

Responses of Candidates for CT House of Representatives

Members of the state House serve two-year terms.

State House District 13 (answers submitted to LWV Glastonbury)

Jason Doucette (D, WF)

1. Biography

I'm a lifelong resident of Manchester, father to two boys in public schools, and an attorney representing individuals and small businesses. I have a long record of civic and community involvement ranging from our town council to coaching little league.

2. In view of the state's deficit problems, what specific measures would you support or oppose in order to increase state revenue and/or decrease state expenses? Please explain.

Solving our state's fiscal crisis is job number one and we need to address the problem head on and work together to find the solutions. We need to (1) identify potential new sources of revenue that don't impact middle class taxpayers (we already pay enough!) and (2) tighten up our state budget to eliminate inefficiencies and wasteful spending. We need to have an income tax that is fair and equitable and doesn't balance the budget on the backs of the middle class. To help solve the problem of underfunded pension liabilities in particular, the state should make an in-kind contribution of state assets to its pension systems to improve their funded ratios.

3. Other than the state's deficit problems, what do you consider to be the two most important issues currently facing your district and how would you address them?

With the myriad of challenges we face in Connecticut and threats from Washington, we have many important issues to address. Economic development and education are two critical issues that impact us here every day. On economic development, we should focus on attracting and retaining good jobs by helping industries (e.g. manufacturing) that are already here and trying to grow. We also need to cut red tape and taxes for small businesses. On education, the state needs to provide a fair and consistent level of funding for our local school systems.

Jennifer Fioreck (R, I)

1. Biography

Certified Professional Photographer

Small Business Owner

2003 Leadership Greater Hartford, Quest Program Graduate

2014 Hartford Business Journal Forty Under 40 Award Winner

Girl Scouts of Connecticut

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

MACC

MARC, Inc. of Manchester

Rebuilding Together Manchester
Saint James School
Saint James School Foundation
Take-A-Vet Fishing

2. In view of the state's deficit problems, what specific measures would you support or oppose in order to increase state revenue and/or decrease state expenses? Please explain.

Connecticut has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. The more money taxpayers give to the State, the more it is mismanaged. Despite two of the largest tax hikes in state history, Connecticut's bonded debt increased by more than \$6 billion under the Democratically controlled Legislature. Moving to a zero-based budgeting process would hold state departments accountable, requiring them to justify every expense in their budgets. There is overwhelming evidence of waste, fraud, abuse and inefficiencies throughout state government. It is indefensible to me how lawmakers could ask taxpayers for more money. The following must be addressed: benefit payments to dead people, abuse of overtime, revisions to purchase orders without approvals, lost/stolen state property, unauthorized rehiring of retired/state employees. I also support regionalizing some municipal services. Finally, lowering taxes will generate more revenue and entice businesses to invest in Connecticut.

3. Other than the state's deficit problems, what do you consider to be the two most important issues currently facing your district and how would you address them?

Opioid epidemic: We need to work more with insurance companies to ensure that people with addiction are covered; get the care they need and deserve. We need to work with physicians and drug companies to prevent over-prescribing opioids.

Municipal Aid: The state cannot continue to pass mandates on to municipalities and cut funding, particularly after budgets have already been approved.

State House District 17 (answers submitted to LWV Canton)

Ms. Eleni Kavros DeGraw

1) What experience do you have to help you be an effective Representative for the 17th district?

I have two decades of experience leading in our communities and building relationships at the government level. As board member for various organizations, one with a budget of millions, I saw first hand how state level decisions affect working families and communities, and I did the work to find solutions.

2) What are the three priority steps that the legislature must take to solve the state's budget crisis?

To get the state budget under control, we must examine efficiency while updating processes, explore zero-based budgeting, and maximize partnerships between the state, innovative companies, small business, educational institutions, and non-profits. If we assess more thoroughly what is working, we can make better and more impactful decisions with taxpayer dollars.

3) How would you assure access to healthcare insurance for all residents?

No one should have to choose between medicine and food or end up in financial ruin over necessary healthcare. Our Legislature was unsuccessful in 2018 in passing a provision to combat already high and rising healthcare costs including prescription drug pricing – I will make common sense healthcare measures a priority.

4) How do you propose to equalize school funding to ensure that the highest funding goes to the schools with the most need?

Since its creation, the state's Education Cost Sharing Formula has never been fully funded, leaving towns without the full complement of resources for effective public education. Teachers are the first to see the consequences of bad policy decisions; I am the strong advocate who will fight for fair funding.

Mrs. Leslee B. Hill

1) What experience do you have to help you be an effective Representative for the 17th district?

- 17 year Canton resident, Connecticut attorney
- Canton Board of Education 2008 – 2015
- Canton First Selectman 2015 – present

Served on Capitol Region Education Council; Capitol Region Council of Governments; Farmington Valley Health District First-hand understanding of impact of legislation on residents, schools, towns and businesses.

2) What are the three priority steps that the legislature must take to solve the state's budget crisis?

The FY19-20 budget must fund all state expenses/obligations including state employee pension/medical obligations. Require an independent audit of all state departments to identify cost savings. Require zero-based budgets from all state departments. Require all state agencies to submit budgets reflecting a 5% spending reduction to stimulate cost-saving analysis.

3) How would you assure access to healthcare insurance for all residents?

Health insurance is currently mandated by the ACA. The state must improve communication and outreach to residents of the coverage available through AccessCT, and fund the Medicare Savings Program. Connecticut P.A. 18-10 ensures coverage for health benefits currently required under the ACA in the event the federal law is repealed.

