

Scott Lively Candidate Questionnaire Responses 2014

1. What will be your top public health priorities if elected governor?

I believe the greatest threat to health in our society today is the breakdown in the natural family. Intact nuclear families built upon strong marriages and traditional roles in which both parents devote themselves to raising their children with good values are the best environment for preserving wellness and speeding healing, while broken homes tend to produce dysfunction of varying kinds with varying degrees of severity. My first priority will be to strengthen the natural family.

My second priority will be to actively discourage behaviors such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse and bad eating habits which contribute so heavily to our health-care burden.

My third priority will be to turn health care consumers back into stake-holders by giving them more direct responsibility for choosing and paying for health services to create systemic incentives to drive prices down.

2. We know that our health is closely related to our zip code – people living in low income communities and communities of color live shorter lives and have a higher burden of illness. What are three specific actions you would take to change this?

I am the pastor of an inner-city mission church in Springfield and my wife and I live in the same neighborhood in a formerly abandoned house which we are renovating as an example of "redemptive living." I work every day with people at the lowest rungs of the social and economic ladder. What inner-city families most need is a sense of personal empowerment and help to break free from a culture of perpetual government dependency that has been created by the Democrats to preserve minority communities as a voting block.

The Black family, for example, was once a model of strength and health, with households led by responsible bread-winning fathers. Today, Dad has been largely replaced by government social-service bureaucrats, leaving men feeling worthless: creating tens of thousands of households of women and children entirely dependent on government aid, while the men all-too-often turn to substance abuse and criminal behavior because their role as providers for their families has been rendered moot. The young men from these homes gravitate to gangs because they have no strong father figures to keep them on the right path. Every member of these broken homes is more prone to sickness, dysfunction and disorders of every sort.

In my ministry we help individuals follow Biblical guidelines to rebuild a sense of worth and purpose and steer them toward restoration of the family-centered model of healthy living. I would adopt a similar approach as Governor through a statewide office of Faith Based Initiatives.

- 3. We know the best way to control healthcare costs is through focusing on prevention-oriented solutions before we ever get sick; however, Department of Public Health programs whose purposes are to prevent chronic diseases have been affected most by budget cuts during the recent recession. As governor, would you support increased state funding for chronic disease prevention programs?**

Indeed, as Benjamin Franklin said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I would shift spending priorities throughout the healthcare sector toward prevention and "root causes" and away from treating symptoms. I would not increase state funding as I believe that, properly allocated, there is more than enough money in the system to accomplish our goals.

- 4. We know that actions by state agencies related to housing, development, and transportation impact our health. How would you support and encourage these "non-health" agencies to consider the health impacts of their policies and practices?**

I would be willing to listen to suggestions for improvements but I am reluctant to take any action that would create an overlap of mission objectives across agency lines with potential to incite turf battles and/or unnecessarily expand government bureaucracy through duplication of services.

- 5. This year hundreds of people in Massachusetts died as a result of opiate overdoses. As governor, what would you do to prevent substance abuse and overdose?**

Before I became a Christian 28 years ago I was a drug addict and alcoholic, so I have special knowledge of and concern about this issue.

Again, the first and best line of defense against the drug culture is strong natural families. My own substance abuse began in the context of the breakdown of my own family of origin and this was true of almost everyone I hung out with in those days. I would strengthen families.

Secondly, I would take a strong stand against gateway drugs, especially marijuana, that are leading young people into substance abuse as a lifestyle. My church operates a Christian coffee house right next to Commerce High School. Every day before school dozens of kids openly smoke pot behind our building and at other nearby hang-outs. We continually confront them and try to get them to stop, but they just laugh. They think the legalization of marijuana is inevitable and that adult authorities are deliberately turning a blind eye (an assumption that may be correct). I would crack down hard on drug use by students and increase criminal penalties for dealers who directly or indirectly sell to minors. My educated guess is that the lion's share of the blame for student academic failure and related problems in Massachusetts, especially in the inner-cities, is caused by marijuana use.

Thirdly, I would mandate drug-free lives and require regular drug testing for all recipients of government financial assistance, in combination with a graduated system of institutional treatment for those unable to get and stay clean on their own.

6. Do you think our state's tax system is stable, equitable, aligned with health policy, and sufficient to meet our public needs? If not, what changes do you support?

I don't think there is enough transparency in the system to make this determination. I believe the entire Massachusetts budget is bloated and filled with waste, and I assume this is true of the health agencies as well. I would do a top-to-bottom analysis of the health care sector and make appropriate modifications throughout the process. I fully expect to find more than enough money to meet the legitimate needs within the existing budget.

7. How do you plan to vote on ballot questions 1 and 4 on the upcoming November ballot?

a. Q1: Repeal of gas tax indexing

I Support the Repeal. There should be no automatic tax increases in our system.

b. Q4: Earned paid sick leave

I do not support burdening businesses with this additional expense. I would support some form of voluntary workplace medical savings accounts supplemented by insurance that would protect both the worker and the employer.