

The St. George Area Chamber of Commerce distributed a questionnaire for comment from all Utah Congressional District 2 candidates in an effort to raise voter awareness on critical issues affecting business in Southern Utah. This document contains the full and unedited statements from candidates who submitted responses by publication on Friday, August 1st.

Rising costs and ongoing supply chain disruptions continue to impact businesses, workers, and the economy overall. What is your plan to address inflation and bolster the supply chain to encourage domestic production?

Celeste Malloy (Republican)

The federal government has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. Last year, the federal government took in 4.9 trillion dollars in revenue. This is the highest ever as a percentage of GDP (19.6% of GDP). Spending under Democrats and President Biden has driven inflation to record levels. Inflation is a hidden tax on every single American. To get our inflation under control, we have to get our spending under control. I will support efforts to pass a constitutional amendment to require a Balanced Budget and will be part of the fiscal responsibility caucus in Washington.

I will strive to bring common sense back to Washington budgeting practices. We need to be spending less than the revenue we take in. A solid first step to limit wasteful government spending would be to examine which executive agencies are using their funds to operate outside of their congressionally granted statutory authority. During the appropriations process, Congress ought to define exactly which actions are going to be funded by every agency's budget, and cut any funds that are not expressly authorized by Congress. We need to put these agencies back in their statutory boxes, and cut funding for their extracurricular activities that have not been authorized. This will not only lower our spending, but it will help keep executive agencies in check.

Additionally, I want to use Congressional authority to curb poor Executive Branch policies like the ones that have made us dependent on other countries for energy. If the U.S. were still energy independent, the prices of homes, fuel, groceries, and other goods would be lower.

Becky Edwards (Republican)

One way we can ensure more domestic production is by bolstering our workforce participation. Despite the pandemic's peak being far behind us, we are still seeing significant instances of low workforce participation—including in Utah. As I travel throughout Utah's Second Congressional District, I frequently pass "Help Wanted" signs. There is a tremendous opportunity to expand our

domestic production and ease some of the impacts of inflation by reducing the ever-increasing costs of hiring and training employees. One bipartisan solution I would consider is supporting efforts to increase the Earned Income Tax Credit, a work credit that can give money back at tax time or lower the federal taxes people owe. This would help incentivize individuals to get and keep employment, reducing the costs for companies.

In addition to focusing on workforce participation, I would look closely at what is a large contributor to inflation - rising energy costs. High energy costs affect all aspects of our economy, and it's an issue that needs more champions in Congress. I am supportive of reforming our regulatory structures to better incentivize domestic energy production. As a long-time supporter of an "all-of-the-above" energy approach, we need to take urgent steps to reduce the burdensome energy costs and take permitting reform seriously in Congress. current permitting process is arduous and harms American domestic energy production and innovation across energy sectors. Failing to pass comprehensive permitting reform holds back the free market's ability to innovate and provide tangible solutions to our air quality problems—as well as good-paying jobs to residents of Utah's 2nd Congressional District. I would have voted and advocated for HR 1, the Lower Energy Costs Act--bipartisan legislation that would have helped pave the way for comprehensive permitting reform.

Bruce Hough (Republican)

Inflation is defined as "too many dollars chasing too few goods" and the only way to slow inflation is to stop spending and appropriating money we do not have. We are printing money, borrowing money and calling it the "Inflation Reduction Act" which is literally the opposite of reducing inflation. There is \$3.9 trillion dollars meant to go towards infrastructure that is primarily meant to enrich green energy and other social programs. This appropriation should be "clawed back" and not spent.

Supply chain weakness became abundantly clear during the pandemic. We need to eliminate imports of minerals, chips, and pharmaceuticals from China. This is a national security and supply chain issue.

January Walker (United Utah)

To address the challenges of our current economic landscape, it's essential to embrace advanced technologies. AI, Blockchain, and Machine Learning are pivotal in optimizing business operations in the U.S. AI can proactively predict supply chain disruptions, optimize routes, and enhance demand forecasting, ensuring timely deliveries and reduced costs. Blockchain ensures product traceability from source to shelf, expediting customs clearances and reducing fraud. Meanwhile, Machine Learning's capability to analyze vast data sets allows us to anticipate disruptions, adjust inventory, and optimize pricing strategies, directly mitigating inflationary pressures.

