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The League of Women Voters of Norwalk invited all candidates for State Senate and State Representative in Norwalk's districts to submit responses to a six-item questionnaire, a photo, and a campaign URL.

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**Connecticut State House District 142**

<b>Lucy Dathan* (D)</b>	<b>Fred Wilms (R)</b>
	
<a href="https://www.lucy2020.com/">https://www.lucy2020.com/</a>	<b>FredWilms.com</b>

\*incumbent

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Dathan:** I see my strong constituent service record as State Representative being based upon my values and priorities as a mother of school-age children and engaged member of my local community, combined with the skills and experiences acquired over 25 years working in business finance and accounting. I started out as an auditor in Public Accounting and progressed

to executing deals as an investment banker before becoming the CFO for start-up technology companies. This gives me deep understanding of what goes into long-term business plans and strategies and how best to achieve them. Much of my life has been spent working in different countries and cultures where I have learned how to collaborate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Connecticut needs to stabilize its fiscal future to ensure ongoing funding for our schools, healthcare, transportation, and more, and my experience enables me to contribute strongly in the state's budgeting process.

**Wilms:** In my 19 years of Norwalk and State public service, I have always sought a calm, thoughtful leadership approach – one that brings people together. I try to listen and place a huge importance on keeping my word. When I chaired the Norwalk BET we produced eight city budgets, all approved unanimously – despite much of that time in the volatile Great Recession.

I was honored to be your State Representative from 2015 -2019. I have a unique finance background: of the 187 legislators, the only one who was a banker plus chaired their town's fiscal authority. The State needs more people with this background. I started my banking career on Wall Street after receiving my BA Economics from Northwestern University and MBA from the University of Michigan. For the past 17 years, I have been a Senior Vice President at Webster Bank, working with small businesses in our area.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Dathan:** As a legislator, I am committed to creating an environment that fairly and equally protects the rights of all constituents. While Connecticut has not been in the national spotlight

with egregious manifestations of systemic racism, we must be honest and acknowledge there are events in our state where people's rights are violated. This bill was drafted after much bipartisan discussion and thoughtful review of constituents' experiences with police. I strongly support our police officers, but if we can further the overall goal of fairness and equality under the law for all, then I must support this. Preserving justice was at the crux of our nation's formation. Who would want to deny a victim, or their family, the ability to seek redress in a case where wanton police action violates their rights? This law strengthens the relationship between police and communities, and am proud to have voted in favor of it.

**Wilms:** The Norwalk police have been nationally CALEA accredited since 1995, They have served us well, and made enormous efforts to be constructively engaged in the Norwalk community. Yet the Hartford democrats unfairly treated Norwalk's police as if they were from Minneapolis. Now some of these same democrats are going out of their way to defame our police. All of this makes no sense. Our police deserve our support.

While many of the reforms in the police accountability bill were good, I will vote to restore qualified immunity for our police officers. Taking that away only hurts good cops and stops proactive policing. I support a complete reexamination of the police accountability legislation, but this time holding proper public hearings coupled with receiving testimony from all sides. This time we need to take a bipartisan approach.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Dathan:** Norwalk has achieved the 3rd highest percentage of affordable housing in Fairfield County. I believe the best way to build on this is to incentivize towns to voluntarily create it, not

through state mandates that towns will fight. We can revive financial support for towns that convert abandoned buildings into safe, affordable housing and support those that need Federal Brownfields Funding to remove legacy pollution and ensure that old buildings are eligible for Brownfield Cleanup Funds. I also think that we can reduce the amount of government regulation in building which I feel is holding back economic growth. Affordable housing also includes the ability to afford utility expenses. I would consider the adoption of minimum/baseline Green Building Design Standards including solar installation and energy efficiency measures for all housing construction. Towns like Norwalk should be rewarded for creating affordable housing and help grow Connecticut's population in additional educational funding.

**Wilms:** Norwalk has always taken the lead on affordable housing. Statute 8-30(g) requires ten percent of a town's housing stock to be affordable. Norwalk has exceeded that threshold for many years. Affordable housing has enjoyed bipartisan support within Norwalk and this provision is further captured in our local ordinances. I support Norwalk always staying above this threshold.