4) How do you propose to equalize school funding to ensure that the highest funding goes to the schools with the most need?

Redistribution of ECS funding is in process. Avon's ECS funding was eliminated in the last state budget while thirty low-performing districts (Alliance Districts) received ECS increases. Underfunded towns are receiving immediate funding increases. High performing districts should still receive basic funding to ease the burden on local property taxes.

State House District 31 (answers submitted to LWV Glastonbury)

Jill Barry (D, WF)

1. Biography

* Professionally, a CPA that specialized in municipal accounting, auditing and financial reporting; tax preparation for individuals, corporations, partnerships and non-profit organizations, corporate finance and non-profit management.

* Husband Shawn, police officer, Children: Emmett, Kaye Jameson.

* Volunteer: PTO Steering Committee (HAS, GWS, SMS), classrooms, school store, school committees, former teacher at St. Dunstan's, FLL Robotics team coach, Girl Scout Leader, member - Glastonbury Community Action Partnership (GCAP)

2. In view of the state's deficit problems, what specific measures would you support or oppose in order to increase state revenue and/or decrease state expenses? Please explain.

I do not support raising income taxes at this time, but I do support other sources of revenue generation, including tolls. Connecticut should join the practice of neighboring states and utilize tolls to raise revenue for infrastructure improvements. Improved transportation will guarantee a thriving 21st century economy. It is crucial that all toll revenue is placed in a lockbox and used only for this purpose. Options to review: a reduced rate for Connecticut drivers, a tax credit for tolls paid and/or a reduction in the gas tax.

3. Other than the state's deficit problems, what do you consider to be the two most important issues currently facing your district and how would you address them?

The threat of losing State education funding. If we lose this funding, the Glastonbury school system's superior status will start to deteriorate and/or local property taxes will greatly increase. For the past seven years, I have been a champion for the school system and I would not vote for a budget that decreases funds to the Town.

Our values have been threatened at the national level and now at the state level. Values: sensible gun control, women's and worker's rights, environmental initiatives, and equality and opportunities for all. I will fight for all.

Lillian Tanski (R, I)

1. Biography

Welles Turner Library Board, 2011-2013

Town Plan and Zoning Commission, 2013-2015

Board of Education, 2015-present

Glastonbury Newcomers Board, Nayaug PTO, Centennial Lions Club, Girl Scout Leader

2. In view of the state's deficit problems, what specific measures would you support or oppose in order to increase state revenue and/or decrease state expenses? Please explain.

Connecticut is in a debt crisis that drives our \$4.4 billion deficit over the next two years and will cause that deficit to keep growing. Debt payments squeeze out funding for education and social

services. How can we reduce our debts without increasing tax burdens on Glastonbury residents?

First, we must stop borrowing.

Second, we must restructure our obligations to make them affordable and sustainable, working with state unions to find savings in pensions and benefits so we can avoid default.

Third, we need new ways to pay down our debts, such as placing state assets in trust and using public/private partnerships to fund infrastructure and community improvements.

Otherwise, taxes will keep increasing, more residents and businesses will leave, and tax revenues will keep shrinking—together we can stop this cycle of unaffordable taxes, declining funding, and ever-growing deficits.

3. Other than the state's deficit problems, what do you consider to be the two most important issues currently facing your district and how would you address them?

First, Connecticut needs jobs, both to keep residents here and to attract new residents to support our property values and local tax base. Legislators must earn and keep the trust of job creators, inspiring businesses to stay and grow in Connecticut so our economy will support a strong future for everyone.

Second, we must stop unfunded mandates. These state measures force property tax increases while impeding our ability to provide for our local needs and responsibly plan for our future

State House District 137 (answers submitted to LWV Norwalk)

Chris Perone (D):

1. What are your top three legislative priorities? Why these?

1. Education funding.

2. Make Connecticut more economically competitive through better prioritization of infrastructure and a push for a balanced and multi-modal transportation system. – CT needs good infrastructure along with reliable bus and rail service in order to compete in the global economy.

3. Modernize the tax code as well as improve budget planning. – Tax policy, when used effectively, should be part of our long term economic growth strategy. But in CT we do the revenue package only after the spending package is done. The revenue package should go first to keep spending in line with revenues.

2. What alternative revenue streams are you suggesting to keep Connecticut fiscally sound for years to come?

My main focus is on transportation so I consider revenue streams as they impact the special transportation fund. In short tolls, an increase in the gas tax, and other alternative revenue sources need to be seriously discussed – and not used as political footballs. The consequences of inaction are dire. If we continue the status quo as it relates to transportation it will result in deterioration of our transportation facilities in the next few years, and a significant curtailment of transit services and affordability. So, without new revenues, the state would have no choice but to implement such cuts.

3. Would you support establishing an independent citizen's redistricting commission-similar to California's-- to draw new legislative district lines after the 2020 Census? Why or why not?

Yes. Connecticut currently counts prison inmates as residents of the districts in which they are incarcerated instead of their pre-incarceration residences. It muffles the voices, and votes of residents in the inmates home communities – residents who are disproportionately African-American and Latino. I support the reformation of Connecticut's redistricting commission. As long as this inequity is continually ratified by inaction, then Connecticut cannot say it has a redistricting system that takes into account population and fairness.

4. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

I am encouraged that we have a new education funding formula in the latest state budget. But I supported it with the notion that we would accelerate how the state funds public schools with more aid getting to the neediest districts. Like any funding mechanism the proof is in student outcomes. In short, will the funding we receive be enough to give Norwalk schools the resources necessary to educate our students effectively? Making sure our students have the resources they need is my top priority.