Amid intensifying geopolitical tensions and their impact on global trade, prioritizing domestic production becomes paramount. I propose incentivizing domestic manufacturing through tax breaks, grants, and favorable loan terms. Modernizing our infrastructure, especially with high-speed rail systems, will expedite goods transportation, making us competitive on a global scale. Sustainable manufacturing practices, supported by green incentives, are essential for environmental conservation and long-term economic viability. A thorough review of trade policies and regulatory reforms, leveraging AI and Blockchain, will ensure a robust, self-reliant U.S. economy, benefiting both businesses and consumers.

Cassie Easley (Constitution)

The best way to address the inflation problem is for the federal government to cut back on spending. As citizens we have had to cut back on our expenses, the federal government needs to do the same. With the federal government continuing to spend it is putting an undue burden on the taxpayer that is already struggling.

We do not need to depend on other countries for things the United States can produce itself. We need to put Americans back to work and become more self-sufficient, and quit relying on foreign supply chains.

Brad Green (Libertarian)

As a businessman whose company owns several manufacturing brands, I know first-hand how regulatory burden and antiquated labor policies strangle the ability to compete on the world stage as a US manufacturer. My plan to address inflation, bolster the supply chain, and encourage domestic production is to leverage the Constitutional budgeting process to strip the Federal Executive Branch of its usurped powers that control every aspect of commerce in this Republic. Specifically, I will push for an all-of-the-above energy policy which will decrease the cost of everything in our economy because whether it's power to run factories, trucking to deliver our goods, or fuel to run tractors, every product and service is affected by the cost of energy. The EPA has exceeded its Congressional directive for decades and is now antithetical both to the well-being of our nation, and the directive it was given to protect the environment. Regulating nuclear power into near-extinction ensures that carbon emissions are not eliminated maybe ever. I will fight that nonsense, to restore America's ability to be self-reliant in energy and manufacturing. Perhaps the most important concepts in addressing inflation are 1) return to a sound money policy. Back it by gold, silver, oil, or some other commodity that is relatively inflation proof. All my stores accept Goldback currency, I love to see a currency free of elitist meddling because it is backed by itself. 2) make the government live within its means and stop inflating away our wealth through reckless monetary policy; with that our currency will maintain its value, and our economic strength will return.

Financial regulations can often be burdensome for businesses and stifle innovation. How will you address these concerns while ensuring the integrity of our financial system?

Celeste Malloy (Republican)

Executive branch agencies write, interpret, and enforce their own rules. Having all of those functions performed by the same agency doesn't provide any checks on agency policies. The lack of checks and balances allows agencies to implement regulations that are overly complicated and not always well-founded in good practice.

The first and most obvious solution is to spread out these responsibilities. Congress needs to do a better job of drafting bills so that the agencies aren't left with such broad discretion and authority in rulemaking. Law-making should be done by Congress, not delegated to faceless and largely unaccountable bureaucrats in the executive branch. Additionally, I would ensure that Congress respects federalism and the tenth amendment, meaning only financial regulations that are truly federal in nature are implemented by agencies in Washington, DC. I would respect the dual banking system and keep federal rules in bounds. This would result in fewer federal regulations and reduce the cost burden of compliance.

Becky Edwards (Republican)

Reducing regulation helps encourage innovative solutions which will bring down costs for consumers across the board. One important example is related to trade. I would support a comprehensive assessment of what practices are hindering innovation and fueling inflation. Barriers to trade have significantly harmed Utah businesses. In Congress I will champion policies that ensure economic diversity and streamline opportunities for American manufacturing to thrive.

