



# Twelve Questions for Ohio's Next Governor

We hope to enrich the debate over Ohio's economic future by posing a series of questions to the hopefuls for governor in the 2018 election. These questions are also appropriate for legislative candidates as well:

1. What will be your priority for initiatives aimed at improving Ohio's economy?
2. Governors of both parties have tried to stanch the relative decline of Ohio's economy and return to the prosperous 1950s and '60s. But to what extent can any state government, through either program initiatives or tax policy, exert a significant influence on the direction of a state's economy?
3. Gov. Kasich has launched several initiatives designed to create more jobs and help Ohio businesses and workers. Which of these would you continue as is? Which ones would you continue but modify, and which ones might you abolish altogether?
4. Do you think Ohio's energy, transportation, and water and sewer infrastructure is capable of supporting the state's goals for economic growth? If not, what would you do to keep Ohio competitive in this regard, whether or not the federal government acts, and how should such efforts be paid for?
5. Do you think the current state tax structure is conducive to economic growth? If not, what would you do to change it?
6. Do you think targeted tax breaks and other financial incentives are appropriate tools for recruiting or retaining businesses? If so, do you see circumstances where costs might exceed benefits?
7. Do you support what is known as "right-to-work" legislation, which limits the ability of unions to collect dues or service fees from nonmembers?
8. What portion of Ohio workers do you think needs a bachelor's degree or higher over the next 5 to 10 years? What would you do to help achieve that goal, and who should pay for it?
9. What portion of Ohio workers do you think needs training beyond a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree (including apprenticeships)? What would you do to achieve that goal, and who should pay for it?
10. Should the state do more for "forgotten Ohio," those communities outside of major metropolitan areas that are losing jobs and the many Ohioans who work in important but low-paying jobs?
11. What would you do to help Ohio employers deal with the challenge of finding workers who can pass a drug test, while still ensuring a safe workplace?
12. What are the most important policy issues regarding Ohio's economy to be decided in Washington, D.C.? How would you go about making sure Ohio's economic interests are effectively represented at the federal level?





**The purpose of this project is to help frame the debate for Ohio's next governor by laying out the challenges facing Ohio's economy and seeking candidates' proposals for addressing them.**

**Ohio has witnessed a steady decline in its economic well-being, compared to the nation as a whole, for more than 60 years.**

- In 1953 Ohio's per capita personal income was 9 percent above the national average. It is now 9 percent below.
- Much of this decline can be traced to the loss of 700,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs since the 1969 peak.
- Many factors are at play, including increased foreign and domestic competition, but the biggest contributor to the loss of manufacturing jobs has been automation.
- Ohio factories today are producing twice what they did 50 years ago with half as many workers.

**The nature of Ohio's job market has changed and so have the skills of Ohio workers and the skill needs of Ohio employers.**

- Ohio's workforce is better educated and more diverse than 50, or even 15, years ago.
- Serious gaps exist between the skills employers want and the skills Ohio workers have.
- Estimates of the size and nature of these gaps vary, making it difficult to develop and implement an appropriate plan for addressing Ohio's current and future skill needs.
- Adding more jobs will not, in and of itself, improve the prospects for Ohio and its workers if the state's employment composition continues to shift toward lower paying jobs.

**Governors from both parties have worked to improve Ohio's economic performance, but their interventions have not yet been able to reverse the state's relative decline.**

- Ohio's challenges are similar to those of other Midwest industrial states.
- There is no silver bullet, but there are a variety of state-level policy options that could improve the lives of Ohioans.
- Ohio's candidates for governor should be prepared to answer questions about what they propose in these four areas:
  1. Creating more high-paying jobs.
  2. Improving the match between the skills worker have and those employers need.
  3. Exerting influence on national and international policies that affect Ohio.
  4. Addressing the needs of "forgotten Ohio," those people and places who have lost out in the modern economy.

