

**Katie Stewart**  
**Restore the Balance**  
**La Plata Candidate Questionnaires**

**Why are you running for Colorado State House? What qualifications do you bring and how are you preparing to serve if elected?**

I am running for office because I believe we can build a strong future for our children and for Colorado. Southwest Colorado is facing serious challenges as housing prices soar, water becomes scarcer and access to healthcare and public education remains limited to many. I am committed to being a fair legislator – which means listening to all my constituents and working collaboratively to pass legislation that helps those who need it the most. I am currently in my second term on the Durango school board and have gained extensive experience implementing state policy at the local level. We oversee a budget that is comparable to the city of Durango's budget and one of the largest employers in the county. We have struggled with unfunded mandates and gaps between state policy and the needs of rural Colorado. I am ready to work hard to ensure that every policy that passes at the state house works for Southwest Colorado.

**Do you agree with the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Colorado. If you do not agree with one or more of these principles, please identify and explain why.**

I agree with these principles and am committed to implementing them in my legislative approach.

**Do you believe Colorado's current election laws and procedures provide for secure elections and encourage voter participation? Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

Colorado has one of the more accessible and secure electoral systems in the country and I will fight to keep it that way. There are, of course, always ways that we can do better. Two recent improvements have been the expansions of ballot drop boxes and polling places to more college campuses and on the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute reservations, as well as the Tribes' ongoing negotiations with the Secretary of State's office around possible automatic voter registration for tribal members.

**If elected, what actions will you take to help find common ground with your fellow elected officials on both sides of the aisle.**

Elected representatives are elected to represent everyone in their district. It will be my top priority to get things done to help rural Colorado, and that is a goal that I will share both with legislators in my own party and with those across the aisle. The focus needs to be on finding solutions, which requires compromise and open communication.

**If elected, how will you listen to and represent the concerns of constituents who don't agree with you?**

As said, if elected I will represent everyone in HD59. On the campaign trail, I have talked to many Republicans who at first seem to not agree with me on anything. However, what I have found is that the most powerful tool we have to bridge divides is simply to listen and ask thoughtful questions. I always find common ground with people once we get past national talking points and into a grounded discussion about daily, local concerns. I plan to prioritize legislating in the spaces that my constituents can find common ground in, like improving our water infrastructure and lowering the cost of living.

**What are the top three issues facing Colorado and briefly how do you plan to address these issues if elected?**

1. Healthcare is one of the most challenging issues in rural Colorado. HD59 has been struggling with healthcare access as rural hospitals have struggled to keep their services available. I will work to improve the existing programs on recruiting and retaining rural healthcare providers and raising medicare and medicaid reimbursement rates where we can. I will also work on expanding telehealth - and broadband access so that people can use telehealth when it is available, so they can avoid driving hours to get the care they need whenever possible.
2. High housing costs have put huge stress on hard working families, making it more difficult for workers to stay in the district. Affordable housing is not a simple issue, but I will work with local governments, developers and community organizations to come up with creative solutions to expand the housing stock and lower prices while building good jobs for our communities and protecting our environment.
3. Public education is crucial to building a better future for our children and I have spent my two terms on the Durango 9-R school board working to improve the quality and accessibility of our public schools while navigating the complicated realities of school funding in CO. I will continue to advocate for improved funding at the state level, as well as the expansion of career and technical education pathways, so that Coloradans can get the knowledge and training they need to succeed.