

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Scott Jensen on abortion, public safety and how he'll try to unseat Gov. Walz 01GA4DBD1YHKTY3TTTTY1P2YA4J

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Scott Jensen is a former state senator who easily won his Republican primary for governor yesterday. And he joins us now as the Republican nominee for governor. Dr. Scott Jensen, congratulations and thanks for coming on.

SCOTT JENSEN: Good afternoon, Mike and Brian. Thank you for asking me to come on your show.

INTERVIEWER: When this campaign started, there were quite a few Republicans-- more than a half dozen-- who wanted to be in the position you're in right now. How did you get to this point and how do you win in November?

SCOTT JENSEN: I think there's a movement going on in America. And I think the movement is born of a concern for the nature of our very democracy. And I think we saw that really come to play in Virginia, as we saw mama bears, and warrior dads, and people get off the sidelines in a way that perhaps hadn't been seen in a long time.

There was an activism. There was an energy, an electricity. That event in Virginia in 2020 I think galvanized an awful lot of places outside of Virginia. And I think that's what happened in Minnesota.

Mary and I, my wife and I, decided to run for election in December of 2020 on Christmas day. Three months later, we launched. And for the last 18 months, we've done everything we can to try to get out and have a conversation with Minnesotans. Along the way, we stood up for parent rights, and for health freedom, and for public safety, and for a foundational education for kids, and things like trustworthy elections so everybody can feel good about that.

And we also talked very much about the economy and what is the role of government. And through all that, I think a movement was born. And so we had a tremendous performance on February 1, with almost 20,000 people coming to the Republican precincts. And that was almost double what had been there four years ago.

And then at the endorsing convention in May in Rochester, after nine ballots, we won, I think, 65% to 33% and were the endorsed candidate. And then last night we had some 89% or 90% of the vote. I think we had more votes in a statewide Republican primary than anybody's ever received for the last 25 years.

And I think it was really important, too, Mike was that the Democrats, I think, in 2018, I think there were some 600, 650,000 Democrats who turned out for the primaries. Last night, it was just a little bit above 400,000.

So I think we've seen a lot of things, but there's a lot of, I think, conservative-minded people who say, we can do so much better than this. A movement was born. And it got behind the Jensen campaign. And we're very, very grateful for that.

INTERVIEWER: What are the key issues you will stress now in the general election campaign with a couple of months to go here?

SCOTT JENSEN: Well, if people don't recognize that the pivotal issue is public safety, they've got their head buried in the sand. We have shootings virtually every day. We have the mega-mall, the Mall of America, closed down because people are firing at each other with guns there.

We've got teenage kids killed an hour or two before a baseball game in the downtown Minneapolis area. We've had more police officers assaulted in 2021 than any normal year. We've broken records for concentrated homicide events in a short period of time. And over a year's period of time, we've been near-record breaking.

I think public safety is absolutely the critical issue. And it's being compounded by an inflationary cycle that, in large part, has been borne of, in many situations, foolish economic policies that serve to fracture supply chains, accelerate the inflationary driving forces, and now we sit at 8.5%, 9.1% inflation. People that maybe got their biggest raise in years from their workplace, and they're actually falling behind.

I think without issue, without any kind of deep analysis, this election is going to be about public safety, putting more cops on the street, having incarceration be a tool for deterrence, having judges and prosecuting attorneys actually follow mandated minimum sentencing. And [INAUDIBLE] inflation, and economy, and broken supply chains, and what Governor Walz has done to long-term care facilities-- we're going to see all those things on the table.

INTERVIEWER: Let me ask you about one other issue, that is the issue of abortion. Because a few months ago, before the Supreme Court ruled, you and I were talking and you told me you would try to ban abortion outright if *Roe versus Wade* were struck down. Lately, you've said you would not seek to overturn the state supreme court ruling that found a right to abortion in the Minnesota constitution, and that you do support some exemptions to an outright ban. Can you just clarify for us now what your position is?

SCOTT JENSEN: Thanks, Mike, for asking that question. I do remember our conversation. First and foremost, abortion is not on the ballot in November. There's no question about that. *Dobie Gomez* in 1995 assures Minnesota women access to abortion.

