

## THE INDIANA CITIZEN'S CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE: SECRETARY OF STATE CANDIDATE JEFF MAURER

The [2021 Indiana Civic Health Index](#) and other reports consistently show Indiana in the Bottom 10 for voter turnout. What is your reaction to this?

**Answer:** In 1773, Benjamin Franklin wrote to his youngest sister, “If you make yourself a Sheep, the Wolves will eat you.” Today, your vote is your power. So why do so many of us voluntarily become sheep by not voting?

As Americans, we love choices, and a good, fair competition. Our elections don't provide either. Imagine a restaurant that only serves one item, which you hate. How often would you eat there? Instead, imagine a restaurant with many choices, and good quality and low prices because of competition. Most of us would prefer to eat there.

Elections work the same way: our ballots need a bigger menu with more candidates and more parties.

Our elections are so bad that many candidates run unopposed, and some even refuse to appear in public debates. If candidates won't answer to you in a debate, they won't answer to you in office. Republicans and Democrats wrote all our election and campaign finance laws. Unsurprisingly, there's one set of ballot access rules for them, and one set of rules for everyone else. By design, it's prohibitively difficult to organize causes and candidates into political parties because that creates competition for the two parties who wrote the laws.

This unfairness creates distrust and predictable, uncompetitive results. Why go see an unfair ballgame in which one team is certain to win?

However, with transparency and accountability measures like receipts and audits, we'll all have greater trust in the results. Our elections will finally feel like a fair game.

We should all walk into the voting booth thinking that each race is perfectly tied, and we're about to cast the deciding vote. Your vote matters. The only wasted vote is the one you cast for more of the same problems. And if you don't vote, you can't complain.

To start, check your voter registration and research all the candidates on your ballot at [IndianaVoters.com](#). Take your children with you to vote, and let them see the process.

You can also volunteer to work at the polls, or work for an issue that matters to you by volunteering for a candidate, campaign, or cause.

As Americans, our mission statement is in the first words of the Constitution: “to form a more perfect union.” We can always do more and be better. But forming a more perfect union requires action. And that starts with your vote on November 8.

Let's get to work.

Some states have adopted the following measures to increase turnout. Which, if any, do you favor, and why?

**Answer:**

**No excuse absentee voting:** Yes, I favor no-excuse absentee voting, but only in person. I do not favor no-excuse mail-in voting. Unlike voters in most states, Hoosier voters who want to cast an early ballot by mail have to provide a reason when they apply for their absentee ballot – and convenience isn't one of the categories allowed by the law. Like anything, there are advantages and disadvantages of mail-in voting, but mail-in voting brings several additional vulnerabilities, costs, and delays in voting and tabulation. Therefore, mail-in voting should be the exception, not

the rule. The most secure vote is in-person on Election Day, and that's what I recommend first. However, I do support no-excuse in-person absentee/early voting.

**Automatic voter registration:** Yes, I support automatic voter registration. Indiana's voter registration and voter turnout statistics are nothing to brag about. We are too often toward the bottom, not the top, when compared to other states. In 2014, Indiana had the dubious distinction of having the lowest voter turnout in the country. We need to make common sense updates so more eligible Hoosiers can register, vote and have their voices heard, while at the same time safeguarding our election system with mandatory audits and better technology. Several states, with bipartisan support, have implemented automatic voter registration systems. AVR is the best way to ensure that all eligible citizens are able to cast ballots and provides a way for those who don't want to participate to opt out. AVR will also help update the voter rolls and keep them current.

**Same-day voter registration:** Yes, I favor same-day voter registration. The deadline to register to vote occurs almost a month before Election Day. Too many voters realize an election is coming up and try to register in the weeks before Election Day, only to find out it's too late. Now that we have a statewide database of voters, the best way to ensure that no one is disenfranchised because of administrative barriers is to implement a system where voters can go to their polling place on Election Day, register and vote. Minnesota, which has long had the highest voter turnout in the country, has had Election Day registration in place for many years, without any problems.

**Longer voting hours:** Yes, I am open to extending or shifting voting hours. Indiana is among the states with the shortest voting hours on Election Day, and among the states with voting hours that end earliest. While I'm not at all opposed to extending or shifting voting hours, this has not been a priority of my campaign.