I also support policies that simplify our regulatory processes so that businesses are not hindered by the high costs of regulatory compliance. It has been estimated that the average US firm spends upwards of 3% of its budget on complying with regulations. Thousands of pages of complex regulations, without any real public input with administrative actions, threatens the vitality of our industries. I would support oversight efforts to ensure that new regulations are easy to understand and actually justified.

Bruce Hough (Republican)

There have been several financial regulations put into place since the Enron and like debacles. Having had to lead a business under Sarbanes Oxley, it became clear that this was not only unnecessary for most businesses but increased costs in a material way which suppressed employment and profits. One of my principle aims is to reduce regulation wherever it has become a burden on business, the consumer, and the economy.

January Walker (United Utah)

To address the complexities of our current financial regulations, I propose a two-fold approach. Firstly, we must simplify regulations by consolidating overlapping rules and providing clear guidelines for businesses. The power of AI and ML can be harnessed to analyze regulatory texts, pinpointing redundancies and areas for potential simplification, ensuring a more efficient consolidation process. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by small enterprises, AI-driven systems can categorize businesses based on various factors, allowing for tailored regulatory guidelines. This means a tiered approach, with lighter regulations for smaller businesses and more stringent ones for larger corporations.

Secondly, we must modernize our financial system. Streamlining reporting and compliance is essential, with a focus on reducing paperwork and introducing user-friendly online platforms for regulatory submissions. The introduction of blockchain technology can revolutionize processes: from providing a super-secure digital stamp of approval, streamlining the applicant process, to facilitating secure data sharing across institutions. This ensures real-time regulatory compliance, simplifies global operations, and significantly reduces the risk of fraud. By embracing these solutions, we pave the way for a more efficient and secure financial landscape.

Cassie Easley (Constitution)

Regulations are a huge problem. Constitutionally congress holds the responsibility of funding the regulatory agencies. Cutting funding and eliminating unnecessary regulations will be less burdensome to businesses. This will also eliminate unnecessary government spending.

Brad Green (Libertarian)

My top campaign issue is to repeal the Federal Income Tax. Every business I know weighs tax implications against every decision they make, and most have to prioritize the government over their own employees and customers every day. The Federal Government was never designed to have a direct impact with citizens of the several States, nor the commercial ventures of those citizens, with exceptions of ENABLING and PROTECTING free trade between and among the States. Income Tax is the most burdensome of the financial regulations placed on most businesses. Next most impactful are banking regulations and how our banks have basically become agents of the Federal Government. If you've tried to get a loan with a competitive interest rate over the last 20 years you know that SBA loans for businesses are the standard against which all other loans are compared, and because of that artificial competition, options are limited. I want to get the Government out of the lending business completely, and detach our banking systems from politics and alleviate the "strings" attached.

Amid a nationwide housing crisis, what will you as Utah's representation in Congress do to alleviate current distress while forging a path for long run affordability?

Celeste Malloy (Republican)

While many aspects of housing availability and affordability are reliant on local government decisions, there are a few things that can be addressed from the federal side, namely inflation, energy policy, and land management.

As mentioned, inflation is a hidden tax on all Americans. If we cannot get our inflation under control, affording a house is a dream that is put further out of reach for many Americans, especially young Americans. To get inflation under control, the government needs to be spending less than the revenue it takes in. We can cut spending to federal agencies who are operating outside of their statutory authority which will do two things--prevent them from setting and enforcing their own rules, and reduce our spending which will help strengthen our economy.

For western states like Utah, federal land ownership is an important variable in the housing equation. 23 million acres of land in Utah, or some 43 percent of total land, is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This federal land ownership is especially prominent in rural or southern counties like Washington County. I would support legislation that creates a special process to allow some of this land, where appropriate, to be used to address the housing shortage facing our cities and towns.

The energy piece of this is related to the land piece. America was energy independent 4 years ago. Executive Branch land decisions have made us dependent on other nations for energy. The result is that energy prices are up 24% during the Biden Administration. High energy prices have a ripple effect on the prices of other goods and services. Better land policy and reigned in Executive power would result in lower house prices.

