

Kansas Senate – 17th District

Lillian Lingenfelter, Democrat

Occupation: Teacher

Number of Years in District: 10 years

What prompted you to run as a candidate for Kansas Senate District?

I believe in Kansas and what we stand for as a state. I believe that the values of our founding are still true today, and we need legislators to stand up for Kansas, and represent their constituents with honesty and integrity. I know that the time to make Kansas the best it can be is right now. My desire to make Kansas the best it can be for the next generation is what's driven me to run. I want to provide the residents of the 17th district a chance for a new voice in the senate and find the compromises necessary to make a better, brighter Kansas now and in the future. We must continue to make the 17th district a place that supports economic development, has options for first rate health care, and gives every Kansan the opportunity to send their children to the best public schools possible.

What top issue concerns you the most about the current political climate in Kansas?

The issues that concern me most about the current political climate in Kansas are the continued partisanship and gridlock, and the low levels of public participation and civic engagement. Decisions driven more by party loyalty than by the best interests of constituents can lead to policies that are not well-rounded or effective. With my experience on a nonpartisan school board, I have seen firsthand the benefits of putting aside partisan differences to focus on the community's needs. It's my commitment to the district to be a true representative, be a voice for the constituents, and support engagement in the community.

What are your 3 top priorities?

1. Economic Development & Lowering Costs for Kansans

As a senator, I would prioritize economic policies that reduce costs, support local industry growth, and create good-paying jobs in Kansas. I will advocate for a tax code that enhances everyone's financial well-being. Kansans statewide shouldn't have to worry about being priced out of the homes where they've built their lives. That's why I will champion essential property tax relief and other beneficial tax reforms that provide immediate, tangible benefits. By encouraging the development of STEM industries and strengthening existing ones like agriculture, engineering, and clean energy, we can build a strong economy that benefits all Kansans. Additionally, I will support legislation that helps small businesses thrive, ensuring rural communities have access to essential services and amenities.

2. Healthcare

I recognize that our rural hospitals and healthcare systems provide much needed care for Kansans. Access to affordable healthcare across the state is crucial for everyone. As a senator, I would not only support Medicaid expansion, but also legislation that supports our local hospitals and healthcare providers. We must protect our rural hospitals, ensuring no one is left without the care they need. Between 2005 and 2023, 10 hospitals in rural parts of our state closed including, most recently, the hospital in Herington, near the 17th district. I also support maintaining critical investments in mental healthcare and substance abuse treatment programs, expanding telehealth programs and recruiting healthcare staff in rural communities.

3. Education

As a public school teacher, I know our state's prosperity depends on quality schools with highly qualified educators. As a Senator, I will prioritize making Kansas and the 17th district places where teachers want to teach and students can thrive. My top priority will be investing in education at all levels, including early childhood, K-12, and higher learning, along with trade and technical education. I will also advocate for fully funding special education to ensure every Kansas student receives the best possible education tailored to their needs.

What do you think sets you apart from the other candidates?

My generation is running fast into the business of changing the world because we understand the urgency of the moment we are in. I bring a new perspective and new voice to the 17th district. This, combined with my Board of Education experience promoting consensus making, illustrates my commitment to meaningful results. In a district where 66.2% of the population is under the age of 44, I bring a unique approach that bridges generational gaps, ensuring that the voices of both younger and older constituents are heard and respected. This collaborative and inclusive mindset is essential for creating lasting, positive change in our community.

If people would like more information, can they find you on social media, and if so, how?

Facebook | [Lillian G. Lingenfelter for Kansas](#)

Instagram | [Lillian For Kansas- Instagram](#)

Web | lillianforkansas.org

Anything else you would like the citizens of your district to know about you?

Since being elected to the USD 253 School Board in 2021, I have served as the district's delegate to the Kansas Association of School Boards, on the district's policy committee, and as Vice President of the board. I also serve as a Commissioner on the Planning Commission/Board of Zoning Appeals for the Emporia-Lyon County Metropolitan Area and was selected as a Fellow in the School Board Partners Advanced and Expert Fellowship in 2023. I graduated from Emporia State University with a Bachelor's in Secondary Education (Social Sciences), Spanish, and Political Science, and earned a Master's in Education Policy and Leadership from American University. A career educator, I received the Kansas

Horizon Award in 2019 and completed Teach for America's Rural School Leadership Academy in 2022. This fall, I will pursue a graduate certificate in Education Finance from Georgetown University.

In my personal time, I enjoy date nights with my husband at local Emporia restaurants, all things Emporia State University, including mentoring the women of my sorority, Sigma Sigma Sigma, and reading.