Frank Page (R)

1. What are your top three legislative priorities? Why these?

My three main priorities in the legislature will be transportation, education, and enacting real pension reform. These all ultimately affect state spending and taxes.

Every state relies on its transportation network to drive economic development and maximize quality of life. Unfortunately, transportation has been ignored for far too long here in Connecticut, which remains a roadblock to economic recovery. I will support legislation that reserves a set amount of General Obligation Bonds to be used solely for transportation priorities, preserve Special Tax Obligation bonds dedicated to transportation, and re-establish the Transportation Security Board to work alongside CT DOT (Connecticut Department of Transportation) to assess proposed projects and identify community needs.

On education funding, Norwalk continues to be short-changed, despite its rapidly growing population and the increasing need for educating English language learners. I will support the creation of a more equitable state funding formula that provides all students a quality education, with a particular emphasis for Norwalk's special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

It is impossible to fix our budget without pension reform. Our unfunded pension liabilities cannibalize the state budget and cause state employees to fear for their futures. This is unacceptable. I will support legislation to move pension and benefits out of collective bargaining and make them statutory. This includes policies to remove COLAs from pensions for employees who retire after 2027 (when SEBAC is set to expire) and also remove overtime pay from pension calculation for workers who retire after 2027. These policies will make public pensions more similar to private-sector pensions and allow us more flexibility when we budget.

2. What alternative revenue streams are you suggesting to keep Connecticut fiscally sound for years to come?

The past eight years have been largely defined by legislators in Connecticut suggesting “alternative revenue streams” in order to plug holes in our budget that inevitably reopen every year. It is time to accept that our state does not have a revenue problem. In fact, we collect more revenue from income tax and sales tax every year. Our legislature has a spending problem, and if I am elected I will go to Hartford as an advocate for taxpayers and make Connecticut more affordable. I will push for budgets that reduce spending by streamlining our government, eliminating layers of bureaucracy, making the most use out of technology to save money, and transferring government services to non-profits. We need to prioritize spending for core government services like education funding to Norwalk and urgently-needed transportation projects. Our state needs a specific and full-detailed blueprint for how we are going to manage our finances going forward with predictability and stability, because plodding along with runaway deficits and using tolls and other tax hikes to plug the holes is irresponsible.

3. Would you support establishing an independent citizen’s redistricting commission-similar to California’s-- to draw new legislative district lines after the 2020 Census? Why or why not?

No, I would not support this measure. Connecticut’s current method of redistricting by legislature is currently working for us - if you look at a map of House districts there really aren’t any egregious instances of gerrymandering like you have seen recently in other states such as North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Mostly, legislative districts in Connecticut conform with town lines. Additionally, in Connecticut, there are already safeguards in place against transparently partisan redistricting. Our state courts, who are supposed to fill this role acting as independent arbiters representing the people, must review the new legislative maps. If they find any obvious problems or gerrymandering, the courts send it back to the legislature for redistricting to be redone until the problems are resolved. I also question the true “independence” of these citizens’ redistricting commissions. Who gets to appoint these people? Who can be appointed? Are they accountable to voters? How can we be sure partisanship won’t seep into their decisions? I think a commission like California’s would open a whole new set of problems here in Connecticut. At least here, legislators are accountable to voters every two years and voters can express their dissatisfaction with the people who made the maps.

4. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk’s share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

Connecticut still does have an equitable formula to distribute education spending among towns. Our current formula, of course, is so irrational that it was actually declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court in a 2016 lawsuit. Under the current formula, Norwalk, which is a growing city, often finds itself lumped in with affluent larger towns like Greenwich, and receives insufficient funding as a result of its location on the Gold Coast. As Norwalk parents know all too well, Norwalk’s school system is increasingly diverse - economically, racially, culturally, and linguistically - with very unique needs. For example, although Norwalk is ranked in DRG H, with almost 50% of its students eligible for free/reduced lunch, the ECS system as it currently operates does not consider that fact. It also doesn’t take into account the amount of students enrolled in special education or English language learners.

If elected, I will cosponsor a plan to more appropriately determine a community's wealth and make sure that formula is applied the same way across the state. There needs to be more outreach to all education stakeholders in Norwalk, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators, so that Norwalk's delegation to Hartford can present a more unified front. Education funding for Norwalk is also intrinsically linked with the state budget. In recent years, Governor Malloy has looked to slash education funding to towns as a means of plugging holes in the budget. Fixing our state budget will allow for more predictability and stability for local leaders while they craft their school districts' budgets.

State House District 140 (answers submitted to LWV Norwalk)

Travis Simms (D)

Q1. What are your top three legislative priorities? Why these?

Education reform: Our schools are not performing as well as they should and the manner in which education funding is distributed to towns in Connecticut is unconstitutional as it allows towns with higher property wealth to spend more on education, with less stress and consequences than towns in lower –property tax wealth areas like Norwalk. Investing wisely and fairly in our children with an education that prepares them for a successful future can be a windfall in the future for our state's economy and for the city of Norwalk.

Economic development and local jobs – we need to leverage the assets we already have here at home. Serving on the Commerce committee will give me the opportunity to partner with local community leaders and local businesses to close the work-skills gap and keep jobs closer to home.

Environmental issues- The environment is where we live, work, play and learn. I will advocate to implement environmental justice laws to ensure our residents, the environment and the economy are all equally protected.

