

Jennifer Brunner on the Issues

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GENERAL

Jennifer Brunner is Ohio's current Secretary of State. She is the 52nd Secretary of State in Ohio and the first woman elected to the position. She is running for the United States Senate in the 2010 Democratic primary election.

Jennifer Brunner is a courageous leader who has a proven track record after being tested by those who oppose change. She's not afraid to take principled stands on controversial issues. She is strong in fighting for equality for everyday Americans and Ohioans and has a strong record supporting the concerns and needs of workers and their families.

As Secretary of State, she restored integrity to and cleaned up Ohio's elections.

In 1988, Jennifer started a law practice out of the corner of her bedroom with three small children at home, focusing on election law and campaign finance, and eventually, with her husband later adding his law practice to the firm, grew the firm to 32 people.

She ran for judge in 2000, besting a governor's appointee in what was then a largely conservative county. As a judge, she allowed jurors to take notes and ask questions. Her practices were challenged, upheld and used as the basis for a statewide rule for other judges to follow in allowing jurors to ask questions in trials. Judge Brunner found that allowing jurors to participate in this way drastically lowered the reversal rate of jury verdicts by the court of appeals. She also started Franklin County's first adult felony drug court, which is still in operation today.

As Secretary of State, for her work to ensure the enfranchisement of every Ohio voter, in 2008 she received the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, considered the nation's most prestigious award for elected public servants.

Jennifer Brunner has NEVER lost an election and is the strongest general election candidate Democrats can nominate. That's why Republicans are already attacking her. They want her to lose to a weaker primary election candidate who last won an election in his own right 20 years ago by 1234 votes statewide in an election decided by the Ohio Supreme Court.

For more information go to www.JenniferBrunner.com.

JOBS:

1. INFRASTRUCTURE: Jobs are key to restarting Ohio's economy, and immediately aiming stimulus funding toward jobs such as infrastructure rebuilding, easily accessible by Ohio's many skilled trades workers, would have better served Ohioans who have been hit harder than those in most states by the economic downturn. That can and should still happen.

2. RETOOLING OHIO'S JOB ECONOMY: Jennifer Brunner launched an Innovation Trail Tour to get a first-hand look at what is in store for Ohio's future. She will use the knowledge she gained on the tour to shape policy that helps retool Ohio's economy to create new and sustainable jobs for Ohio's future that includes clean energy jobs that produce clean energy

and the equipment needed to do it, as well as for advances in the bio-medical fields closely related to the top-rated hospital and university medical institutions that Ohio enjoys now.

3. **EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN:** And as new economy jobs are created, she will be a vocal supporter of workers' rights to choose whether or not an election should be held to collectively bargain with their employer through measures such as the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). As Secretary of State, Jennifer understands the integrity and importance of a secret ballot election held without conditions of coercion or suppression, and she restored bargaining unit jobs in her own office that had been outsourced by her predecessor, increasing productivity and response time and saving money.

4. **SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH INSURANCE AND CREDIT:** Small businesses and entrepreneurs need the relief of being able to get affordable health care for themselves, their families and employees. They also need credit that should be available through community banks, backed by government guarantees (using paid back and unspent TARP funds). The credit available should not be laced with onerous government forms and requirements that slow down the process and should be available for companies as small as 2 or 3 people.

5. **TASK FORCE APPROACH TO WORKER RETRAINING:** Task forces should be created in communities to bring together business and skilled labor to apply for grants and worker retraining funds, to administer the funds with the assistance of state Jobs and Family Services offices and to get workers retrained for a "retooled" economy where great promise has been shown in the development and production of a variety of sources of clean energy, biomedical advances and the marrying of industry and agriculture in exciting new innovations to locally produce energy and food and sell it outside the state using our well-developed systems and networks of transportation.

6. **PART-TIME WORK WHILE ON UNEMPLOYMENT TO SPEED REEMPLOYMENT:** In many states such as Ohio, unemployed workers are not permitted to work part-time. If an unemployed worker receiving unemployment compensation would be permitted to work part-time and to subtract earnings from part-time work from his or her unemployment compensation payments, with a payout being the difference between the weekly benefit and weekly part-time earnings, less of the unemployed workers' insurance would be spent, allowing the worker to maintain benefits longer and lowering the overall cost to the government because the need to extend unemployment insurance would decrease for these workers. Often, part-time work leads to full-time work, taking an individual off the unemployment rolls and alleviating unemployment compensation altogether.

7. **PENSION AND HEALTH CARE ASSURANCE FOR RETIREES:** In Youngstown, Ohio, retired salaried and administrative employees of the former Delphi plant, whose pensions and health care plans were guaranteed by GM, have ended up with their plans left in the bankrupt GM, absolving the "new GM" of the obligations to cover them. Many of them were given incentives to retire early. There are a surprising number of corporations who have been alleviated of their obligations to their pensioners, with benefits picked up by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation that pays pennies on the dollar of pensions for which it is responsible. With an aging population, regulations must be reexamined regarding the ability of seniors and retirees to work and the extent to which they may work without penalty. Also, the need to pass comprehensive health care reform that will insure more, lower the overall risk by increasing the pool of insureds, will lower health care costs and

assist with continuity in retiree health care and pensions, especially for those retirees who do not yet qualify for Medicare.

