

Candidate Joe Passanise

Responses to St. Louis County Executive Candidate Questions August 2014

What should be done to do good for the poor? Believe it or not, this question has been asked as far back as the 1700s during the founding of the Country. I side with one of the founders, Benjamin Franklin, in doing good for the poor. I believe his quote “hits the nail” on the head in how to treat the poor.

Mr. Franklin says, “I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. I observed, he says, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer.”

About 2 weeks ago, I remember hearing a woman on the radio during a talk program in Dallas, Texas. She was saying that the money and food stamps she receives locally, from the State and from the Federal Government adds up to about \$1,300 per month. She asked the radio host, why should I work? She added that the government gives her enough money so that she doesn't have to work. Just like Mr. Franklin said, she remains poor in her work skills, and poor in her attitude about making a living, because the government gives her all her provisions for living.

All of my answers to the KSDK questions will be flavored with the Franklin Attitude.

My Answers to the Housing Questions

From the prospective of personal responsibility in preventing foreclosure, the property owner's first need to help themselves before government should consider providing money. These property owners need to work with an organization to help them. One such organization is the St. Louis County Housing Authority. This organization is charged with promoting self-sufficiency for families. The help could be teaching about how to balance their budget within their resources or staying away from the casino or helping solve a liquor/drug problem. If none of these apply, then government should consider temporarily paying for their monthly mortgage and reevaluating the financial status of these families in six months. Likewise, if families decide not to help themselves with such education, then government should give them a 30 warning that these families will be living in an apartment building and not in a house.

My Answers to the Economic Questions

I would not choose any of your suggestions. Instead, I would strengthen housing and economic development in the County by finding a way to increase the safety of businesses opening new stores in such areas. After talking with businessmen, they fear opening a business in such areas because they fear losing their financial investment in their new store. It is businesses that provide jobs to people who live in depressed areas and the means for poor people to pay their bills. Businesses have to have some confidence in the system to take financial risk. What could be done by St. Louis County Government that would also include the Franklin Attitude? First, a "Back to Work Education Program should be established to teach people basic consumer friendly skills, values of speaking honestly and living by your word. For businesses to return they have to believe they will hire potential employees that have these values. This means that the County should establish this Back to Work Education Program. The Program should be established in partnership with business leaders and community leaders and directed by a local education institution like the Community College or UMSL or Wash U or St. Louis U. In order to be considered for hiring, the person would have to complete this Education Program.

My Answer to the Transportation Questions

My personal experience and the experience of others who are middle class and poor people who want to be middle class, transportation does not depend upon the rail system or busses. People want the convenience of flexibility and not feel like herded cattle in a box car. Having their own vehicle even being part of a car pool gives them that flexibility and not feeling constrained by a rail car or bus. This type of parking also gives people the option to drive with non-smokers if they choose.

As County Executive, I would make sure that there are parking areas connected to Malls/Shopping Centers, especially along north-south arterials like Hanley Road and Lindberg Blvd. There would be designated parking areas for car pool traffic who may decide to shop before and after they park. There could be an incentive to use a shopping area parking lot by giving parkers a 25% discount on all items purchased.

Of course, before action is taken to implement any of my answers to your questions, there would be a Town Hall Meeting for each of these subjects to hear from our citizens and to shape government appropriately.