

Keys to the Candidates
Compiled by the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County
for the
2016 General Election

Indiana House of Representatives, District 60

Penny Githens (D)

Peggy Mayfield (R)

1. What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?

GITHENS: I grew up in Indiana, have lived in Indiana House District 60 for over 20 years, hold a B.S. from Purdue and an M.S. from IU. I currently serve on the Steering Committee of the Democratic Women’s Cause and on the Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women. Earlier I served on the boards of both local and state autism societies.

MAYFIELD: No response.

2. What are your top three priorities for your office and, if elected, how will you address them?

GITHENS: My top three priorities are public education, living-wage jobs, and infrastructure rehabilitation. I will work to mandate kindergarten for all students, to provide quality pre-Kindergarten programming to all children, and to reduce the amount of time and money spent on state-mandated testing. I support the re-enactment of the common construction wage and will work with Vocational Rehabilitation, Work One and Ivy Tech to ensure that Indiana workers have 21st Century job skills. I will push for sustainable funding to repair and replace our crumbling roads and bridges while also addressing the need to upgrade our water and sewer systems and expand broadband services in the rural parts of Indiana. Improving our infrastructure is another way to boost growth and provide more Hoosiers with living-wage jobs.

MAYFIELD: No response.

3. How and by whom should redistricting be done?

GITHENS: Redistricting should be done by an independent commission. After each census, the commission should determine the average number of constituents that should be in each district – Congressional plus Indiana House and Senate – and then seek to keep the number of residents in each district as even as possible. Districts should be drawn, wherever possible, along existing county lines, but also incorporate adjustments to prevent “natural gerrymandering.” In the case of the Indiana House, this would minimize the number of Representatives in a given county, reduce the number of counties a given Representative would need to represent, and

promote fair political representation. It would make it much easier for federal and state legislators to work effectively with local officials and their constituents.

MAYFIELD: No response.

4. What is the impact of vouchers on the Indiana constitution's requirement for "a general and uniform system of Common Schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all"?

GITHENS: Vouchers should be discontinued **immediately**. While vouchers – or Indiana’s “Choice Scholarship Program” – may be equally open to all, private school admission is not. Private schools are not required to provide transportation, free/reduced-price lunches, Title I reading programs or to admit special education students. This strongly discriminates against special education students, poor families, and families whose work schedules do not allow them to transport their children to or from school. In other words, private schools are not the same force for educational equality as public schools. If the students in specific public schools are underperforming, let’s address the issues that prevent these students from reaching their academic potential.

MAYFIELD: No response.

5. What role do you think the Indiana General Assembly should play in addressing climate change?

GITHENS: We should encourage the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind. This can be done through grants and enforcement of clean energy standards. In 2015, Monroe County competed in a national contest to reduce energy consumption. The program, conducted by the Monroe County Energy Challenge, was a broad coalition of community organizations that collaborated to reduce energy use. This program could serve as a model to reduce energy consumption, which reduces the production of harmful greenhouse gases.

We should encourage the planting of trees to increase absorption of carbon dioxide. This is not being done in our state forests under the current administration. In fact, just the opposite is happening: logging is occurring in state forests without replanting.

MAYFIELD: No response.

6. What should the balance of power be between the state and communities in such matters as environmental protection and gun regulation?

GITHENS: Local entities should have the ability to enact stricter legislation when it comes to issues like environmental protection and gun regulations. Some gun regulations can only be

enforced effectively at the state level (e.g., regulations governing gun purchases). Certainly, however, communities should be able to restrict where guns may be carried – we don't need them at public swimming pools or in parades.

MAYFIELD: No response.

7. What is the influence of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) on legislation in Indiana and what are the pros and cons of that influence?

GITHENS: Indiana has passed numerous regressive pieces of legislation written by ALEC. In 2011 Indiana passed ALEC-proposed legislation that prohibits local governments from determining what the living wage is. This is deplorable -- the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 will not support a single adult anywhere in Indiana.

Another example of ALEC legislation is the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). There was such an outcry from the business community that a second law was quickly passed, specifying that RFRA does not authorize discrimination. Despite quick passage of this second law, Indianapolis lost an estimated \$60 M in tourism and convention business in 2015. Indiana cannot afford such legislation. Pros versus cons? In the case of ALEC it's all con and no pro.

MAYFIELD: No response.