

Questions for Candidates and Elected Officials
Jean Fuller, Republican candidate for State Assembly, 16th District

1. Nearly a quarter of Kern’s population (24.4%) is at or below the federal poverty level, according to the California Poverty Measure, but ranks 23 in the state in terms of eligible residents’ utilization of CalFresh—an estimated loss of \$73.6 Million in federal nutrition benefits. What policies would you support to boost participation among the currently eligible population for a program that has a \$1.79 economic multiplier for every \$1 spent?

First, we must ensure the members of our community understand the requirements and the benefits of the CalFresh program. Second, we must ensure all of those eligible are presented with information and instructions that are easy to understand.

Additionally, ensuring county, state and community organizations work together and communicate effectively to identify and process more families and individuals in need is crucial.

2. California’s current three-year drought is the worst in at least 100 years. Consequently 428,000 acres have been fallowed, and over 17,000 jobs lost. What policies would you propose to build on-farm resilience in the face of climate change and a more sustainable use of Kern’s water?

Kern County famers understand the importance of efficient water use because their livelihood depends on it. The last thing a farmer wants to do is fallow land, not hire workers, and limit their production of food and crops.

I supported the 2014 Water Infrastructure Investment Act that is currently on the ballot. This proposition will provide significant investment into new, significant above-ground storage, provide funding for clean drinking water and assist local water agencies promote water efficiency programs.

3. We estimate that 17.2% of the California’s workforce is in the food system, including production, processing, distribution, retail, and service industries. According to the KEDC, nearly a quarter (24%) of Kern’s private sector jobs are food system-related, yet many of the workers are undervalued and are more likely to experience substandard working conditions. What labor issues in the food chain are you most concerned with, and how would you address them?

The safety of workers, in all professions, is always a top priority for me. California has very strict workplace safety regulations intended to protect workers. The farmers and food processors that I have the

pleasure of knowing are committed to the health and safety of their employees and understand its impact on their bottom-line.

I will continue my support for laws that enhance the safety practices of our food line producers, and punish those employers that willfully and unnecessarily ignore worker safety laws.

4. The Kern Food Policy Council is pursuing the creation of a comprehensive, county-wide food system assessment that will help us create new relationships between policy and action, as well as explore the potential for community-based pilot projects directly addressing the physical and economic health and well-being of Kern County residents. In what ways, if any, would you support this effort?

I am always interested in ideas that help in the coordination and distribution of resources to our community members most in need. I will work with the Kern Food Policy Council to provide assistance, wherever possible, to ensure discussions take place to pursue and move forward this worthy goal.