**Making Election Day a state holiday:** No, making Election Day a state holiday has not been a priority of my campaign. There are many other ways we can increase voter turnout and participation without creating another expensive state or federal holiday that further reduces the availability of government services to the citizens and businesses that need them. Furthermore, many businesses continue normal operations on holidays like Columbus Day and Veterans Day, so designating Election Day as a holiday in no way guarantees Hoosiers will have expanded access or convenience to voting. This is an expensive and ineffective choice and should be a low priority relative to early/absentee voting options, as well as extended Election Day hours.

How healthy is civic literacy in Indiana? What would you do, as secretary of state, to improve Hoosiers' civic literacy?

**Answer:** Civic literacy in Indiana, like across the United States, is abysmal. Immediately, I want to work with local school districts to schedule regular appearances in high schools to walk through the voting experience. I would model the behavior I hope to see from other elected officials from local, city, county, state, and even federal offices. I would like to see a social media campaign recognizing parents who take their children to the polls with them to see the voting process for themselves. I would encourage our high school students to take U.S. citizenship practice tests and pass with high scores.

What is “ballot security” and what, if anything, should Indiana do to safeguard it?

**Answer:** Ballot security” is ensuring that we accurately and quickly count all the votes from all eligible voters and only eligible voters. There are many components to security from securing physical mail-in ballots to training Election Day workers and high-tech cybersecurity for our electronic systems. But at every point, we need continuous process improvement, so that we are always identifying vulnerabilities and making our elections and “ballot security” better for Hoosier voters. The best way to achieve continuous process improvement is with a robust, comprehensive, independent, and timely risk-limiting audit of all 92 counties. Let’s show that our county clerks are doing great work, and take credit for sound practices. But let’s also identify vulnerabilities and get to work fixing them.

Is voter fraud a concern for you? If so, please give an example of voter fraud in Indiana.

**Answer:** As “chief elections officer,” it’s my responsibility to always be concerned about the potential for voter fraud and always take action to limit that risk. From conversations with county clerks, I’ve heard first-hand stories of non-citizen voters coming into clerks’ offices to disenroll because they cannot be enrolled as voters (a crime) to complete their lawful citizenship process. It’s not clear when or how they became registered or if it was accidental or intentional. Nor is the scale of the problem clear, but we know there are vulnerabilities in our system that need to be addressed.

Do you believe Joe Biden was legitimately elected U.S. president?

**Answer:** Yes, I unequivocally recognize Joe Biden as the legitimate U.S. president, and as a member of the Air National Guard, I recognize him as my commander in chief.

A recent study found Indiana ranks 51st for the strength of its campaign finance laws. As chief election officer, what changes, if any, would you make to those laws?

**Answer:** Indiana campaign finance law is complex and those complexities can be intentionally or unintentionally used as “traps” for third party candidates and campaigns. Even the Republican Secretary of State Holli Sullivan ran afoul of campaign finance laws for which she is expected to be foremost expert, and had to return campaign donations collected unlawfully while the General Assembly was still in session.

Campaign finance laws allow donors to pay politicians faster than government takes care of our neighbors. As an example (albeit at the federal level), in 2002 the maximum individual campaign contribution was \$1,000. Twenty years later in 2022, it’s now \$2,900. That’s nearly a 300% increase over 20 years. During that same time, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$1.00 in 2002 is worth \$1.67 in 2022, an increase of about 67%, roughly reflecting inflation over that period.

While complex, our election laws fail to address open conflicts of interest. Holli Sullivan was appointed to secretary of state and continued to serve in her previous role as vice chair of the Republican Party. She served in both roles concurrently for nearly one year. As vice chair of the Republican Party, her duty was to elect Republicans to office, and as secretary of state, her duty was to run fair elections. Those two duties are mutually exclusive and create an immediate conflict of interest, which is not addressed in our election law.

Hoosiers across the political spectrum support strong disclosure laws that allow us to know who is funding secret money political groups and campaigns. These groups and their “dark money”

are a big problem in Indiana, where they now account for more than a third of all political money spent. These groups don't disclose the source of their funds, hiding critical information from voters about who is behind the advertising and what interests are backing which candidates. Hoosiers deserve strong transparency laws that give us full and complete information about who is spending money to elect candidates to our state legislature.

Elected officials must be responsive to the needs and priorities of all of their constituents, not just big donors and wealthy special interests. We need a new alternative to funding political campaigns in Indiana that amplifies the voices of ordinary Hoosiers and breaks down barriers that prevent everyday citizens from running for office.

