

# Your Governor

At right, six of the questions NSEA asked the candidates. Below are their answers.



**Chuck Hassebrook**  
Hassebrook, 59, spent 36 years at Center for Rural Affairs, 17 as executive director. Three-term University of Nebraska Regent.



**Pete Ricketts**  
Ricketts, 49, is president of the Platte Institute. Retired CEO of Ameritrade, his father's company.

**Q.** Nebraska's **teacher salaries** are more than \$8,000 below the national average. As governor, what would you do to improve teacher pay in order to attract and retain qualified teaching and administrative staff?

I support strengthening the student loan forgiveness program for new teachers and teachers furthering their education. I also support increases in state aid to improve teacher salaries and enhance the ability of Nebraska schools to retain and attract talented teachers.

**Q.** Would you support **charter school** legislation that preserves employment rights laws, including due process, salary and benefit negotiations, and inclusion in the retirement system?

I oppose charters because they drain funds from public schools and overall have not been demonstrated to improve educational attainment. Further, they tend to cherry pick students, leaving public schools with a greater concentration of the most disadvantaged students.

**Q.** Research says every \$1 invested in **early childhood education** saves \$7 in future societal costs. Would you support funding to ensure every child participates in quality early childhood ed programs with certified teachers?

Ensuring that Nebraska kids are prepared to learn when they start kindergarten should be one of our state's highest priorities. I strongly support an investment by the state in quality early childhood education programs that employ certified teachers.

**Q.** Do you support the concept of the **Commission on Industrial Relations** or do you wish to change this process.

I support the CIR. Without it, I fear that teacher pay would fall lower in Nebraska and make it harder to attract the top talent we need in teaching.

**Q.** Should the state create an **Education Trust Fund** with a dedicated revenue source?

Yes, a portion of the state's "Rainy Day Fund" in times of surplus should be dedicated to an Education Trust Fund to protect education in times of falling tax receipts.

**Q.** Do you support public funds to provide **vouchers** or tax credits to those who choose to send their children to private schools?

No. I oppose using public tax dollars for private or corporate schools.

I would consider alternative structures for payment of teachers. We may need to consider adjusting salary levels particularly for areas of most need, such as math and science.

Yes. I believe a charter school law is appropriate. I believe charter schools should be allowed to operate upon mutually agreed on contracts.

The state's goal should be to help students get a quality education and if that can best be accomplished with vouchers, especially for low-income students, then we should make that option available.

My administration would comprehensively examine the current function and effectiveness of the CIR before determining whether action to adjust or reform was necessary.

This is an interesting idea that I would like to research further, seeking the input of NSEA and other education policy experts.

Yes. Provided that it is consistent with local control and other budget priorities are considered in the process.



# Connecting Dots Gives Hassebrook the Edge

## **Chuck Hassebrook's vision for education is clear.**

Public school supporters share that vision, which has earned Hassebrook NSEA's recommendation as the next governor.

Pete Ricketts' agenda can be discovered only by "connecting the dots" — and the revealed agenda is troubling.

First, know that 14 NSEA members — a balanced, statewide mix of Republicans, Democrats and Independents — met with the two in March. Members asked them about education issues and their answers to questions submitted before the interview.

Hassebrook was the clear choice. Now, the two are on the Nov. 4 General Election ballot. Before you vote, learn where they stand on issues affecting education.

**For 37 years, Hassebrook worked** for the Center for Rural Affairs, including 17 as executive director. During that time, the Center provided loans, training and business-planning aid to more than 10,000 small Nebraska businesses. He was crucial in securing passage of state and federal policy reforms to strengthen the middle class, including the nation's first Microenterprise Tax Credit.

Hassebrook, 59, served 18 years on the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, including two years as chair. He led efforts to obtain \$11 million in tuition aid for students from moderate to low income families. He is a Platte Center native, where his family has farmed for more than 100 years.

Hassebrook knows small business, agriculture and education.

**Ricketts, 49, is the retired** chief operating officer of TD Ameritrade, the billion-dollar stock trading company his father founded. He is a founder, benefactor and past president of a group called the Platte Institute, which advocates for vouchers, corporate charter schools and tax cuts for the wealthy.

The Platte Institute has publicly called for cuts in state funding of higher education, freely admitting it would raise tuition; an increase in the student-teacher ratio in public schools; usurping of local control by consolidating local school districts into one large district per county; privatization of public education; privatizing roads and highways and instituting toll roads; and privatizing the state's mental health system.

Ricketts plays his agenda close to the vest. He often claims education as a priority, yet education receives only brief mentions on his website.

It is only after you connect the dots that his plans are clear: he supports corporate schools, vouchers and policies that would hurt our public school students and employees. He favors further cuts in the corporate income tax and lowering of tax rates for the rich. No wonder some call him "Wall Street Pete."

**Tax reform:** Ricketts said in the May 18 Omaha World-Herald "I've crafted a plan" for tax reform, yet he has not revealed details.



**Chuck  
Hassebrook**

Meanwhile, his Platte Institute agenda regularly seeks cuts to corporate income taxes and taxes on the wealthy, urging heavier reliance on "taxes on consumption" — or the regressive sales tax.

Hassebrook will focus tax reforms on **property tax relief** for low and middle income homeowners, family farmers and ranchers. "I oppose cutting the income tax rate on the top one or two percent of earners because it squanders our capacity to invest in our future, and it will shift the tax burden from those most able to pay to those less able to pay."

**Vouchers:** Ricketts favors siphoning off public school funding to support corporate or private school voucher schemes. He is a benefactor and past chair of the pro-voucher Children's Scholarship Fund of Omaha.

Hassebrook is opposed to vouchers, saying he does not support using public tax dollars for private, corporate or for-profit schools.

**Charter/Corporate Schools:** Ricketts told NSEA "I believe a charter school law is appropriate."

Hassebrook is clear: "I oppose charters because they drain funds from public schools and overall have not been demonstrated to improve educational attainment."

**Your retirement:** Hassebrook would maintain the defined benefit plan for educators, expertly managed by investment professionals. Nebraska's defined benefit plan guarantees a set income, with periodic cost of living increases.

Ricketts would eliminate the expert management of your retirement dollars and move to a defined contribution plan, requiring you to investigate, select and invest in plans that might, or might not, provide sufficient retirement income. The Platte Institute is pushing to move public pensions to defined contribution plans, even though studies show that, over time, defined benefit plans are less risky, provide better returns, and cost less than defined contribution plans.

**Collective bargaining:** While Ricketts told NSEA he supports collective bargaining, he is a close pal with Gov. Scott Walker, the man who gutted collective bargaining for Wisconsin educators. Walker has appeared in Nebraska on behalf of Ricketts, and members of the Ricketts family donated \$420,000 to Walker's recent campaign.

Said Hassebrook: "I support the right of all employees to organize and bargain collectively."

When you prepare to vote in November, remember: The choice for children and public education is clearly Chuck Hassebrook.