Q2. What alternative revenue streams are you suggesting to keep Connecticut fiscally sound for years to come?

We need to invest in long-term, cost-cutting solutions to improve the economy for years to come. Connecticut is a beautiful state. We should focus on opportunities to grow our visitor market by increasing tourism throughout the state and local attractions. Jobs and revenue generated by these activities will aid in boosting the economy.

Q3. Would you support establishing an independent citizen's redistricting commission--similar to California's-- to draw new legislative district lines after the 2020 Census? Why or why not?

Absolutely, I believe voters should have the right to choose their representatives, not the other way around. I am fully supportive of a redistricting plan that makes it easier for voters to participate in the electoral process. We must ensure that district maps are drawn fairly to represent our district and the people who live in our community.

Q4. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

Every child deserves a high-quality education. The ECS formula is a topic that's been a hot issue for several years. ECS is an issue of basic fairness. Right now, we essentially take from some to give to others and that's not right – our children ultimately suffer in the end. It's really frustrating to see other (similar) towns getting twice as much funding than the city of Norwalk. In Hartford, I'll seek to serve on the Education committee and work with other elected leaders in a bi-partisan manner to make the formula more equitable and breakdown the current system of winners and losers.

John Flynn (R)

Q1. What are your top three legislative priorities? Why these?

I have a goal of due process, equal protection under the law, and basic civil rights. They are my three legislative priorities.

I am an experienced Pro-se litigator. I have filed 250 court cases in Superior Court and Federal Court, and 50 appeals in the Appeals Court. Judges have ruled on cases in which the Judges themselves were appointed by the Defendant, our Governor.

The second major problem with the State is that it doesn't enforce the law. The Charter Oak is rotting at its heart. Connecticut needs a trained arborist. The law is not written to protect your rights. The law is flawed. Our State doesn't even enforce the Cannons of Judicial Conduct. The State Police look the other way.

I am a jack of all trades and renaissance man. That's what we need.

The Office of the Claims Commissioner, The Statewide Grievance Counsel, DCF, the State Banking and Securities Division, and other Departments of the State are ethically bankrupt. As a result, we have lost confidence and companies like GE. Many of these State agencies have no accountability, all have immunity, and none are efficient. We simply can't tax ourselves out of these problems. We cannot shift the burden to the next generation. The Municipalities equally are to blame.

We need to save the State from Financial ruin. The pension liability, and the shrinking tax base are problems that a person with an MBA in finance, like me, can figure out. I am uniquely qualified to assist the legislature.

Q2. What alternative revenue streams are you suggesting to keep Connecticut fiscally sound for years to come?

We need to legalize marijuana immediately and collect a billion dollars, just like Colorado, tax it. More importantly, the opioid epidemic is gigantic. 78 people over dosed in one day on the New Haven Green. We pay for all the treatments and services.

Cut taxes, that will add revenue and increase investment.

Alternative revenue streams, we need clean alternative energy sources. For example. Manressa is sitting in my back yard, a hazardous waste dump. We need to retrofit it, convert it to a natural gas facility, create 300 jobs, and sell the excess electricity through the existing line to Long Island. We can generate \$240 million in taxes, move the businesses from the upper harbor, and save \$300 million on the Walk Bridge Ct-DOT project overnight. Do it.

Then we must compensate the 400 existing businesses under the Walk Bridge, so they don't go bankrupt over the six-year CT Dot Walk Bridge Project. Do it.

We need to change the regulation for the listing requirements of NASDAQ and the listed exchanges, so companies can attract investors with less regulation. I witnessed 5,000 small biotech companies fail when regulation took away their ability to raise capital. We need to bring back the ability to grow businesses. We need access to capital that is restricted by listing requirements. That is of itself is a tremendous revenue stream.

I am uniquely qualified to explain economics to Colin and Travis.

Q3. Would you support establishing an independent citizen's redistricting commission--similar to California's-- to draw new legislative district lines after the 2020 Census? Why or why not?

I would not follow in the footsteps of California. They were a great State 20 years ago. The question itself is suspect. Abe Lincoln lost the popular vote. Thanks to the Electoral College, he won. Where would be? Back in the Stone age with Saudi Arabia. It's a power grab. Let them in, get their vote, and use them for cheap labor.

Why not? They screwed themselves now they want more power for screwing themselves. Now they are screwing us because they need to pay for all the social ills they created. They want a bigger piece of the pie after reckless spending. The problem with borrowing money is that you must pay it back. California has defaulted, and they want other fiscally responsible States to bail them out. CT is next to fail.

Who idea was this question? Please give me their telephone number and name. We have 40 real issues in the 140. What is your agenda? Teach the kids history. Don't change the history books to program the kids.

Q4. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

ECS is based on a town's ability to pay. The system is completely flawed.

Layoffs, tax hikes. and budget concerns are increasing not decreasing. Government grants have been reduced and are in jeopardy. The City keeps building housing and thinks borrowing money and giving tax incentives is smart. It's not smart. More and more kids register and Rilling's cronies get tax incentives squeezing the City's budget. More students with less taxes, and less teachers. Bad idea. The Housing Authority is a disaster. We are not attracting upwardly-mobile people, we are a welfare State and a Sanctuary City. Look at the projects. Go to Harbor View. Go to the 30 building complexes.

Special needs kids are getting hit the hardest. Wait till the Mall fails, and the Walk Bridge destroys half the business in the Downtown. 30 new restaurants and 70 new stores, with and all the increased costs.

