

1. Please provide some basic information about yourself.

Name: Mark A. Sharp

Position you're running for: Missouri state representative, 36th District

2. Please briefly tell us why you are running for public office.

I am running to continue the work I started this January when I was sworn into office after winning a special election in November. Specifically, I want to:

- Quickly fund and implement the new bipartisan law I co-sponsored that created a long overdue pretrial witness protection program in Missouri that will increase the number of witnesses willing to testify so more of the relatively small number of extremely violent repeat offenders who commit so many of our city's most violent crimes can be successfully prosecuted and incarcerated before they can hurt even more victims. As of October 8, there had already been 147 homicides for the year in KCMO, just 5 homicides away from breaking the all-time record of annual homicides in the city set in 2017 and 2019. This is disgraceful!
- Adequately fund our public schools, community colleges and public universities.
- Approve the proposed Missouri Nondiscrimination Act to protect members of the LGBTQ community against discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations.

3. (State and Federal) Over the past decade, Kansas City has started to become recognized as a Midwestern technology hub. There are multiple programs in place to allow this to happen, which should lead to high quality, high paying jobs. If elected, what types of policies would you support or advocate to continue the creation of startups, growth of the industry, and/or attraction of technology companies looking to relocate or expand to the Kansas City area.

I believe KCMO should continue to offer all economic development incentives currently allowed by state law such as tax increment financing and other forms of tax abatements. The city should prioritize granting economic development incentives to projects that will bring high paying jobs to the city rather than minimum wage jobs. The city should also try to work with other municipalities in the metro area to try to develop a unified effort to attract new high

paying jobs to the region, rather than trying to lure companies to move from one city in the metro area to another.

4. (State Only) During the past few legislative sessions, education funding has been prioritized through new reforms to computer science and STEM education, allowing qualified courses to count as a high school graduation credit. Due to COVID-19, funding proposals for computer science and STEM initiatives are in jeopardy. What, if anything, do you think needs to be done regarding education funding? How would you fund your ideas?

The Missouri school foundation formula that provides state aid to public schools has been chronically underfunded for decades, and many members of the majority party who place a much higher priority on cutting taxes for their wealthy contributors than in providing an adequate level of essential services can claim the formula is fully funded only because they moved the goal posts a few years ago on what constitutes full funding. Making matters worse, our current governor has withheld millions in funding for our public schools approved by the legislature during the current severe economic downturn, rather than withholding funds from lesser priority programs as needed to balance the budget. As a former classroom teacher, I am committed to making education funding our number one priority which I think will do more to quickly improve the state's economy and state tax revenue than any other single thing we can do. It will soon pay for itself.

5. (State & Federal) Finding talent is one of the most critical challenges that Kansas City technology companies face. Workforce development programs and STEM education are two ways in which the state can help address this concern. What do you believe can be done to fill the void to ensure companies can find the qualified workers they need?

As a member of the House Workforce Development Committee, I am well aware of the critical need to prepare students for today's jobs, not yesterday's jobs. I think one of the answers to this need is to adequately fund our community colleges that seem well positioned to rapidly train students for high tech jobs without burdening them with a mountain of debt.

6. (State Only) COVID-19 significantly changed the budgetary landscape we faced at the beginning of 2020. Though we are all hopeful for a speedy economic recovery, funding will have to be prioritized in the meantime. What are your top three budget priorities, in order of importance to you? Please include a brief description of each priority.

1. Adequately funding our public schools so our students are prepared for success and our community colleges and public universities so our students don't graduate with a mountain of debt.
2. Adequately funding the Department of Economic Development and other agencies like the Missouri Technology Corporation charged with promoting economic growth in Missouri.
3. Adequately funding Medicaid expansion which will save the state millions annually in the long run but will have some upfront costs when expansion begins at the start of the next fiscal year.

7. (State & Federal) Regarding the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, how important is the technology business community to economic recovery, and which measures can speed the positive impact of this industry on the economy?

Additional federal relief for the business community is still urgently needed, particularly for smaller startup companies, and it is callous and irresponsible for the current national administration to refuse to negotiate in good faith with leaders of the other political party and attempt to hammer out an agreement on another relief bill. Relief is needed now, not months from now.

8. (State & Federal) If the federal government makes additional funds available for infrastructure, where would you prioritize that spending? Alternative energy, repair bridges, increase freeway capacity, increase airport person and freight capacity, smart infrastructure, public transportation, or other?

I would prioritize spending on clean energy, smart infrastructure and public transportation.

9. (State Only) In 2019, the California general assembly successfully passed the California Consumer Protection Act. This legislation regulates how companies can collect, store, and sell consumer data. Federal pre-emption is looming and will likely mirror similar legislation to the General Data Privacy Rights passed by the European Union in 2017. If more states continue to pass similar legislation, compliance could become a difficult and expensive task for any online business. Do you support state legislation on this issue or would you prefer a Federal privacy law to preempt states' laws and to cohesively protect American consumers and businesses? If you prefer a Federal law, do you support giving the FTC the resources and authority it needs to be the enforcer of the federal law, or do you believe plaintiffs' attorneys should be empowered to bring class-action lawsuits against companies.

I prefer a federal law, but I hope a new administration that actually cares about consumers will take office in January to administer such a law. I believe the FTC should be given the authority and resources to enforce such a law, but it will also have to have new members who are committed to protecting consumers' rights, not just corporate profits of big business. I think allowing class-action lawsuits also should be allowed.

10. (Kansas Only) The Kansas Angel Investor Tax Credit program was not renewed in the 2020 legislative session and must be renewed in the 2021 session to continue. The return on this investment has been exceptional and provides the necessary capital to grow new companies and attract outside investors to Kansas companies. What is your view on the Kansas Angel Tax Investor Credit and other economic development incentive programs?

N/A

11. (Missouri Only) In the last legislative session, funding for the Missouri Technology Corporation (MTC) was significantly decreased – allocating just \$1 million in this fiscal year. In 2016, MTC funding totaled \$17 million. MTC programs include MissouriTechLaunch (co-investment program), Seed Capital Co-Investment, and the Missouri Building Entrepreneurial Capacity program (MOBEC Grants). These programs will struggle to remain, if at all, with the cuts in necessary funding. Would you support future funding increases for MTC, or do you

have recommendations for policies the state of Missouri can adopt to support the future of new tech businesses and startup support organizations?

I think slashing the Missouri Technology Corporation budget was penny wise and pound foolish, and I strongly support restoring adequate funding for the agency and its programs which are essential for continued economic growth in Missouri. This will be one of my top priorities if I am re-elected.