

UTAH PRIMARY » JUNE 25

School board incumbent Hymas faces Natalie Cline associate Wilbur

District 10 » Hymas says contest is about preparing children for future; Wilbur declined to answer questions.

By CARMEN NESBITT

Incumbent Utah State Board of Education member Matt Hymas is being challenged for his District 10 seat by Monica Wilbur. The winner of the Republican primary will face off against Democratic candidate Deborah Gattrell for a chance to represent the district that covers most of Tooele County.

Hymas initially ran for office in 2020, representing what was then District 3. The area was changed to District 10 after a statewide redistricting initiative in 2021. That year marked the state's first-ever partisan elections for the State Board of Education. Hymas won his bid by defeating his Democratic opponent, Brett Garner, by securing 59% of the vote.

Hymas is the executive director at Excelsior Academy, a charter school in Erda. He has served in various educational roles since 2008.

Wilbur says she is a former teacher and education advocate. Wilbur worked closely with censured board member Natalie Cline through Higher Ground, a conservative group that pushes for "faith, family and freedom."

To better understand the candidates' positions on issues readers told The Salt Lake Tribune were important in this primary, a reporter reached out to Hymas and Wilbur with questions on topics from Cline's censure to book bans. Hymas answered half of the questions, while Wilbur did not respond to The Tribune.

Question #1 » According to Utah State Board of Education bylaws, board members must act "in the best interest of the school children of the state, using powers



Matt Hymas

Monica Wilbur

or resources of public office to promote the public interest rather than for personal gain or to pursue private interests." If elected, how will you act in the best interest of Utah's school children?

Matt Hymas » I will act in the best interest of Utah's school children by first and foremost speaking with parents. I want to hear what they are experiencing, get a glimpse of their perspective, and gain an understanding of what they see as they drop their kids off at school every day.

Second, I will continue to improve my understanding of what is best for children through professional development and research.

Third, I do not jump on the latest trends or just go with the flow. Our children are too important to make policy decisions based on quick ideas. The direction of education is not about me, or any other board member. It is about preparing our children for the future.

Monica Wilbur » Did not respond

Question #2 » State school board leaders this year voted to censure board member Natalie Cline after determining that a social media post she made resulted in the "cyberbullying" and "harassment" of a student. Do you agree or disagree with the board's decision? Why or why not?

Matt Hymas » Agree. Educators, including board members, should never use students or any minor, as a weapon against adults. How can an

individual claim to fight for students while using a student to fight with? There were so many other, more appropriate ways, to address the concerns.

Monica Wilbur » Did not respond

Question #3 » List what you believe are the top five challenges facing public education in Utah, ranking them with No. 1 as the most critical.

Matt Hymas » Overspending; non-academic focus; educator accountability; overabundance of programs; politics.

We have seen hundreds of millions of dollars put into sports complexes and buildings that are more elaborate than museums all in the name of educating our children. Meanwhile, in Utah we have one of the top schools in the nation operating at a fraction of the cost. We need to focus on academics in our schools. That should be the priority, not the hundreds of other programs that pull away from or distract the true purpose of education.

We need to have the ability to hold the very small percentage of bad educators accountable. The one percent will oftentimes tarnish the work of all other educators, which is unfair and unnecessary. Finally, we should not be attempting to politicize education. Our children are not pawns or weapons in a political war. We should not treat them as such.

Monica Wilbur » Did not respond

Neither candidate responded to the following questions:

For or against » Are you voting for or against the constitutional amendment that removes the requirement that income taxes be used for education and social services?

For or against » Did you support or oppose HB29, which created a process for banning books from Utah schools statewide if at least three school districts or at least two school districts and five charter schools determine it amounts to "objective sensitive material?"

Yes or no » Do you support policies/laws that seek to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in Utah's K-12 public schools?

Incumbent Strate faces GOP's nominee for state school board

District 3 » Classroom success tied to teachers says Strate; challenger Hall declined to answer readers' questions.

By CARMEN NESBITT

Incumbent Utah State Board of Education member Brent Strate is being challenged in his District 3 reelection bid by Rod Hall. The winner of the Republican primary election will face Utah Forward candidate Laura Johnson this fall for the chance to represent the district encompassing East Layton, Clearfield and nearby cities.

Strate initially ran for office in 2020, representing what was then called District 4. The area was changed to District 3 after a statewide redistricting initiative in 2021.

Also that year marked the state's first-ever partisan elections for the State Board of Education and Strate won his seat by defeating primary opponent K'Leena Furness, as there was no Democratic candidate in the race.

Strate taught at South Ogden Jr. High for 10 years and at Bonneville High for 20 years and previously served as a council member for South Ogden City.

Hall secured the Utah Republican Party's nomination for the District 3 school board seat. He currently serves as an assistant pastor at Layton Baptist Church and was a teacher for over 10 years, according to his website.

To better understand the candidates' positions on issues readers told The Salt Lake Tribune were important in this primary, a reporter reached out to Strate

and Hall with questions on topics from Strate's censure to book bans. Strate answered half of the questions, while Hall did not respond to The Tribune.

Question #1 » According to Utah State Board of Education bylaws, board members must act "in the best interest of the school children of the state, using powers or resources of public office to promote the public interest rather than for personal gain or to pursue private interests." If elected, how will you act in the best interest of Utah's school children?

Brent Strate » Research shows that the number one factor of student academic success is the classroom teacher. This success is amplified by para-

ent engagement. The Utah State Board of Education does not directly fund classrooms, but we do impact teachers by developing quality standards, through teacher licensure and training and good policy.

Rod Hall » No response.

Question #2 » State school board leaders this year voted to censure board member Natalie Cline after determining that a social media post she made resulted in the "cyberbullying" and "harassment" of a student. Do you agree or disagree with the board's decision? Why or why not?

Brent Strate » I would make the same decision today as I did then. As a member of the Utah State Board of Education I fully support the decision of the board. Within

PHOTO: DISTRICT 3, NEXT PAGE

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