Read the latest superintendent report and the recent complaint. ECS allows towns to shift money to none educational purposes.

Lets assume \$16,700 is spent on each child in school each year. The only way to save the educational system is to incentivize parents to move the kids to private school. If the City gave \$8,000 per student to enroll in private school, many parents would make the move and save the City \$8,500 per student. That is the only realistic economic alternative.

Colin Hosten (WF)

Q1. What are your top three legislative priorities? Why these?

There are some very important state-level initiatives that we can take to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people here in Norwalk. 1) The question of affordability is a big one for many of us. I'm proud that Norwalk is growing, at a time when many towns in Connecticut are struggling to grow. But I also want to make sure that that growth doesn't penalize our lower income neighbors. As our State Representative, I would support smart, sustainable development that prioritizes an affordable and inclusive Norwalk. 2) I'm also particularly passionate about public education. I know that when we invest properly in public education, we're investing in long-term economic growth. Connecticut has some of the best performing district in the country, but we also have one of the largest education gaps. No child should be robbed of educational opportunities because of his or her ZIP code. That's why I strongly support the plan to build more classroom space in South Norwalk. This will be the first public school built in Norwalk in almost 50 years. It still baffles me that Councilman Simms voted against it. 3) And, not least, we need to take a responsible approach to environmental sustainability at the state level, especially in a coastal city when it comes to our changing climate, and the wellbeing of our families who live near South Norwalk's industrial zones.

Q2. What alternative revenue streams are you suggesting to keep Connecticut fiscally sound for years to come?

One example is that I would love for Connecticut to reconceptualize our costly and ineffective drug policy by rethinking our approach on low-level offenses, and taxing the regulated recreational use of marijuana. I also believe that Connecticut can refashion our state as a hub for energy in the 21st century, by incentivizing an efficient transition towards 100% renewable energy and meaningfully funding a "green bank" that subsidizes investments in renewable energy and creates a competitive economic landscape for renewable energy companies. The best part is that a progressive approach to energy creates a win-win situation when it comes to energy sector employment. But when it comes to sound fiscal policy, it's not always about finding new revenue streams. My long-term goal is to dispel the myth that investment in social and public programs comes at the cost of what some conservatives have the nerve to call fiscal responsibility. Data abounds at macro and micro levels to show that when the state makes a point of protecting and supporting the interests of its most economically vulnerable citizens, including the elderly, it promotes long-term economic growth overall. Policies like increasing minimum wage to a livable level and committed investment in public infrastructure—especially our ailing Metro North system—have the win-win effect of stabilizing state budgets while also empowering working class families. I am strongly against most regressive taxes that unfairly punish low-income families and essentially allow the top 3% to hold the state hostage.

Q3. Would you support establishing an independent citizen's redistricting commission—similar to California's—to draw new legislative district lines after the 2020 Census? Why or why not?

Absolutely. The question of full enfranchisement and participation in the democratic process is central to my campaign, and perhaps related to some of the fundamental issues that have been exposed in our electoral system since the 2016 general election. When legislative district lines

are drawn in such a way that reduces the full impact of someone's vote—what we commonly call gerrymandering—citizens become disengaged with politics, and politicians start to take their positions for granted. We've seen that right here in the 140th district. We need to do everything to make it easier for people to vote or otherwise take part in the political process. Besides the question of fairly drawn legislative districts, I support expanded voting hours and polling locations; improved voting access for lower-income families, as well as for multilingual voters. Politics is about people—not special interests or corporations. I am proud to declare that I have already discarded the letter from the NRA asking me to seek their endorsement. Politics is not a business. I will not buy and trade on policies that can literally mean life or death for some people

Q4. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

As the son of public school teachers, properly funded, high-quality public education is near and dear to my heart. The current ECS formula places too much emphasis on the value of real estate, which can put excessive strain on property taxpayers. Adjusting the formula to give greater account to the actual earnings of working class families would give municipalities more leverage, while also being fair to taxpayers, and—of course, to our students, who deserve a public education system that sets them up to succeed in every way.

That said, I would frame the question more in terms of increasing education funding for all of Connecticut, not just Norwalk. This kind of zero-sum thinking can sometimes pit communities against one another, fighting for a bigger piece of the pie, instead of working together to grow the whole pie for everyone. I intend to make sure that not only Norwalk gets what we deserve, but that we grow our state economy in a way that creates more education funding overall. I know improving the ECS formula has been a challenge, but I believe we can do it. I have faith in us. But it takes electing the right people. I'm proud to have earned an "Honor Roll" designation from the Connecticut Education Association, and I look forward to working on a legislative agenda that grows Connecticut's economy and improves education funding, while also easing the pressure on our working class. We can do it. But we can only do it together.

State House District 142 (answers submitted to LWV Norwalk)

Lucy Dathan (D)

Q1. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

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.

Q2. What are the top two policy changes you propose to help the state resolve its fiscal crisis?

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.

Q3. 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?

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.

Q4: What are the top two policy changes you would propose to improve transportation in Fairfield County and why?

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.

Fred Wilms (R)

Q1. What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

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.

Q2. What are the top two policy changes you propose to help the state resolve its fiscal crisis?

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.

Q3: 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?

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.

Q4. What are the top two policy changes you would propose to improve transportation in Fairfield County and why?

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.

State House District 143 (answers submitted to LWV Norwalk)

Stephanie Thomas (D)

Q1 What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

Although the new changes to the Educational Cost Sharing formula come closer to recognizing the challenges for cities such as Norwalk, additional changes will help improve parity across the district and the state.