So from that perspective, it is not on the ballot. The conversation you and I had seems almost like eons ago. It was prior to the *Roe v Wade* overturning by the Supreme Court. It was in the process of an endorsement. And I didn't think that it was necessary to articulate what specific types of exceptions or exemptions would take place, because I've always felt that if a pregnancy is jeopardizing a woman's mental or physical health, that that would always be a situation where you're not dealing with a legal matter, you're dealing with a private health care matter.

But in the conversation that we had after the court's overturned *Roe v Wade* at the end of June, I think both Matt Burke and I together arrived at a place of consensus that, yes, we need to articulate very clearly that rape and incest would absolutely be exceptions. But we also say, clearly, that it has to, at the end of the day-- if a pregnant woman's mental or physical health is endangered, then this is no longer any kind of a situation for the legal system.

This is a private matter between patient and doctor. And we have to do everything we can to preserve the health and the life of the pregnant woman. So that would be my position.

INTERVIEWER: It's pretty clear that the governor and his allies already are trying to paint you as an extremist with a lot of wild ideas, unconventional ideas. How do you respond to that?

SCOTT JENSEN: I smile. Anybody who's ever seen me in the office as a physician-- nobody's ever called me extreme. Probably the most extreme thing about me is the fact that I have sort of a cruddy diet, where I like to eat more cookies and donuts than I probably should. But I was family doctor of the year in 2016, and I think a very successful associate professor at the medical school for decades-- because I'm thoughtful, and I'm balanced, I'm measured.

But I've always been a skeptic, Mike. And I think that even during the entire COVID pandemic, I have always tried to inject a certain level of context into the conversation, because I think that's what helps people have reasonable conversations. When we paralyze one another with fear, that doesn't generally bring out the best in our thought processes.

So I know that the Democrats are going to say, gee, abortion is our winning ticket. We finally have something we can hang on to. But that's not on the ballot in November. What's on the ballot and what we're hearing all over the state of Minnesota is the lawlessness that's invaded Minnesota's cities in both the urban areas and greater Minnesota, and the inflation that could have been avoided in so many situations, and hooking our wagon to the California car mandates, and taking a state that has less than 2% electric vehicles in place right now and even suggesting that by 2025, we have to have 35% of our auto sales be electric vehicles, and having a candidate like Tim Walz who froze when it was time for strong leadership and refused to put the National Guard on the streets when asked by Jacob Frey, who, if you will, made the decision to sacrifice the third precinct building because he felt it was only a structure and didn't recognize the fact that it represents a spirit of lawful behavior, and two weeks after that, he froze when it came time to preserving the Christopher Columbus statue that has stood for decades guarding the capitol.

And he's told the state patrol to stand down. Then even a month ago, when we knew that Minneapolis was still a troubled city, and the 4th of July could be problematic, and Jacob Frey was making, if you will, arrangements to try to protect Minneapolis, Governor Walz did nothing. This kind of freezing behavior, and then flip-flopping, saying that he supports putting money towards long-term care facilities when in his original budget, he didn't put \$1 towards long-term care facilities-- it was only after the session started to unfold that he said, oh, well, I guess I can make a compromise position. These are the reasons, Mike, why we have to start having debates.

Because rather than having one sentence clips, or little sloganeerings, or political mantras, let's have an actual conversation so Minnesotans can understand what governor Walz believes, what Scott Jensen believes, why Scott Jensen said what he said, why Governor Walz did what he did. But canceling debate after debate after debate is no way to run a campaign.

INTERVIEWER: Scott Jensen, the Republican nominee for Governor of Minnesota, thanks for coming on today. I hope you'll come back again.

SCOTT JENSEN: Mike, it's always fun to chat. Sorry we didn't get any input from Brian there.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, he'll have his chance. Thanks again.

SCOTT JENSEN: Thanks, Mike.

INTERVIEWER: Now, Scott Jensen says the hymn *All Is Well With My Soul* speaks to his message to voters. Let's hear a little bit of that.

[CHOIR SINGING]

CHOIR: When peace like a river attendeth my way. When sorrows like sea billows--