8. TRADE AND JOB OUTSOURCING TO OTHER COUNTRIES: She will push for fair and intelligent trade to replace "free trade" agreements and to prevent foreign predatory practices. She will push for eliminating favorable corporate tax treatment that creates incentives to move American jobs out of the country.

URBAN AGENDA:

Last August, Jennifer unveiled the first phase of her urban agenda to revitalize Ohio's great cities. It calls for a revitalization and refocusing of HUD, the nation's largest landlord, to use HUD funds for urban development anchored by already existing community institutions such as a major hospital, awarding funding to community development corporations in the neighborhood slated for development. In addition HUD funds would be used to retrofit existing housing, making it more energy efficient and stirring job creation, using residents who have been trained in apprenticeship programs in cooperation with skilled trades labor organizations.

Ohio ranks No. 2 in the production of auto parts, but the credit crunch following the TARP bailout of 2008-2009 has made it hard for suppliers to get the loans needed to keep businesses operating and produce the parts. Jennifer has called for the use of stimulus money to make loans for auto parts suppliers, keeping their businesses and auto manufacturers producing products without parts delays.

Jennifer has called for the preservation of Ohio's fresh water resources so that not one drop of it is sold to other states or nations.

BANKING REFORM:

Jennifer is the only U.S. Senate candidate from Ohio who does not take campaign contributions from banks that took TARP funds.

She routinely has stood up to bankers and Wall Street financial institutions.

Instituting financial reform that will protect workers, borrowers and taxpayers against irresponsible corporate behavior. Examples include credit card and student loan reform, such as a rate cap for bank-issued credit cards.

She will encourage loans and investments into small businesses and push for long overdue regulation of mortgage companies and banks.

Jennifer knows it will be essential that candidates for the U.S. Senate "walk the talk" when it comes to reforming financial institutions. Many rail against "Wall Street," yet they take Wall Street's money anyway. There has been no real improvement in the regulation of banks and financial institutions, whose precarious practices have been allowed to continue with government blessing and even subsidy. The work of reforming our financial and banking regulations will be difficult, controversial and essential to avoid further catastrophe and to reduce the country's burgeoning deficit. Regulation of our financial systems that is fair to both consumers and investors will add to overall economic improvement. This must begin with the reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act that was repealed in 1998.

HEALTH CARE:

Reforming our health care system will improve our economy and allow small business to grow and create more jobs.

Jennifer has been an early and consistent champion of expanded health care for adults, children and families. She is a strong supporter of mental health parity in health care treatment, having served on a local mental health board for 6 years while judge and secretary of state.

She believes that a public option and eventually single payer coverage (like Medicare for all) is something to work toward as Americans begin to see the benefit of universal health care, which she describes as a right, not a privilege.

CONTINUED ELECTION REFORMS:

In wake of the *Citizens United* decision the U.S. Supreme dealt to free and fair elections, Jennifer is uniquely qualified to pursue legislation that will require full disclosure of corporation-funded election advertising and ban foreign-owned corporations from funding election ads.

The courage Jennifer demonstrated in reforming Ohio's election system is what we need more of in Washington D.C. We know – and the nation knows – that she cleaned up Ohio's elections.

CIVIL RIGHTS FOR ALL:

Members of the LGBT community have a progressive champion who will not only support but sponsor legislation for the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in the U.S. military. She has already supported state legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of LGBT in housing, employment, and accommodation and will continue to support and sponsor it in the U.S. Senate.

Jennifer will push for marriage equality, as she has supported it for decades, even when it was not popular to do, seeing this as an issue of basic civil rights and a way to strengthen families and keep talented citizens here in the U.S. Simply put, she states that people should be able to love and legally commit with full rights to a person they wish.

CLEAN ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

Jennifer supports a plan to facilitate the transition to a clean energy economy – including a clean auto industry, wind and solar power, and smart grid implementation – making use of Ohio's idle factories and well-trained workforce. Ohio's skilled trades workforce, exceptional work ethic of its people, extensive transportation network and history of innovation had already moved it forward in the development of technology in wind turbine and solar energy production as well as the marrying of agriculture and industry as a pioneer in the production of clean burning diesel fuel from agri-waste. Already Ohio is developing a smart grid in regions of the state that will help conserve energy as it is distributed.

WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN:

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been the major contributor to our growing national deficit. Much of the gain at American taxpayer expense has been for private contractors, both domestic and foreign, and this often contributes to instability in the very country in which the U.S. seeks to bring stability and hunt down harmful terrorist activity. At a point where we have paid for two wars with debt and now have bailed out large banks and financial institutions that continue to show profits and pay out large executive bonuses, there is a call for deficit reduction focused on curbing "entitlements." Likely targets are to be government provided Medicare, Social Security and unemployment compensation. The foreign nation building that will be required in the lengthy endeavor that is Afghanistan should begin now both in Afghanistan and at home. A wait of years while we continue to accumulate debt that we have no real way to pay for as we attempt to root out terrorists in a country that has never taken well to foreign occupation is a prescription for failure abroad and at home. We can and must work smarter in Afghanistan by gaining the trust of its people away from the Taliban with a multi-faceted approach that employs humanitarian aid and education for its citizens while protecting the United States against terrorist attacks germinated in this and other countries.

