

Q1

Please provide your name:

State Senator Mike Shower

Q2

Which office and district are you running for?

State Senate district O

Q3

What is your vision for Alaska when it comes to reducing sexual assault and domestic violence? What steps are you prepared to take to get there?

Zero may not be realistic but why try for anything less? It's an epidemic. Resources for girls & young adult females to be educated on the what, why, how & when - and available (counselors, health care, etc) if they become a victim. Throw the book at perpetrators and make it known you will pay the price in Alaska if you sexually assault anyone. I've been a part of working on criminal justice reform and moving ahead on sexual assault legislation - I will continue to be.

Q4

What responsibilities do you believe the Legislature and other elected officials hold in advancing efforts to intervene in and ultimately eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault in the state?

Appropriate funding, statutes and resources to help victims and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice. Education for young men & women on the issue and how to prevent it, warning signs, how to help others, etc.

Q5

Victim/Survivor services in Alaska have been flat funded for many years and are facing a potential shortfall in future years due to decreasing federal funds. What are your thoughts on state funding to provide support services for victims of domestic and sexual violence?

I don't see how we can throttle this particular area back considering the staggering statistics.

Q6

Alaska Native women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. What are your thoughts on supporting Alaska tribes' ability to strengthen local responses for survivors?

The state and tribes MUST work together to solve this problem. It's far more complicated than can be adequately addressed here but we are failing young native Alaskan women. But as I've seen personally in the last 5 years due to cultural sensitivities it's difficult for a non-native or non-bush legislator to do certain things relating to sexual assault in rural Alaska. Native tribes and corporations must help via funding and other resources available to them and work with the state to do what I said in 3 and 4 above.

Q7

Children are a particularly vulnerable population and may be traumatized by living with an abusive person and witnessing violence perpetrated against a parent or caretaker. What remedies might you suggest to provide protection for these children?

Have to prosecute offenders. Have to help the victims. If you remove the offender from the equation it at least allows them a safe environment to recover in and grow through. Counseling services are critical. Non-profits have a lot of resources to help and the state must work closely with those organizations in all of these areas to help pick up the slack and make sure we aren't letting children fall through the cracks.

Q8

What is your opinion about an adult over the age of 30 having sex with someone that is only 16 or 17. Should it be a crime?

I didn't agree with where the age limits landed in this last session as we worked on updating our criminal code related to this topic. Either you're an adult at 18 and all options are on the table or you are not. The sub-categories don't sit well with me. And let's be honest that is a huge gap in age. 30 to 18 is too but hence we have to draw a line at some point. We've made "some" progress on sexual assault legislation - but not enough.

Q9

Do you believe reproductive rights should be the choice of an individual? If you do not, do you believe there should be choice for victims of incest, sexual and/or domestic violence?

I am pro life. I would encourage a victim to consider adoption over abortion. As a legislator I feel I must follow the law.

Q10

The state of Alaska is experiencing a housing shortage statewide. This is impacting domestic and sexual violence survivors' ability to move forward with their lives. What would be your ideas to address this?

I don't believe the state can afford to be in the business of building, buying or providing housing. This hasn't gone well where it's been tried. However, we can certainly help provide assistance to those needing housing and/or work with non-profits who help provide such services. We must also assure the state isn't standing in the way of the private sector building homes with regulatory or tax burdens which hamper growth and progress.

Q11

Currently, the domestic violence response is largely a criminal justice response. Please share any ideas you have of other types of responses.

I've addressed it in previous answers. Counseling resources, education especially at a younger age to help recognize & prevent it from happening (for boys & girls). An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Try to stop as much of it as we can before it happens. How did we make smoking no longer a

societal norm? A long term public education campaign. We're going to have to do the same thing with sexual assault.

Q12

Currently there is no dedicated funding for programs to provide services to engage individuals who have abused their families. What would be your ideas to address how to provide services to people who choose to cause harm to their partners? Do you feel this is the responsibility of the government?

I'm very cautious about signing the government up to do "everything" - we can't necessarily afford it or have the resources (people) to do so either. But as I've said several times in this survey we have to have at a minimum the appropriate counseling services for victims and perpetrators and the judicial branch must require such programs for perpetrators. Just like drug & alcohol rehabilitation programs we need to look at DV & sexual assault in the same way. Those programs have a certain success (and failure) rate and anything we can do to prevent it moving forward even if we can't solve all of it is a positive step.

Q13

Are you familiar with local programs that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services to victims across Alaska? Have you recently visited your local domestic violence/sexual assault shelter or victim services program? What is your plan to support these programs?

Yes and yes. I will support where possible any state assistance to insure these programs continue.