

Office: Nevada State Treasurer

Candidate: Zach Conine

Party: Democratic

Campaign website: zachconine.com

Q: Public funding of higher education has declined in relative terms over the past two decades while student fees and tuition have increased and student debt has rapidly expanded, both nationally and in Nevada. How should these issues be addressed?

Conine: As Nevada's chief investment officer and the financial steward for the Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship, I understand how investments in Nevada's higher education system correlate to greater economic opportunities for students and our State's economy.

We need to do everything we can to adequately fund our institutions of higher education, while also ensuring that we provide students with the financial tools they need to complete degree programs affordably.

In the Treasurer's Office we were successful in working with Speaker Frierson and Assemblyman Watts during the 2019 Legislative Session, to establish Nevada's first-ever Student Loan Ombudsman. Over the last three years, this Ombudsman has worked with numerous incoming students and post-graduates to help them navigate their student loans.

To make sure that more Nevadans have access to these services, we need to work to provide more funding to the Treasurer's Office and NSHE to expand these services for all students.

Q: The recruitment and retention of state employees, including faculty and staff in our public colleges and universities in Nevada, has become a crisis. Reasons cited for widespread vacancies include lagging compensation and cuts to healthcare benefits. What solutions do you have to restore and retain the higher education workforce in Nevada?

Conine: One of the biggest ways that the State can address the higher education workforce shortage is to ensure that we provide dignified wages and benefit packages for faculty employees.

If the State of Nevada truly values the importance of our higher education system, then we need to fund the universities and colleges at a level where they can be competitive in the job market. I'm committed to continuing to find funding solutions to help retain our existing higher education workforce, while also working to hire more skilled workers who are desperately needed.

Q: Do you support collective bargaining rights for professional employees in our public colleges and universities?

Conine: Yes, I will support all efforts by the employees at public colleges and universities to collectively bargain.

Q: Do you support the principle of academic freedom that protects faculty members from political interference in their teaching and scholarship? (For more information see the AAUP 1940 Statement on Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure.)

Conine: Yes

Q: Thank you for your responses. What else, if anything, would you like to communicate to NFA members?

Conine: Thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to working with the Nevada Faculty Alliance over the next four years.

(Submitted 8/7/2022)