The new formula applies only to public schools, but should be expanded to include other types of schools in Norwalk, such as Magnet Schools and Charter Schools. Bringing all schools in line will help ensure that all students receive equitable funding.

Despite the changes to the formula, there is still a challenge associated with how low-income students are defined and measured. The existing guidelines are out-of-sync with the real cost to educate students. Federal poverty standards such as eligibility for free or reduced lunch are subject to change and do not truly reflect a student's needs. Until a new measure is found, the formula will not accurately reflect true cost.

Re-evaluation of the formula should also occur on a regular basis to maintain Norwalk's fair share. For example, the special education population continues to grow and although included in the current formula, the data is shifting quickly enough to warrant constant evaluation. A regular assessment of extra aid opportunities, such as the bonus funding provided for regional districts, should also be explored regularly.

Lastly, the surest way to ensure that Norwalk's share is maintained or increased is to protect the monies allocated for the planned phase-in of the new formula over the next ten years.

Q2. What specific measures would you propose to balance the state budget - please list up to three.

Balancing the budget is a problem that requires parties working together for the good of Connecticut. Solutions married with re-election plans and short-term time horizons will not work. There is not one easy answer to cut, tax, or grow out of Connecticut's budget problem. Recoveries take years of progress. We need to put creative ideas on the table, give them fair consideration, and have the courage to implement innovative solutions.

One of these ideas is the Legacy Obligation Trust (LOT) model developed by a bi-partisan commission to help fund our pension liability. Through this model, state assets (i.e. vacant property and idle waterfront property sitting) would be transferred to an independently managed LOT to maximize its economic value.

We also need a comprehensive review of tax policy and existing loopholes and how tax increases or decreases will affect economic growth and the state's ability to pay for services the state provides.

To save money, we should explore consolidating services currently fragmented across individual towns into regions to maximize efficiency through economies of scale.

Q3: What would you do to make Connecticut a more attractive state for new businesses to open in and for established companies to remain or move in?

Businesses are attracted to states where they can recruit top talent. Small and large businesses alike experience difficulty finding the talent they need. Training the workforce for today's -- and tomorrow's -- jobs starts with our schools. I will prioritize meeting this need for a trained workforce by exploring all ideas, from training and apprenticeship programs to strategies to make college more affordable, such as loan-forgiveness programs or tuition assistance linked to post-graduate residency.

Reliable transportation and well-maintained roads are integral to attracting businesses to an area where many commute via public transportation and highways. I support a Transportation Fund Lockbox to ensure that revenue collected for transportation will only be spent on transportation needs.

Creating a small business-friendly environment is one of the best ways to rebuild the middle class. I will support small business creation with programs that encourage entrepreneurship while easing many of the permitting and regulation hurdles that stymie these efforts. I will also encourage the creation and growth of green technologies to provide new energy sources and reduce energy costs.

Gail Lavielle (R)

Q1: What are your ideas on how to increase Norwalk's share of Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) funding?

It's widely recognized locally that Norwalk receives ECS funding that's inequitable because its property values are high compared to those of other towns with similar levels of household income and student need. This makes Norwalk's ability to pay for education appear greater than it is, and the ECS formula allocates less to Norwalk than to the towns it most resembles. A critical issue for Norwalk is that the ECS formula weights property values much more heavily than household income.

I've introduced three pieces of legislation revising the formula, including committee amendments to the state budget. I testified with all my Norwalk legislative colleagues before the legislature's ECS task force, and I led a citizen rally to Hartford to lobby for Norwalk's funding.

As Education Committee Ranking Member, I've continued to fight every year for Norwalk's ECS funding. These efforts contributed to the progress achieved last year in the bipartisan state

budget. It established a revised ECS formula that will increase Norwalk's ECS funding by 40% over 10 years, reaching \$15.8 billion in 2028.

While this is progress, it's not nearly enough. Norwalk's ECS funding should be more in line with comparable cities like Danbury, which receives more than twice as much.

I believe we must significantly revise the formula to weight median income and student need more heavily. I will continue to fight for this. We must also aim to increase ECS funding overall. To do so, we must all make restoring Connecticut's financial health an urgent priority.

Q2. What specific measures would you propose to balance the state budget - please list up to three.

Connecticut faces a deficit of about \$4.4 billion in the 2020-21 budget cycle, and \$6.4 billion in the following cycle. Structural changes to state government's ongoing operations are necessary: one-time spending cuts or revenues will have no lasting effect.

- Reforming state employee benefits, which cost 3x the national average as a percent of the budget, is key to stopping persistent deficits. Examples: replacing defined benefits with hybrid or defined contribution plans, raising the minimum retirement age, increasing active employees' share of pension contributions, eliminating overtime from base salary amounts used for pension calculations. This would require renegotiating the current contract, which must be on the table. Separately, the state's annual required contributions to the teachers' pension fund could possibly be lowered by redirecting lottery proceeds or monetizing state assets – proposals now under discussion.
- Exploring opportunities to privatize or outsource state functions to community nonprofits that would improve quality and cost-effectiveness.
- Reforming the state budget process to make spending subject to projected revenues. Currently, spending priorities are set before revenues are identified to pay for them.

Q3. What would you do to make Connecticut a more attractive state for new businesses to open in and for established companies to remain or move in?