Becky Edwards (Republican)

Real estate has become so expensive. We have to be smart and proactive to fix this problem to ensure that our children and their children have the ability to buy a home. When I worked in the legislature, I co-founded the Commission on Housing Affordability, which brought stakeholders together to tackle the issue together, and As a result of that commission, we created a public-private partnership in a revolving loan fund that returned funds to the state.

I want to focus resources on effective and efficient programs to expand housing options and improve lives. Congress can do straightforward things like protect the National Housing Trust Fund, rebalance the mix of various types of tax credits to make sure we can create more units where the need is greatest to benefit entire communities, and enable the private sector to provide cost-efficient renovations and updates to existing affordable units. This requires using the power of the purse to incentivize local and state governments to build more units and reduce regulatory barriers that stymie updating and creating new housing.

We must support local Utah housing advocates and elected officials to pursue opportunities that expand inventory in cost-effective ways and foster innovation..

The way we grow matters. We must support free-market and local solutions that remove barriers and increase options to build more affordable inventory for multiple income levels, as well as make coordinated plans for current and future growth that include housing and transit.

Bruce Hough (Republican)

Inflation and the Federal Reserve efforts to curb it through interest rate hikes has become one of the greatest barriers to home ownership. The only way this can be alleviated is to reduce inflation, especially on building materials in the new construction and remodeling of current structures to make them more affordable. The interest rates will lower with the lowering of inflation making the financing more affordable. There will be a correction in the mortgage industry sometime between six months and two years depending on who you believe. In the meantime, municipalities, counties, and the state have a role to play in developing more affordable housing options.

January Walker (United Utah)

The current housing crisis is a culmination of several factors: the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, a mismatch between housing supply and the Millennial population demand, increased investor activity, restrictive local and federal policies, widening economic disparities, and the surge in short-term rentals and second homes. Addressing this complex issue necessitates a holistic approach, involving various stakeholders, from governments to private sectors and communities. It's essential to recognize that solutions aren't just about increasing supply but also managing demand.

To tackle this, I propose several solutions: reforming zoning laws to allow for higher-density housing, streamlining the permitting process, utilizing public lands for housing, offering tax incentives to developers of affordable housing, and implementing rent control measures. Additionally, the preservation of existing affordable housing, regulations to limit speculative buying by investors, promotion of innovative housing models like co-housing and modular homes, and expanding public housing are crucial. Embracing cutting-edge technologies such as AI, blockchain, and machine learning can further optimize these solutions, ensuring they're both effective and scalable.

Cassie Easley (Constitution)

The current housing crisis in Utah is due to the federal inflation and the over inflated value of real estate. Utah has to take steps at the state level to make housing more affordable for people that actually live and work here. The federal government has no authority over housing in any state per the tenth amendment.

Brad Green (Libertarian)

Utah's housing crisis is principally caused by Federal Government claims on our land. The "Equal Footing Doctrine" was enshrined in the US Constitution after the Maryland Compromise and the Federal Government has been in violation of that directive since Utah's statehood. Utah needs a free-thinking fighter like me in Congress to work with State legislators like Ken Ivory to assist Utah's current lawsuit against the Federal Government to restore Utah's right to the lands inside its borders; and enforce the Constitutional mandate that requires all states be on "equal footing" regarding land. I also believe that making banks compete again will create competitive loan products that will help people be able to afford housing, through creative loan terms and innovative ideas. Having a sound currency will also contribute in a huge way to remedy this challenge.

Southern Utah will continue to be a force of growth within Utah, what will you do to ensure the priorities and future needs of our area are addressed?

Celeste Malloy (R)

I am the only person in this race who has extensive experience protecting Southern Utah's ability to grow. Southern Utah has become a political force in the state, and I am happy to see it. Making sure the Southern and rural parts of the district feel heard and represented is a top priority for me.

