

Alaska Professional Design Council (APDC) 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Grier Hopkins**

District: **House District 4**

1. The State of Alaska continues to face significant budget challenges, how will you address the State's budget and revenue issues? Please provide details.

A1: The most important thing we can do for revenue is to protect against raids on the Permanent Fund. With the majority of state revenue coming from the POMV draw, our state's future now rests on the sustainability of our investments. Additionally, I support a spending cap that will make sure we don't spend too much when oil prices go back up and changing our oil tax structure to ensure future development continues and Alaska sees its fair share. Finally, we need to keep pressure on our budget and look at broad based revenue. With a more predictable and sustainable budget, Alaska's economy can grow and plan for success.

2. In 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) ranked Alaska as having a C- with respect to the condition our state's infrastructure – see following link: <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/alaska/> Do you support taxes and user fees, such as increased gas taxes, to help provide funding for these needs? If not, do you have another plan for maintaining our road system?

A2: I do support increased gas taxes as part of a full broad based revenue picture. It hasn't been increased in my lifetime and it supports the upkeep on our roads and bridges, something our state needs to do a better job at.

3. Alaska is eligible for federal funds through the Lands and Water Conservation Fund for design and development of parks and cultural facilities. See following link: https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/21_budget/DNR/Proposed/2021proj32552.pdf Do you support the state receiving these funds? If not, why?

A3: It appears from that page that the funding is contingent on only \$75,000 in state general fund dollars to garner two million dollars in federal LWCF grants. If that's true I strongly support receiving these funds. If it's two million dollars in state funds to get two million dollars in federal funds, that is still a good deal, but we'd have to find somewhere to offset the spending in other places within the DNR budget. Parks are outdoor recreation are an incredible economic driver, and I support improvements to our local quality of life.

4a. The University of Alaska (UA) system has faced severe budget reductions over the past several years. Do you support current funding levels, further decreases, or efforts to reestablish funding that has been cut in recent years? If increases, where do you see that

funding coming from?

A4a: I would like to see an increase in funding for our UA system because it is so critical to our state and local communities in so many ways. I believe the right way to see financial support increased is through the capital budget by paying off debt service. This will allow operating budget dollars to go more to the students and education, improving the overall product and strengthening the whole institution.

4b. As a follow up, if cuts are maintained or deepened, which programs within the UA system should be prioritized over others and where does the engineering curriculum fall in the priorities list?

A4b: I am a huge fan of our engineering schools, especially at UAF. We have a legendary engineering program from petroleum engineering to civil engineering. It's very high on my priority list.

4c. Architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design programs are not offered within the UA system. What are your thoughts on strengthening opportunities for Alaskans through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) program to make attaining these professional degrees more feasible so Alaskans can return home to our state to fill the need for design professionals?

A4c: I support expanded educational opportunities especially through partnerships like WUE and WWAMI. I would like to know what the fiscal impacts to the UA would be, if any. These partnerships help open up financial support allowing many go to college who couldn't otherwise which is an important effort.

5. Several states have sought to reduce or eliminate the scope of professional licensing (Engineers, Architects, Land Surveyors, and Landscape Architect) within their states. What is your stance on Alaska's current requirements for these professions: should the state's laws remain the same or be subject to change, and if changed, would you support decreasing or increasing the projects that require professional licensure?

A5: It's important that qualified and trained professionals ensure that our critical infrastructure in Alaska is built safely and efficiently. This takes Alaskan engineers who have the education and knowledge to Alaska safely. I live in a town with no building codes, so an engineer's report is not necessary everywhere, but they're critical for public works and public safety. I would need to learn about each individual situation to understand where and when an engineer is essential, but when it comes to safety we cannot compromise.

6. The "Industrial Exemption", found in Alaska Statute 08.48.331(a)(10), allows certain

infrastructure, systems, and structural projects to be designed without the requirement of a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) IF the project is such that the risk to human health, safety, and welfare is limited only to employees of the company doing the work and not the "general public". It has been suggested that some very significant engineering disasters in our nation's history, such as the Challenger Space Shuttle Disaster of 1986 and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill of 2010, may have been linked to similar "Industrial Exemptions" and might have been averted had a licensed PE been the ultimate steward of safety in those examples. Do you feel it is appropriate or inappropriate to maintain Alaska's Industrial Exemption?

A6: I believe safety of our public spaces is critical, and that does include work areas. An employer has a responsibility to provide a safe and secure work place, so I would be interested in learning more about the "Industrial Exemption" to ensure this is the case.

7. State law requires that all new buildings larger than a triplex are to be designed and constructed to the latest approved edition of the International Building Code. However, engineers performing earthquake damage assessments after the November 2018 earthquake found that a large portion of buildings are not being built in conformance with the code where there is no formal enforcement. This led to more structural damage in Eagle River and the Matanuska Borough, where there is no code enforcement, compared to Anchorage, where there is code enforcement, even though ground motions were similar. What would you do to bolster adherence to and enforcement of building codes in the vulnerable and growing population centers around Alaska that are not currently under the purview of a local code official?

A7: I would look to enforce state law in this situation to also extend to requirements for sale or have an engineer's report ensuring that they are built up to standards needed to withstand an Alaskan earthquake. Perhaps sharing in responsibility between the developers, builders, banks and buyers will keep more eyes on more buildings ensuring their safety.

8. Do you have any plans to help reduce greenhouse gasses in order to mitigate the effects of climate change in Alaska?

A8: Yes. Working to bring more renewable energy projects as their costs per kilowatt come down below many fossil fuels will help reduce greenhouse gas emission and bring more energy projects online as an economic stimulus. I worked with Senator John Coghill to pass Senate Bill 123 which works to do this as utilities continue to plan into the future.