- Regain business confidence by restoring Connecticut's financial health.
- Implement a focused, purposeful economic development policy based on attracting new businesses with favorable fiscal and operating conditions, rather than on one-time incentives that don't reduce overhead for the long term.
- Enact and sustain consistent tax and regulatory policy that allows businesses to make long-term plans without having to second-guess the future.
- Substantially improve alignment of study and training programs at colleges, universities, community colleges, and technical high schools with the recruitment needs (engineering, advanced manufacturing, etc.) of businesses operating in and interested in moving to Connecticut.
- Expedite permitting and registration processes and reduce payroll costs.
- Eliminate the estate tax, which affects family businesses particularly strongly.
- Restrain persistent legislative attempts to impose new, onerous mandates on businesses that constrain their ability to manage efficiently and control costs.
- Invest in transportation infrastructure. Improve the most heavily used systems like Metro-North, increase service at Bradley and Tweed airports, and optimize deep water ports.

- Actively communicate Connecticut's new, business-friendly economic development policies nationwide and aggressively recruit new businesses.

State House District 149 (answers submitted to LWV Greenwich)

Livvy Floren (R) (running unopposed)

Website: oliviafloren.com

Biography: Incumbent. Assistant Leader. Ranking Member Bonding. Member Finance/Revenue/Bonding and Insurance/Real Estate. Served RTM and BET. MBA Adelphi; AB Vassar. Resident 46 years. Married 51 years; 4 children; 8 grandchildren. Civic volunteer; recipient of inaugural David N. Theis "Outstanding Service to Community" Award.

Q: Connecticut has a serious deficit problem. What measures would you support to eliminate the deficit?

A: Solving both a long-term and short-term budget deficit will depend on our making common sense reductions in spending, eliminating waste and creating efficiencies through better use of technology. We need to change the way government taxes, borrows and spends. Obligations like pensions and health care benefits must be revisited and revamped to comply with the new economic reality. The bi-partisan budget adopted in October 2017 enacted many substantive structural reforms and should serve as a fiscal blueprint for the future.

Q: What specific ideas do you have to address the ever-increasing congestion problem on Connecticut's roads?

A: Connecticut needs to repair and replace many of its bridges, roads and rails to make our infrastructure workable. Getting more trucks off the roads by improving freight rail services and making mass transportation – rail and bus service – more convenient, connected, clean and comfortable for people are two first steps. We have a documented, viable, long-term, State-wide transportation plan – it needs to be implemented. I support a Lockbox which would assure that all monies collected specifically for transportation must be used for that purpose and not raided for any other use.

Q: Connecticut has ranked consistently near the bottom of the CNBC's America's Top States for Business. Do you agree with this assessment? If no, why not? If yes, what positive steps do you think should be taken to restore confidence in our state?

A: Disagree. Connecticut is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. We just need to capitalize on and improve our strength. Some positive initiatives include: lower and more predictable taxes; increased job creation through public-private partnerships for educational options that include technical training and apprenticeships/internships in various occupations; reductions in onerous regulations and paperwork for businesses; and maintenance of environmental safeguards that preserve and protect open space, clean air and pure water. Add to these better mass transportation and reliable, affordable energy, and the rankings would reflect reality.

House District 150 (answers submitted to LWV Greenwich)

Steve Meskers (D)

Website: stevemeskers4greenwich.com

Biography: 22 year resident of Greenwich, retired from 35 years in international finance on Wall Street with a B.A. in Economics and an MBA in Finance. Married for 31 years, father of three public school educated children. I am currently serving my 14th year on the RTM as vice-chair of education.

Q: Connecticut has a serious deficit problem. What measures would you support to eliminate the deficit?

A: Economic growth and job creation are keys to reducing our deficit. State GDP has been flat for 10 years. Let's reduce marginal tax rates for new hires and companies looking to relocate to Connecticut resulting in new business, shrinking deficits and rising tax revenues. Working smarter/smaller to eliminate waste, shrinking the state payroll. Unfunded pension costs are high. Negotiate to stretch out payments to pension funds, renegotiate the benefit package and/or delay full benefits paralleling social security. Pension costs are largely healthcare costs. Let's join states appealing to the FDA to allow import of medicines from Canada (50% cheaper).

Q: What specific ideas do you have to address the ever-increasing congestion problem on Connecticut's roads?

A: We need to upgrade Connecticut's rails and roads and that takes money. We are constrained by our budget so tolls may be the answer. 35% of our traffic is from out of state and 25% is commercial. They are travelling our roads for free. We need to use congestion pricing to get trucks off the roads at peak hours. We are running a multi-state charity on I-95. We are the only state in the northeast that gives away our roads for free and worse, makes Connecticut's residents pay the full cost.

Q: Connecticut has ranked consistently near the bottom of the CNBC's America's Top States for Business. Do you agree with this assessment? If no, why not? If yes, what positive steps do you think should be taken to restore confidence in our state?

A: Connecticut is ranked 47th in infrastructure so fixing our transportation gridlock is key. Connecticut is 46th in business costs so reducing taxes for new hires and for companies relocating here sends a powerful message that we are focused on growth. Implementing probusiness strategies including streamlining new business permits will get the message out that Connecticut is open for business. We have a solid education ranking. I would support more workforce training at our technical high schools and targeted internships at our community colleges and universities. Let's capitalize on our strengths and bring a can-do vision to Hartford.

Mike Bocchino (R, I)

Website: electbocchino.com

Biography: Mike Bocchino is a life long, dedicated resident of Greenwich CT. Mike proudly serves as the current State Representative for the 150th district representing portions of

Greenwich. Mike is married to his lovely wife Shannon and they have 2 wonderful boys Michael (13) and Sean (10).

