

## Knoxville Chamber Knox County Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

In order to better inform its members and the business community about the candidates running for Knox County Mayor, the Knoxville Chamber has developed this questionnaire. Answers to the questions will be shared (in their entirety and without editing) with the Chamber's 2050 business members that employ more than 275,000 people. The answers will be posted on the Chamber's website, featured in the Weekly Email Digest that is sent to 3,500 readers, and written about in the monthly newsletter that is delivered to 13,500 businesspeople in the area. The purpose is to allow businesspeople to make informed decisions at the ballot box.

Please answer the following eleven questions. Answers should be submitted to [gwagley@knoxvillechamber.com](mailto:gwagley@knoxvillechamber.com). Please limit the answer to each question to a maximum of 250 words. **The survey should be completed and returned by 10:00 AM, Tuesday, April 13, 2010.**

Name Tim Burchett, State Senator  
Address PO B0x 52825; Knoxville, TN 37950  
Phone 865-357-8686 Email tim@electburchett.com  
Website www.electburchett.com

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### 1. Why do you feel that you are the best candidate for Knox County Mayor?

I have more than 15 years experience in public service as a state representative and senator. During this time I have become known as someone who is fully committed to fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability.

As a candidate for mayor, I am committed to restoring public trust to Knox County government. This is the most fundamental need facing Knox County and is the foundation of any future effective policy. My record and experience reflect this commitment.

Our county faces serious challenges in the coming years, but they are not challenges we cannot meet and overcome. In fact, I believe that we can use these to better position ourselves in the core areas of economic growth and education.

In order to accomplish this, however, the public must have confidence that the county's leadership is there to serve them and their interests. This requires a mayor who understands and is committed to genuine public service, transparency and accountability. I am that candidate.

### 2. What three elements of your mayoral agenda would you like to accomplish in your first term? What would be the outcomes of these? What resources are needed to accomplish those outcomes (financial, otherwise, or both)?

1. The restoration of public trust
2. The application of business-like models to county government in departments under the direction of the county mayor that significantly improve efficiencies and reduce costs
3. Work with community stakeholders across the county to develop and implement strategic investment plans in the core areas of education, job retention/recruitment, and infrastructure. Each will be results driven and require accountability, transparency and full public engagement.

**3. If it is determined that tax increases are necessary to accomplish crucial objectives, will those increases be sought?**

I do not believe it is appropriate to even entertain the possibility of increasing the tax burden currently placed on the people of Knox County. Instead the discussion should be centered on identifying savings through increased efficiencies and the elimination of wasteful or unnecessary expenditures.

**4. In your opinion, what are the most significant budget issues facing Knox County? What specific actions would you take to address those?**

We are currently spending approximately 10% of our budget on debt service. This is the same percentage of the budget that goes to public safety and law enforcement. Although we have a AA+ bond rating, we must reduce this debt burden and the subsequent debt service payments if we are to be able to make key investments in other areas including education.

**5. How would you determine adequate funding levels for education, law enforcement, health services, infrastructure, recreation, and other areas?**

Given the restricted fiscal environment facing county government it will be critical to prioritize basic county services and to work openly with the appropriate individuals within each area to ensure that base-level funds are available to provide excellence in service. The key to this is open communication.

**6. How will you go about filling your key administrative positions? What qualities will you look for and how will you determine if your selections are qualified?**

If I am elected as mayor, every person I hire will bring the skill set to the job that will assure that he or she will not merely accomplish the tasks but will excel at their jobs while always recognizing that public service requires first and foremost honesty, integrity, and commitment to the public good.

**7. How important is diversity to your administration? What diversity issues face the County? How will your senior staff reflect diversity?**

Diversity is an important component of any successful administration. As the State Senator for District 7, I represent one of the most diverse districts in the state in terms of race, ethnicity and economic means. I understand that every voice in the community must not only be heard, but also listened to and sought out. If elected, my administration would seek to reflect this fact.

**8. Have you ever owned or operated a business? What has been your role in private enterprise?**

I have been engaged in the private sector all my adult life and have been a small business owner.

**9. Specifically, how would you support business in Knox County?**

Often the most effective ways government can support business is to get out of the way and allow free enterprise to excel in an open market. With this said, however, I believe there is a role for government in terms of industry retention/promotion and

infrastructure. As in other government related activities, the absolute foundation of any economic development endeavor is public trust. As the county works with the private sector to support job growth there must be transparency, public engagement and accountability.

**10. How would you support economic development? What is your vision of Knox County's role in economic development? What do you see as the role of local government to grow and maintain jobs? Be specific.**

My vision for economic development in Knox County is very straight forward - recognize, support and promote our regional assets in a way that positions us to seize economic opportunities in a quickly changing environment while supporting long-term investments in education that result in a highly skilled potential workforce.

**11. How can the county better seize the economic opportunities relating to renewable energy?**

Clearly renewable energy is a key component of our nation's current, and likely future, federal investment. As a community, we are uniquely positioned because of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, The Tennessee Valley Authority and the University of Tennessee, as well as, recent private sector renewable industry investment in the area to be a regional and possibly national leader in applied renewable technologies. Because of these facts, Knox County should have renewable energy technologies as a core component of its economic development portfolio. We should pursue growth in the full spectrum of private sector activities from R&D to manufacturing to application.