

AFSCME Candidate Questionnaire for Santa Fe County Commission

Candidate: Thomas Blog District: 2

- Responses must be received by Noon, Tuesday, April 13 at AFSCME Council 18 offices at 3150 Carlisle Blvd., Suite 110, Albuquerque 87110.
- The forum will start at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, April 15, at the AFSCME Council 18 offices in Santa Fe (1406 4th Street, just off Cerillos). We will contact you later this week with your specific time slot. Each candidate will meet with our members for approximately 15 minutes, with no other candidates present. The candidate will speak for 2-5 minutes, followed by questions and answers for the remaining time. Only AFSCME members and other union members may attend, although your staff and/or family may sit through your presentation.
- Please hand-deliver, mail, fax (830-6060) or email (carterbundy@yahoo.com) your response to the attention of Carter Bundy. If you email your response, please do so as a Microsoft Word attachment to your email.

1. Do you support the unions' right to negotiate a contract containing wages, benefits, hours, and conditions of employment?

Yes.

2. Where do you stand with respect to planned growth and sprawl? What suggestions do you have to prevent development from stretching city resources too thinly?

There is a world of difference between planned growth and sprawl. Growth is not inherently bad. Planned well, disclosed and debated, it can even be healthy. I favor such growth.

The County Growth Management Plan, prepared after years of hard work by citizens and County staff, is a very good proposal to encourage growth without sprawl. Unfortunately, many of its key points, such as clustered development and build to water availability have never been enforced by ordinance.

To avoid stretching resources, I also support smart impact fees. The developer pays a fair amount to cover the cost that the development will have on roads, fire, sheriff, etc. The monies collected must be applied to the impacted service, not to general revenue.

3. What is your position on the privatization of public services? Please be specific with respect to prisons (including the Santa Fe County jail), solid waste, water treatment, and other government services.

Depends on the service and the available labor pool. Santa Fe does not have a large labor pool, so there may not be much advantage to privatization. Critical services such as police or dispatch should never be privatized.

Other service, such as road maintenance, could be handled by a mix of County and private bidders, using the private companies for peak load projects.

With regard to the prisons, it is pretty clear that privatization has been inefficient and costly to the County in the long run.

4. Do you favor the expansion of Wal Marts throughout New Mexico and Santa Fe County? If yes, why? If not, why not, and what tax, zoning, regulatory, and labor laws would you support to prevent or slow the replacement of decent jobs with low-wage, low-benefit jobs?

It seems nobody is happy to have a Wal Mart around except the many customers that show up and shop!

I agree that size, location, lighting and other standard County regulations should apply to WM as well as to all other business. I do not believe it is a County Commissioner's job to regulate the labor practices of non government related private businesses.

I do agree WM has rotten labor policies, and I personally avoid WM for that and other reasons. I wholeheartedly support the efforts to unionize any employer that creates a need for a union by not treating employees fairly and with respect. However, it is not the County's role to play a part in the battle.

5. What is your opinion of the use of Industrial Revenue Bonds and corporate tax incentives? What types of restrictions, clawbacks, cost/benefit analyses, and/or disclosure requirements would you advocate with respect to IRBs or corporate tax incentives?

Done right, IRBs and other incentives can lead to healthy business and job growth. However, the implementation can get very costly, with local government, employees and taxpayers getting stuck. I would insist on very strong protections for taxpayers, citizens and workers prior to agreeing to IRB type benefits for business.

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6. Health care cost increases are cutting heavily into the county's general fund and employees' paychecks. What ideas do you have for slowing down the skyrocketing increases in health costs without sacrificing coverage?

This is a nationwide problem, not just in Santa Fe. Even so, some things to look at would include: Prescription meds from Canada, higher deductibles with incentives for wellness and seeking larger groups to associate with. What has worked elsewhere?

Santa Fe is a very hard medical market: single hospital, few doctors, very long waits. My own family coverage went up 45% last year, and that was with a \$5,000 deductible and no claims!

7. How do you feel about county assistance with child care for county employees? Please explain your position regarding: free child care in county-run facilities; discounts for county employees at county run child care facilities; voucher or vendor programs subsidized by the county with outside providers; non-taxable Dependent Care Assistance Programs set aside in a county-held account; flexible family-friendly work schedules; and other ideas you may have on this subject.

I think such services are better handled by providing a 'family needs' cash payment, and let the individuals figure out the best use. Not all employees have young children, some have elderly parents or a special needs child. Rather than crafting a special benefit, I would rather provide a lumps sum cash benefit and let each person figure out what works best for them and their family.

I have always supported flexible work schedules, including flex time and 4 longer days, to allow a day off during the week.

I had a small business (about 40 employees), and after discussion and a vote, it was clear what people wanted most was money. Then they figured out how to use it for their special needs.

8. Would you support Project Labor Agreements for all county-financed construction projects?

I don't know enough to comment specifically on this point. However, my general belief is that governments should not distort the labor market significantly.

9. Do you support Best Value Contracting, under which projects are awarded to the bidder who offers the best overall package rather than just the lowest bid?

I have always used this model for my purchasing decisions. Price is an important consideration, but never the only consideration.

