



ALLIANCE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Steven Rogers

1. Currently NJ unemployment rates are approximately 53% among people with disabilities. If elected, what efforts would your administration undergo to hire qualified individuals with disabilities as well as encourage the private sector?

During my campaign I met with hundreds of NJ Citizens with disabilities and learned much about their needs. With regard to employment, I would provide tax credits to private sector businesses (small and large) that hire citizens with disabilities. With regard to government agencies, I will require that each government agency hire qualified citizens with disabilities on a one to one ratio. In other words one person with disabilities (who is qualified) for every one person who is not. This creates a level and fair method for all concerned.

2. What steps should the State of New Jersey take to increase access to public transportation currently not served by NJ Transit? (I.e. Sussex County, Somerset County)

In my travels and after meeting with citizens with disabilities I learned that many public transportation facilities and routes are not serving the best interests of citizens with disabilities. Hence, I will create a task force comprised of citizens with disabilities to research and develop transit routes that meets everyone's needs including their needs. Who better than citizens with disabilities can provide an efficient and effective transit plan!

3. Even though the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, people with disabilities still face accessibility barriers. For example, inaccessible stores, elevators broken at train stations and snow removal laws not being upheld. What will your administration do to fight discrimination and enforce the ADA?

As Governor, I plan to create a Cabinet level position specifically designed to address, implement, and enforce ADA laws. I am now in the process of working on this and it will be a very active office.

4. Do you support or oppose proposals to block grant or per capital cap Medicaid spending in NJ? What Medicaid services in NJ, if any, would you seek to eliminate under a block grant or per capita spending system?

I do not want to see any Medicaid spending in NJ eliminated. Obviously, if we find waste and fraud, I will address that.

5. If elected, what would your administration do to ensure that people with disabilities are included in the planning and implementation of emergency preparedness efforts on the county, state and local levels?

As a former member of the FBI National Joint Terrorism Task force and career police officer, I am uniquely qualified to create and implement emergency preparedness programs statewide. As Governor, I will mandate that state, county, and local agencies have on their planning and development preparedness teams, citizens with disabilities. (I have heard some stories that are very troubling and I will ensure that citizens with disabilities will be part of the planning).

6. In NJ, there is a shortage of accessible, safe and low-income housing for people with disabilities. How would you propose to increase the inventory of housing throughout the state?

This is not an easy fix because of court mandated COAH decisions. However, as Governor, I will revisit mandated affordable housing decisions by the courts and do my best to ensure that citizens with disabilities get priority.

7. Persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities are victimized by sexual assault crimes at much higher rates than the rest of the population, and they are often targeted specifically because of their disabilities. What steps would your administration takes to reduce the risk of crimes committed against people with disabilities? Would you direct your Attorney General's office to work more closely with disability agencies on training and prevention?

Again, as a retired Police Lt from the Nutley NJ Police Department, I have been involved with addressing this issue for nearly 38 years. First, penalties for crimes committed against citizens with disabilities would be dramatically increased; Second, through the Cabinet Level position I cite above, and through the AG, I will require that each police academy institute extensive training for police officers that focus on detection and

addressing citizens with disabilities when responding to a police incident. I have on numerous occasions encountered citizens with intellectual disabilities and understand that police must be trained.

8. In the *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states are required to eliminate unnecessary segregation of persons with disabilities and to ensure that persons with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. Do you feel the state is doing what it can do to fully implement this ruling? If not, what measures does NJ need to take?

In my view the state has not fully implemented this ruling. There are still barriers and other "walls of separation" that must be taken down. As Governor, I will require each municipality, via local health departments to contact citizens with disabilities in their communities to establish a data-bank ensuring that all of their needs are taken care of. Once identified we will address each issue and ensure that no one is denied the services they are entitled to. Once again, I point to the need for making this a Cabinet Level position.

9. If elected, would you support or oppose legislation prohibiting insurance companies conducting business in New Jersey from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions?

Any insurance company that denies coverage for people with pre-existing conditions will NOT be doing business in NJ when I am Governor.

10. Do you support the proposal by the Coalition of Direct Support Professionals Living Wage, which would increase the salary of support professionals by \$1.25 per hour every year for five years, bringing the starting hourly wage to \$16.75 by the year 2022. This will attract more support professionals to the field and reduce the high turnover rate that is currently 44%.

I can support this. Seems fair and reasonable.

11. State and federal law provide that students with disabilities have a right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Do you support or oppose increased funding to ensure that New Jersey public schools and teachers have the resources and training necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities?

As a former member of the Nutley NJ Board of Education I am proud to say that the Nutley School district has one of the finest educational programs for students with disabilities. Hence, I will fully support increased funding and training for all needs.

12. Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization. As a vital resource in the community, would you support additional funding for the 11 CILs in order to meet the increased demand for our services?

Yes, and I would include the Office of Faith Based Initiatives to assist us. They have tremendous resources we can tap into.

13. In April 2012, Governor Chris Christie made New Jersey an 'Employment First' state. It means that competitive employment is the first and preferred post-education activity for everyone, including people with disabilities. However, there are still approximately only 47% of the population of people with disabilities in NJ, ages 18 to 64, employed (compared to 79.5% of same age group in the general population). How do you propose to increase employment among New Jerseyans with disabilities?

As stated above, tax credits are good incentives for small and large businesses to hire citizens with disabilities. This will be a start.

14. If nominated by your party for the general election, would you commit to addressing the crowd at the NJ Disability Pride Parade & Celebration on Saturday, October 7th in Trenton?

I have already been invited and YES. I will be attending.

15. Additionally, as Governor, I am planning to develop a Dog/Animal Sanctuary that will be exclusively managed by citizens with disabilities. This Sanctuary will provide education and therapy for citizens with disabilities through the use of therapist dogs and other animals specifically trained to work with citizens with disabilities. My wife Natasha is heading up this project and more details will be forthcoming.