First and foremost, I will be a support to locally elected leaders. My first time meeting a member of Congress was when I was discussing issues with Congressman Stewart in my role as Deputy County Attorney for Washington County. The BLM had proposed a Resource Management Plan that would have taken control away from the people of Washington County and put it into the hands of federal bureaucrats. Working with locally elected officials, Congressman Stewart was able to help us get this plan changed. That is the type of Representative that I want to be--one who supports locally elected officials and keeps control of our public lands and natural resources in their hands as opposed to federal bureaucrats. Nobody knows how to take better care of Utah than Utahns.

I have been involved in water conversations in Washington County since 2015. Not only am I up-to-date on the current water reuse and conservation plans of the state, county, cities, and water conservancy district, but I know what federal roadblocks need to be cleared. I have also been part of the permitting process for the Lake Powell Pipeline. Without these water plans, Southern Utah cannot continue to grow.

I will continue to work on the natural resource issues for I've spent my entire professional career, particularly land and water, by seeking a seat on the House Natural Resources Committee. In this committee I can perform necessary oversight of federal agencies to ensure that southern Utah will continue to be a place of opportunity and growth for decades to come.

Becky Edwards (R)

The way to ensure that the needs and priorities of Southern Utah are met is by showing up and talking to stakeholders. Congressman Stewart provides an excellent model for constituent engagement, and I plan to follow his lead in ensuring Southern Utah knows its voice is heard in Washington D.C. I am committed to having a district office in Southern Utah that provides casework and program support to citizens, businesses, and public officials. I am also committed to showing up— I plan to visit with local stakeholders, municipal and county elected officials in Southern Utah on a regular and consistent basis. With my leadership in Congress, I will be an on-the-ground force that is responsive to local needs and keeps Southern Utah values and ideals top-of-mind.

Bruce Hough (R)

The number one issue facing the growth of southern Utah is Water. In addition to building the pipeline from Lake Powell and the Protocol renegotiation by the Colorado River Compact, we need to double down on conservation, gray water, and water reuse. Additionally, we need to work with compact states to develop new water resources. For example, adding a second desalinization plant in San Diego county on the condition of preserving the equivalent amount of water in the upper basin would be a win/win solution and very practical.

January Walker (United Utah)

Politicians often promise to listen but are swayed more by lobbyists than local communities. I aim to change that. If elected, I'll introduce a Direct Democracy app, allowing constituents to directly communicate with me and influence policy decisions. Before any proposal reaches Congress, it will be open for review and feedback from our district. The app will verify users through Utah's GetMobileID Driver's License initiative, ensuring genuine UT02 district voices. Leveraging AI, machine learning, and data visualization, I'll be able to discern the unique needs of southern and northern Utah separately. If a policy doesn't reflect our district's core needs, I'll adjust based on your insights. This initiative ensures a true Constituent-first approach, giving our voters a distinctive voice in the nation.

Should voters wish to delve deeper into the specifics of these solutions in response to the chamber's inquiries, or if the chamber intends to present these solutions to our elected officials, a detailed breakdown of solutions is available on my website UtahPolitician.com

Cassie Easley (Constitution)

All actions I take will be within my constitutional boundaries, as they are enumerated in Article 1, Section 8, representing the needs of this district.

Brad Green (Libertarian)

I believe in Utahns to be good stewards of our resources, personally self-reliant, and the kind of people who will fight together for a brighter future for our families and communities. When I'm elected to the US House as the first Libertarian congressman in history, Southern Utah will be in

the spotlight as a bastion of freedom, where people around the world can look for answers to difficult questions. I hope we use that spotlight to advocate for the limited-government principles that have made us successful, that have made our communities strong, and have made us such a desirable place to live our lives. Most of the challenges Rural Utah faces are a result of Federal overreach. My fight to dramatically reduce the size of the Federal Government will start with the issues that affect us most directly: taxes, land, water, and regulation. I want a government small enough to fit inside the Constitution, and I won't be content until Utahns in my district are no longer burdened by the agendas of elitists, meddlers, and bullies that live thousands of miles away. The status-quo is not enough; our world is at a pivotal point in history. We cannot have a better future without better ideas and better approaches taken TODAY. Please bring me onto the platform upon which we can stand together to propel these United States, especially Utah, into a better future.

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