10. Do you support the Davis-Bacon Act and New Mexico's Little Davis-Bacon Act?
Yes and yes.

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11. When workers face “union-busting” from large employers, will you be willing to stand with the workers? How?

As I said under question #4, I may personally oppose or boycott exploitive employers, including union busting, but unless the County is using them (Davis-Bacon), it is not the County’s role to become involved in a private labor dispute.

12. What is your opinion of minimum wage laws generally and the current minimum wage laws specifically?

Minimum wage laws perform an important economic and social function. In general, I support them. The current Federal minimum wage is too low, and has not been recently adjusted for inflation and the cost of living.

13. Would you support a living wage ordinance for Santa Fe County? Why or why not?

Yes. I want to see how the City’s holds up legally. I don’t think I would tie it to a hard number like \$8.50, but rather something that is based on the Federal Minimum wage times a multiplier that reflects the yearly cost of living (housing, food, utilities) in Santa Fe. Many of the larger employers have a hand in implicitly defining the cost of living in Santa Fe, and this would put some feedback into the system.

14. What do you see as the primary issues facing unions that you can address if you win?

I’m sure the unions will let me know. Unions have a lot of issues they most sort out for themselves: They are at a historically low membership, globalization has moved many unionizable jobs off shore, and they don’t seem to have the national ‘vote clout’ they had in the recent past.

What I will do when I win is work fairly and openly with unions.

15. What is your proudest pro-labor accomplishment or moment?

My proudest pro-labor accomplishment was the company I founded, and the good relationship I continuously worked for with my employees. In over eight years, I had no layoffs and only one firing (for admitted theft). Often, I went without pay in order to pay the employees. Bonuses were issued quarterly, based on profits, and we only had one or two quarters out of over 32 that bonuses were not paid.

Employees earned stock options, based on the time with the company. When the company was sold (all employees were hired by the purchaser at same or better salaries), employees cashed out stock and often bought homes, cars and in a couple of cases, started their own company.

In my own experience, both as an employee and employer, I have repeatedly learned that people respond well to fair treatment and respect.

16. What, if any, other notable votes or actions have you taken that impact labor?

I am paying a premium and using an NM (Albuquerque) unionized print shop for the vast majority (over 85%) of my campaign printing (my major expense). I have not seen the union bug on many other candidate's signs or mailings!

17. How do you believe you can win the election?

By doing what I do best: hard work, honesty, fresh ideas and communications. Also by getting the most votes.

18. How would you differentiate yourself from your opponents in this race?

My only opponent is Ms. Virginia Vigil. She is also a Democrat.

My background is completely outside of local government. Virginia has spent most, if not all of her career inside local government. I have extensive business experience with deadlines, planning, budgets, employee relations and delivering goods and services. I understand employee and employer issues. I have a track record of getting things done fairly and efficiently.

Another key differentiation is I will provide a much more open and accessible government. Please see details under #19, Transparency.

19. What are the major issues facing this county, and how can you address them if elected?

Water and Growth: Face the fact that water is scarce and costly. Plan and grow accordingly. See question #2 for more detail

Cooperation with the City: Critical. Expand or reform the RPA; Implement a Regional Water System, risk sharing, and consistent water use policies.

Job Creation in the County: Entice low impact, reasonable wage companies to the County. I understand business issues and requirements.

Affordable housing: Attack from both directions – improve job opportunities in the County, and provide incentives to developers build affordable housing. Encourage well done higher density homes. Allocate housing assistance fairly.

Transparency: There must not even be the appearance of corruption. To this end, I have posted to my web a list of land I own, and my property tax data. I will post my Fed and State income tax filings by the end of the month, as well as complete campaign information sooner and in more detail than required by law. I have limited campaign donations to \$200 or \$100 if they do business with the

County. I have pledged to not have a business relationship with the City or County during and for two years after leaving office.

The County should post all meeting minutes and voting records on the web in a format that is easily searched. I will do this if the County doesn't.

20. Tell us about yourself! Where were you born and raised? What jobs have you held? Where are you currently employed? Feel free to share family or community activity stories, too!

I was born in Panama. My family moved to New Mexico when I was 14. I have lived 18 years in New Mexico, the last nine years in Santa Fe.

I am married and our twins (8 years old) were born in Santa Fe.

I have been very involved in hands on community projects, including AYSO summer youth soccer and the Rape Crisis Center teaching Project Aware to 4th graders. I have helped small businesses get started and grow. I am an ongoing volunteer in many schools. My wife and I are volunteers for the Teen Mom program of Catholic Charities. I am the New Mexico coordinator and a volunteer pilot for Angel Flight – we fly rural and low income patients and family to and from medical centers. I have been very active in community land use issues and politics, dealing with PNM, BLM and local developers.

After graduating from UNM, I went to Chicago for work. There I developed a low cost computer communications testing device, and started a company. I build the company to over 40 people. After selling the company, I returned to New Mexico to live here in Santa Fe. I am currently self-employed as a computer and technology consultant.

I want to contribute and help make Santa Fe a good place to live and work for all people, both now and for my grandchildren.

Thank you for allowing me to respond to your concerns.

Additional information is available at my website: www.voteblog.org

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