However too much of anything can stop being good. We learned this from the POKO/Wall Street fiasco that tried to achieve 40% affordable housing. Fifteen years and \$5 million of state funding later, Wall Street is still a mess. As long as we stay in the 10% to 15% affordable range, future projects can be either self-financed, or covered by the banking community. We do not need taxpayer bailouts for failed POKO style projects.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide**

**consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Dathan:** When balancing statewide consistency and local control the priority for me has to be the well-being of the individuals living in any given community. While sometimes necessary to ensure standards are met, a common issue with statewide laws is unfunded mandates and generalized approaches that do not solve for local concerns. I believe we should always consider options for empowering municipalities with local autonomy whenever practical. It is our duty as legislators to avoid mandates that cannot be funded and to fully fund those that we've determined as essential to Connecticut residents' quality of life or to provide mandate relief to towns. One specific example where I see an opportunity is to allow towns to post legal notices in online newspapers - as opposed to in hard print - and provide links where readers can find more information. This would save towns publishing fees.

**Wilms:** I support local Norwalk control wherever possible. State-wide mandates generally hurt Norwalk. That is because the State is controlled by legislators from the failing cities of Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport plus legislators aligned with the state employee unions. Their sponsored bills are meant to address their peculiar problems, which are typically worse than Norwalk's. I do not support Norwalk being saddled with State answers for problems we do not have. For example, I fought Bridgeport attempts to have all WPCA's regulated by PURA. The Bridgeport WPCA hired attorneys to collect past due bills; they were subsequently accused of harassing Bridgeport citizens. I suggested Bridgeport adopt Norwalk's approach of combining the sewer bill with the property tax statement. Scrapping the lawyers would end the harassment. My suggestion only received a blank stare, and new state-wide legislation.

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Dathan:** Connecticut currently has some of the strictest in-person voting laws in the country. I strongly supported and sponsored bills for both of these measures in 2019. By allowing early or no-excuse absentee voting, we will increase voter turnout significantly and enable a more representative democracy where the ‘voice of the people’ is more clearly heard in Hartford. A 2013 study found that voting by mail increased turnout by two to four percentage points, with traditionally low-participating voters more likely to be impacted than others. And as has been well established by many investigations and studies, these forms of voting can be trusted and have negligible cases of voter fraud, contrary to what some would like us to believe. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the problems with our current voter laws and we should embrace this opportunity to put Connecticut back as a leader in supporting the individual right to vote.

**Wilms:** Connecticut already has one of the highest voter turnouts in the USA. Proposals such as early voting or no-excuse absentee voting would result in only marginal increases. While maximizing voter turnout is a laudable objective, it cannot come at the expense of the integrity of our electoral process. The Legislature has yet to fully examine these concerns. On a related note, I agree with the absentee ballot expansion to allow for the COVID virus as a valid reason.

**6. Considering the state’s response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Dathan:** During COVID-19, my priority is our physical and fiscal well-being. I worked with relevant agencies to secure resources including food and healthcare, fix issues with unemployment applications and help businesses apply for aid. We expanded tele-medicine,

brought additional COVID-19 testing sites to our community, opened a COVID-19 recovery center, expanded affordable childcare options for front-line workers and delayed due dates for state income and municipal property taxes. I worked directly with the Board of Realtors, Governor Lamont and DECD Commissioner Lehman to ensure the functioning of real estate transactions during the shut down. While we continue to be guided by public health experts, ensuring that local Health Departments are given adequate funds to include more effective public outreach, we have an opportunity to build a stronger state. Going forward, I am focused on our state's financial health and ensuring businesses have access to testing and PPE to operate safely.

**Wilms:** We need to follow the CDC guidelines for COVID, and continue our balanced approach. That means wearing masks and social distancing, while looking for ways to reopen our economy. With our COVID cases low, reopening our schools made sense. Initial feedback however is that educating children online is exceedingly difficult. As such we need to migrate more towards in-person learning. I support moving forward into the Phase 3 reopening and providing relief to our hard hit hospitality sector.

Switching gears, with COVID putting many out of work, or on reduced earnings, it made no sense for the State employees to receive a \$350 million pay raise this July. Out of fairness, this should have been suspended.

Lastly Governor Lamont recently extended his emergency powers through February 2021. Because I believe in checks & balances, the full Legislature should vote then on next steps.

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