IMMIGRATION REFORM:

The U.S.' current immigration system has failed. There is a desperate need to enact comprehensive immigration reform to avert further human suffering and senseless economic loss.

Jennifer Brunner supports a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that offers undocumented individuals in the United States an earned path to citizenship. An earned path to citizenship allows honest, industrious, hardworking individuals to work toward becoming citizens.

Jennifer Brunner understands that comprehensive immigration reform must hinge on emphasizing values of fairness, security, dignity and keeping families together. She understands that reforming immigration will build needed faith in the nation's immigration system and stop unscrupulous employers from cheating the system by taking away otherwise decent jobs using undocumented workers who are at the same time cheated by such employers who take shortcuts that often threaten their security and safety. In short, we need comprehensive immigration reform for a stronger America.

Our country's original immigrants, the "founding fathers," recognized that our country should rely on the loyalty and labor of its individuals to keep the country safe and prosperous. But the current immigration system does not utilize loyalty and labor as it was meant to be utilized to strengthen our country.

The federal government must help new immigrants learn our language and laws, ensure equal opportunity and access for immigrants to participate in programs and services, and support state and local governments' efforts to help integrate new Americans. Jennifer Brunner believes the authority to enforce the federal immigration law should lie solely with the federal government and that immigration judges should be given greater discretionary

authority to waive unlawful presence bars to reunite families on a demonstration of hardship.

Jennifer Brunner also believes a long-term strategy involves working in partnership with other countries whose citizens immigrate to the U.S. in large numbers. Because Congress arbitrarily sets the level of legal immigration, it is often the subject of political compromise. Employment visa allocations to workers should be depoliticized and placed in the hands of an independent commission that can assess labor shortages and determine the number and characteristics of foreign workers to be admitted, with Congress' approval.

EDUCATION:

As Congress begins to examine the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind law and determine what worked and what did not work, many have said the single biggest problem with the law is its singular focus on testing, treating children as widgets on a manufacturing line. If our public educational systems can operate as supportive environments rather than punitive environments, we will better be able to instill in our children a love for learning so that lifelong learning takes place beyond our educational systems for lifelong achievement.

States and local school districts rely on the federal government to financially support their education systems, and this need is stronger than ever in the face of the tough economies states are grappling with. But as the federal government continues to step up to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind law, we need flexible regulation that accounts for local differences arising from culture, history, economic and social factors to avoid an assessment process that measures things in factory widgets rather than on measurable, factored achievement. There are benefits to collecting and analyzing data, since management requires measurement and measurement requires definition. Hiring qualified teachers, rewarding them and finding fair and accurate ways to measure teacher performance will aid in the essential goal of keeping our best teachers and encouraging those who are not at their best in a classroom to move on.

We have our children but for a brief time. We seldom get second chances with them. An educational system that gets it right the first time is the ideal to enable them to flourish individually and collectively for the betterment of our American society. A federal funding scheme will necessarily carry with it requirements, but they should be to assist in the educational process and not result in hindering it.

Therefore, education should be more child-centered with more individual attention. Preschool education should be available to every child, and teachers and other school professionals should be afforded significant, quality opportunities for continuing education and professional development, not just on educational methods, but also on the subject matter areas they are teaching.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND DEFICIT REDUCTION:

Jennifer Brunner maintains an unbreakable commitment to protecting Social Security and to the values that underlie it. Social Security is designed not only to provide cash benefits, but also peace of mind, a sense of security, and to reinforce the dignity of individuals and families.

Social Security is currently running an annual surplus and will have a \$4.5 trillion reserve at its peak. It is wrong to use this money, belonging to Social Security, to cover up the costs of war, pork barrel spending, and tax cuts for the wealthy. As Senator, she will press for honest accounting, so that Americans know how much the federal government is really borrowing from all sources, including from Social Security.

The co-chairs of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, appointed by President Obama, have already compromised it beyond repair with their recent unfortunate comments. The President depicted a bi-partisan commission that would consider how to address the country's long-term deficits. He implied that the commission's objectivity, thoroughness and open-mindedness would command widespread confidence and, therefore, support.

The two co-chairs, former Senator Alan Simpson and former White House chief of staff Erskine Bowles, have already declared their conclusions that it will be necessary to reduce Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits to accomplish deficit reduction, ignoring other key issues that have prime responsibility for the deficits inherited – huge tax cuts favoring the wealthy and two costly unfunded wars. They have done this before other commissioners have been appointed, before the appointment of staff, before even a commission organizational meeting. This shockingly inappropriate conduct undermines confidence in any conclusions of this commission, and the appointees continued tenure on the commission should be seriously examined.

Deficit reduction should take into account the costs of two unfunded wars, the projected reductions in the deficit by enactment of health care reform and comprehensive immigration reform (where employers pay employment taxes regarding all their workers) and spending level freezes on programs that can and should sustain it.