are a number of proposals to address this in Congress, including the Save America's Rural Hospitals Act, which supports critical-access hospitals and expands Medicare reimbursement. The Rural America Health Corps Act would provide loan repayment for healthcare professionals serving in rural areas, and the Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act, which expands remote healthcare coverage and ensures it remains accessible in underserved areas.

Even in the counties where hospitals are close by, healthcare is still unaffordable and inaccessible for too many. There is existing legislation to address this, too - the Lowering Drug Costs for American Families Act would expand Medicare drug price negotiation to benefit those with private insurance, and the Easy Enrollment in Healthcare Act makes it easier for Americans to sign up for health coverage during tax season. These proposals and more like them are all sitting idle in Congress now, some having not moved since early 2023, because of partisan gridlock. When I say I want to bring a spirit of bipartisanship and collaboration to Congress, it's because people in TN-7 can't afford for effective legislation like this to sit on the shelf.

2. If elected, what specific immigration policy changes and legislation would you support?

I support comprehensive immigration reform that secures our borders while also providing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and others who contribute to our economy and society. We need humane solutions at the border, with a focus on providing resources for asylum seekers and ensuring fair and timely processing of immigration claims. Additionally, I would support reforms that prioritize reuniting families, improving work visa programs, and reducing backlogs in the immigration system. I also would have supported the bipartisan Border Act of 2024 that would make our country safer, make our border more secure, and treat people fairly and humanely while preserving legal immigration, consistent with our nation's values. The bill received support from the Border Patrol Union, the Chamber of Commerce, the South Texas Alliance of Cities, and the Wall Street Journal. The Republican presidential nominee wanted to campaign on chaos at the border. I'm committed to an immigration policy that reflects both the rule of law and compassion for those seeking a better life in America.

3. Negotiating a budget in the House of Representatives is always tough. As you think about the needs and desires of the people who helped elect you, what area needs significantly more funding?

Healthcare funding needs a significant boost, especially when it comes to mental health and substance use disorder services.

In terms of overdoses per capita, Tennessee ranks second among all states. We need to ensure federal dollars are targeted toward expanding access to mental health services and overdose prevention programs. The Mental Health Justice Act, which I would support, would help direct funds to mental health services and ensure that those suffering from mental health crises are treated with the appropriate resources.

4. Please complete this quote: “As your representative in Congress, you can count on me to...”

As your representative in Congress, you can count on me to bring people together and find common ground, even in a political climate where gridlock too often prevails. I will work across the aisle to make progress on the issues that matter most to you— Ending the overdose crisis. Infrastructure and transportation. Border control. Immigration reform. Protecting IVF. Energy independence. Raising the minimum wage. Reducing crime. Permitting reform. Common sense firearms regulation. Housing costs. Making the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes. Avoiding pointless government shutdowns. All of these (and more) are issues on which voters in *both* parties want results, yet a gridlocked Congress fails to deliver. Unlike my opponent, I will work across the aisle to see that we make progress on them.

5. Our hope and prayer is that the conflict between Israel and Gaza will be resolved before the new session of Congress. If it has not, what steps would you support to bring peace to the region?

Regarding Israel-Hamas, what happened on Oct 7 was a horrific attack by Hamas and Israel has a right to defend itself. We must advocate for a mutual ceasefire that provides for the immediate return of all hostages and an end to the civilian suffering in Gaza by enabling a massive surge in humanitarian aid. The continuing loss of life needs to end. I will advocate for a two-state solution that recognizes where both Israelis and Palestinians can live in security and self-determination with the U.S. playing a constructive role in facilitating that coexistence.

6. What issue or policy are you most concerned about and how do you plan to address that topic and support legislation related to it in Congress?

Tennessee ranks 51st among states (plus Washington, D.C.) in voter turnout - dead last. This is a direct result of policy that denies too many Tennesseans access to the ballot and makes too many citizens feel like their vote will not make a difference. In Congress, I will support the Freedom to Vote Act (H.R. 11), which (among other things) expands voter registration and voting access, limits removing voters from voter rolls, and makes Election Day a federal holiday. Implementing same-day voter registration and extending early voting periods are proven measures that make voting more accessible, especially for young and marginalized voters. In Congress. The bill will also limit partisan gerrymandering that creates politically lopsided districts, like that which created TN-5, TN-6, and TN-7. Fairer districts, drawn by independent commissions or under reasonable standards, would make voters feel like their vote has power, boosting turnout and improving representative government.