Q: Connecticut has a serious deficit problem. What measures would you support to eliminate the deficit?

A: It is imperative that we make fundamental changes to the way we budget and stop spending what we don't have. We must look to eliminate the estate tax and reevaluate the corporate income tax. Most importantly we must hold accountable all Government Departments for mismanagement, inefficiencies and wasteful spending, then restructure and/ or eliminate departments and positions that are unnecessary and no longer cost efficient.

Q: What specific ideas do you have to address the ever-increasing congestion problem on Connecticut's roads?

A: Tolls will not solve our congestion problems on our highways. It is just another tax on the hard working people of the state of CT. To decrease congestion we must look at initiatives outside the box. The possible closing of some exit and entrance ramps in key locations could add to creating a smoother flow of traffic. As many of the vehicles on our highways are shuttling residents to and from the major NY airports, we should look into increasing the flight expansions from our smaller airports to create shuttles to larger airport destinations.

Q: Connecticut has ranked consistently near the bottom of the CNBC's America's Top States for Business. Do you agree with this assessment? If no, why not? If yes, what positive steps do you think should be taken to restore confidence in our state?

A: Yes, unfortunately I agree with this assessment. CT lags behind on so many levels. What we need is a positive business approach. We need to eliminate the corporate tax surcharge and reduce the corporate business tax rate to make CT competitive once again. At the same time we need to retain and attract the workforce to accommodate these businesses and part of that would be to repeal the estate and gift tax that is pushing our residents and business owners out of state.

State House District 151 (answers submitted to LWV Greenwich)

Laura Kostin (D)

Website: laurafort.com

Biography: My husband and I have lived in Greenwich for 14 years. We have four children. I've been a journalist all my professional life and have worked at CNBC, CNN Financial News and MSNBC. I am in my first term on the Greenwich RTM and Greenwich DTC representing district 8.

Q: Connecticut has a serious deficit problem. What measures would you support to eliminate the deficit?

A: I believe measures that promote economic growth are key to solving our deficit problem. While fiscal discipline is critical going forward, that will only go so far. Connecticut desperately

needs more taxpayers. Reversing the trend of out-migration and growing our tax base is the most viable way to solve our fiscal problems. I think reducing corporate income taxes would give companies an incentive to come here and/or stay in-state. The in-state workers they employ would be part of a revenue growth-oriented solution, as personal income taxes and sales and use taxes are the biggest portions of our budget.

Q: What specific ideas do you have to address the ever-increasing congestion problem on Connecticut's roads?

A. I think it would make sense to start tolling trucks on I-95. They cause 90% of the wear and tear on our roads. Once they are in place, we could hopefully use congestion pricing to free up our roads during peak commuting hours. It is unfortunate that Connecticut has underinvested in freight rail for years. A more robust freight rail system would reduce emissions and significantly cut commercial traffic on our highways. Commuter rail service could also be improved to include more frequent trains and the ability to get to New York City faster and more efficiently.

Q: Connecticut has ranked consistently near the bottom of the CNBC's America's Top States for Business. Do you agree with this assessment? If no, why not? If yes, what positive steps do you think should be taken to restore confidence in our state?

A: I do agree that we're not terribly competitive, but there are solutions. Reducing the tax burden on corporations is vital as is improving our infrastructure and the ability to move people and goods more efficiently in Connecticut. Revitalizing our urban cores and making them more interconnected and attractive to young people is another way to boost our competitive edge. Investing in our universities and community colleges would also help solidify Connecticut as a destination for companies seeking access to top talent. These are solutions well within our grasp.

Fred Camillo (R, I)

no website

Biography: A Greenwich native, former small business owner, banker, teacher, and coach as well as civic volunteer since my early 20s, I have served five terms in the House, and am Asst. Republican leader. I have written laws dealing with public safety, public health, consumer protection, commerce, and animal welfare.

Q: Connecticut has a serious deficit problem. What measures would you support to eliminate the deficit?

A: Pension reform, look to non-profits to take over much of the delivery of social services, establish significant public-private partnerships, including for transportation, and zero based budgeting. If enacted, all would bring in outside revenue, allow for downsizing of public sector employees, and save millions in compensation and benefits. We need to reform the way we compensate public employees. We can't afford pension padding and going forward, need to go to a defined contribution system, thus ending the defined benefit system for new hires.

Q: What specific ideas do you have to address the ever-increasing congestion problem on Connecticut's roads?

A. Corporate sponsorships of railcars and other modes of transportation, which would enable fees to be lowered and thus entice people to use more mass transit has worked in other venues and should be encouraged here. Staggered work shifts should also be an option as they have been shown to help decrease traffic at peak travel times. Lastly, working remotely from home would help, and should be an option, when and if possible.

Q: Connecticut has ranked consistently near the bottom of the CNBC's America's Top States for Business. Do you agree with this assessment? If no, why not? If yes, what positive steps do you think should be taken to restore confidence in our state?

A: Absolutely. Every state faced the same economic situation since the 2008 recession, and almost all have recovered. Connecticut, unfortunately, has recovered only 78% of the jobs lost. By contrast, Massachusetts, cut taxes and has recovered 340% of the jobs lost in the recession. Connecticut tried to tax its way back to prosperity. That failed. Debt and a pension crisis are two other reasons many companies are wary of relocating to this state. Once an economic leader, Connecticut needs new direction and new leadership. Lower taxes, privatepublic partnerships, and pension reform will restore confidence.