



## **2018 Voters' Guide: State House Candidates for CT's 142nd**

Welcome to the League of Women Voters of Norwalk (LWV-N) Voters' Guide! The LWV is a national, non-partisan organization that believes an educated voter is a motivated voter. Each year, local leagues throughout the state put together guides to help voters understand where their candidates stand on the issues that impact their city or town. The League solicits information from the candidates by asking them questions that can be answered by all candidates, regardless of their party affiliation. The answers come directly from the candidates and are printed unedited by local leagues.

As candidates may cover more than one municipality – as in this case – answers from the candidates may be shared between leagues in other towns that the candidate represents. We thank the LWV of New Canaan for collecting responses from these candidates (with the exception of the ECS question that was added by LWV-Norwalk).

Here are the unedited responses from the two candidates for 142<sup>nd</sup>, in alphabetical order:

### **Candidate Lucy Dathan (D)**

#### **LWV: What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?**

**LD:** The ECS formula has been improved in recent years, but it has not gone far enough to deliver Norwalk's fair share. The ECS Base Aid Ratio is calculated based on property value (70%) and the income wealth of the town (30%). Because of its location, the property value of Norwalk is much higher relative to the income of the residents compared to towns like Danbury which has similar demographics and income but receives proportionally more in funding.

This is not fair to the residents of Norwalk, and is leading to higher property taxes and less funding for the schools. This imbalance also impacts state reimbursement funding for school construction, school transportation and adult education.

In 2017, the ECS formula was overhauled to make it more based on need but this did not fix the imbalance in property value and income. It will be exceptionally hard to change the ECS, but I will advocate for a 50/50 balance between property values and median income to bring to Norwalk more of its fair share of ECS funding.

I will also fight to ensure that the state keeps its commitment to increase total ECS funding. Connecticut is facing serious financial pressures but maintaining education funding is

key to creating a talent pipeline that will help the state innovate its way to financial success. I advocate investing in our collective future to develop the skilled workforce that will be ready for the jobs of the future.

**LWV: What are the top two policy changes you propose to help the state resolve its fiscal crisis?**

**LD:** By growing our economy we can increase tax revenues without increasing taxes. We can grow Connecticut's economy by investing in education and job training efforts in the state's network of vocational and technical trade schools, and community colleges like Norwalk Community College. Focusing on vocational schools will help prepare workers for the 21st century jobs that entrepreneurs and other employers are looking for when they consider where to locate their businesses.

Economic growth will also happen with streamlining government. Connecticut can save millions of dollars by moving state and local employees to the Husky Healthcare Program instead of private insurance. Husky Healthcare has the same healthcare outcomes, but it costs the state two thirds of what private insurance costs, and it does not have deductibles. I will also fight to allow small businesses and individuals to buy into Husky Healthcare, which would make our economy more competitive.

**LWV: What are two social issues that you expect to address in the state legislature in the next two years (such as environment, women's rights, immigration, guns, ...) , and what are your positions?**

**LD:** With Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court, many issues we once thought resolved may be thrown into question. It is likely that the conservative majority will overturn Roe v. Wade, which puts the question of choice in front of our state government. I will fight to protect the individual freedoms of every woman to decide what to do with her own body. The opioid crisis has hit Connecticut especially hard. According to many local organizations like the New Canaan Parent Support Group, drug addiction transcends socioeconomic backgrounds. Prevention is easier than treatment. We must ensure that our school curriculum includes the discussion of opioids. Additionally, I will fight to guarantee available rehabilitation beds. I will work to expand the Treatment Pathways Program, which diverts people with substance use disorder to treatment before they are arraigned, to lower the likelihood of future arrests.

**LWV: What are the top two policy changes you would propose to improve transportation in Fairfield County and why?**

**LD:** One of Connecticut's biggest assets is its geographical location, but with the state of the rails, roads and bridges, it is difficult to effectively move around the state. Connecticut has 332 structurally deficient bridges. This is both dangerous and fiscally irresponsible, as we will have to replace this infrastructure instead of maintaining it.

I also will plan to advocate for investing in decreasing the train travel time. New Jersey and Long Island have recently invested in their rail, which has significantly decreased the trip times. These investments have led to significant economic growth in the areas along the train line, and property values have increased when they are near faster train lines. But this growth will be limited to the areas of CT that are near the line, therefore we must find innovative ways for regions to work together to invest in their own transportation.

## **Candidate Fred Wilms (R)**

### **LWV: What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?**

**FW:** Following up on my 2014 & 2106 campaign promises, I submitted three ECS reform bills. Norwalk has been shortchanged by \$40 million every year because Hartford believes we are rich. My proposals were to change the ECS calculation formula to Norwalk's advantage; more emphasis on Norwalk's median income and less emphasis on our Grand List property values. Also more incorporation of socio-economic factors such as number of ELL students and the number of children on free/reduced lunch. I worked together in a bi-partisan fashion with my Democratic colleague Bruce Morris. Together we got some of these concepts passed into law. In 2019 I will submit a new ECS bill to carry on this good work. Furthermore I have been able to lever my increasingly senior role on the Appropriations Committee to protect overall Norwalk town aid. I will continue to work together in a bipartisan fashion on behalf of Norwalk.

### **LWV: What are the top two policy changes you propose to help the state resolve its fiscal crisis?**

**FW:** We need to do two things; grow our economy and get our fiscal house in order. To grow our economy we need to encourage individuals and small businesses to relocate here. We do that by lowering the income + business tax rates, scrapping the Estate tax, removing mandates and reforming the business Unemployment and Workers Compensation systems. On the fiscal side, we can save \$2.5 billion by realigning state employee wage, pension and health care costs to private sector levels. We can save \$1.1 billion by relying more on nonprofits to deliver social services, and \$700 million by expanding home health care for the elderly. We should outsource the DMV. To lower our \$100 billion underfunded retirement liabilities we could consider contributing underutilized State assets or even the State Lottery system.

### **LWV: What are two social issues that you expect to address in the state legislature in the next two years (such as environment, women's rights, immigration, guns, ...) , and what are your positions?**

**FW:** I have been actively involved in two areas: supporting those with disabilities and helping those struggling with addictions. Because my family has been touched by both, I have a strong personal interest. For the former I will support new legislation that provides better support for those with intellectual disabilities and autism. For children with food allergies, I will support

allowing children and schools greater flexibility in administering their medications. For those ravaged by addictions, this includes opioid crisis (1,000 Connecticut residents died this year) plus alcohol, drug and gambling addictions. I will support legislation that clamps down on the over-prescription of pain killing opioids, supports expanded treatment for alcohol and drug addictions and increases casino payments to the addicted gamblers recovery fund.

**LWV: What are the top two policy changes you would propose to improve transportation in Fairfield County and why?**

**FW:** I support implementing the Transportation lockbox to ensure that transportation dollars go only to transportation projects – and do not get diverted away to the general fund. We need to change our Capital Bonding policy: issue more bonds for transportation projects and fewer for feel-good, pork-barrel projects. Locally the Governor squandered \$10 million of State bonds on a bankrupt theatre and a bankrupt housing project. Funding should instead go towards roads, bridges, Metro North and more train parking. Locally I will continue to protect service at the New Canaan train line plus promote the new train station at Wall Street, Norwalk. We also need to re-evaluate the costly \$1.1 billion Walk Bridge project over the Norwalk Harbor.