I pledge to work with the General Assembly and the governor's office to create powers of recall into law. Already used in several other states, recall allows citizens to hold their elected officials accountable any time and all the time, making elected officials always vulnerable and always "up for reelection." "Where government fears the people, there is liberty." This rebalanced power dynamic will decrease the return on investment for large PACs and dark money sources so that there are fewer dollars in politics, with a higher percentage of those from individual citizens.

Citizen-funded election systems bring a number of benefits, including:

- More ordinary people are able to run for office.
- Candidates spend more time listening to and meeting their constituents, instead of raising big money from a handful of wealthy donors or special interests.
- Elected officials are less indebted to a narrow set of big money donors and are more accountable to all voters.
- Elected officials are more reflective of the community at large.

A Tufts study that came out right before the 2020 election showed Indiana with a steep drop in 18-19 year-old registrants from 2016. What would you do to promote registration and turnout among the youngest Hoosier voters?

**Answer:** Registration and turnout is a function of trust and offering. If there was a restaurant with only one item on the menu and you disliked it, would you eat there? Voters of all ages will respond to more candidate offerings on their ballots and (have) greater trust in the election process. When it's a "real competition" and the outcome isn't guaranteed, suddenly, voting matters much more to everyone. When races are so competitive that voters cast their ballots thinking that they're the tie-breaking vote, then we'll surely see increased turnout.

Do you think the ways the congressional, state House and state Senate maps have been drawn inhibits voter turnout? If so, how would you address this as secretary of state?

**Answer:** I believe that Hoosiers should pick their politicians. Politicians shouldn't be allowed to pick their voters through partisan gerrymandering. When politicians manipulate voting maps to keep their party in power, the result is dysfunction, polarization, mistrust, cynicism and public policies that don't reflect the will of the people. Hoosiers are ready for a fair and transparent redistricting process that removes the conflict of interest that happen when politicians control redistricting.

In 2021, I led the Libertarian Party of Indiana's 2020 redistricting efforts. See [www.rethinkredistricting.com](http://www.rethinkredistricting.com). On August 11, 2021, I gave this testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate:

Benjamin Franklin famously said “democracy is two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for lunch.” But here in Indiana, with our gerrymandered electoral maps and corrupt redistricting process, we have one wolf voting on how to eat two sheep. That isn’t fair, and it isn’t American. Hoosiers deserve better. I’m here representing the Libertarian Party of Indiana's redistricting proposal. We created a set of fair principles and processes for redistricting Congressional and State legislature districts, including:

- Drawing maps through an independent and non-partisan commission.
- Keeping communities whole. Do not divide counties or school districts.
- Using communities with fixed boundaries that can’t easily be manipulated by partisan interests.
- Accepting a greater variation in district population to keep community voices whole.
- You can review the Libertarian proposed maps, processes, and principles online at [RethinkRedistricting.com](http://RethinkRedistricting.com)
- I’m asking you, the members of the Indiana General Assembly, to recuse yourselves from redistricting to avoid the clear ethical conflict of interest. Instead, let’s work together to uphold our greatest American values.
- Let’s stop politicians from choosing their voters, and instead let Hoosiers choose their representatives.

Do you think some Indiana elective offices should be appointed or, if elected, be nonpartisan? If so, which ones?

**Answer:** Direct election is an important balance to strong partisan politics, and I generally favor more direct election and fewer appointments. We recently saw the public outcry when Gov. Holcomb transitioned the Indiana secretary of education from an elected to an appointed position, which he then controlled through his appointment.

I favor a nonpartisan commission for special purposes, like decennial redistricting. However, as we’ve seen recently, even traditional “nonpartisan” offices like school board seats have become hyper partisan.

Should the secretary of state, who oversees elections, be elected on a partisan basis (as is now the case)? Why or why not?

**Answer:** There are many pros and cons for making the secretary of state a nonpartisan office. All of the office staff would still likely maintain their partisanship. Furthermore, it would require some substantial revisions to state law since the secretary of state’s office is Indiana’s ballot access race. Instead, it might be easier to redact information (county, party affiliation, etc.) and have the office more “blind” when resolving issues. Additionally, we can model after the banking industry’s long-time practice of “bonding” bankers, essentially performing an analytical assessment of their financial responsibility and purchasing a bond to cover payment for any dishonest acts they might commit with the responsibilities assigned to them. Bonding our elections officials, clerks, and poll workers and requiring all to pay personally for some of the bond creates a strong financial incentive to perform election tasks honestly and fairly. I favor strong incentive structures that align desired behaviors with strong consequences.