



2024 Candidate Survey on the Environment

Kieran Ahern, Democrat
House District 87

1) Open Question:

I've been a member of the Clean Energy Task Force for North Haven for nearly two years now. Our priority is outreach of the benefits of home energy audits (HEA), heat pumps for residential & commercial heating and cooling, and residential solar installations.

I also work in the electricity power market forecasting space, where I help states evaluate their offshore wind procurements. We have done evaluations for the RI OSW procurements and the MA 83C procurements. I joined this group specifically to help facilitate the clean energy transition.

My main environmental and energy priorities for the 2025 legislative session will be advancement of clean energy policies, such as more funding for the HEA programs, making those resources more public, raising the caps on commercial solar installations, attempting to make approvals of renewable energy projects more streamlined, and pushing to reinstitute the 2035 phase-out of ICE personal vehicles.

2) Climate:

Will you support paying for increased investments in clean energy and our electric grid infrastructure to ensure a healthy environment that will reduce reliance on fossil fuel and nuclear energy (and ultimately reduce costs to ratepayers)?

- Yes

My primary animating force in getting involved with local politics, and indeed politics at any level, is concern about climate change. I studied energy engineering in undergrad so that I could work in the clean energy transition, and I'm running for office to help Connecticut clean up its generation portfolio, expand clean energy and energy efficiency programs, and generally reduce the demand for fossil fuels and carbon-emitting technologies.

3) Nature-Based Solutions:

Will you support a stand-alone bill that authorizes and prioritizes the use of nature-based solutions (forests, trees, wetlands, riparian buffers, healthy organic soils, and other natural ecosystems) as the preferred alternative, where appropriate, across all agencies?

- Unsure

I don't quite understand what this question means. I absolutely agree that biodiversity is a key concern within the framework of the climate crisis; I do think that many of our natural resources are the best solutions we have to solving issues that we lack a technological solution towards. Allowing natural systems to do things like carbon storage, water purifying, and more are all obvious reasons to leave natural spaces intact and preserve them where we can. If that is all this question is asking, then I agree.

However, I am fiercely opposed to limits on offshore wind development or other renewable technologies on the grounds of 'protecting natural spaces'. Avoiding offshore wind developments off the coast of Southern New England, for specious arguments about protecting whales and birds, while actively pushing for expanded arctic drilling for oil, increased global commerce via massive shipping tankers (which do kill whales), and even increases in invasive cat populations (which kill birds), I will never support. Renewable energy projects often do convert green spaces into energy generators, but when the alternative is steam units or more natural gas units, I don't believe there is a compelling argument to protect that given green space when climate change is likely to doom it far worse anyways.

4) Clean Cars and Trucks Emissions Standards:

Do you support Connecticut's adoption of the latest California emissions standards for cars and trucks?

- Yes

Yes! This was struck down last year by a committee that was half Democrats and half Republicans - hardly representative of the legislative body as a whole, and thus the state as a whole. We need to join California and Massachusetts and other states in implementing these standards.

5) Environmental Rights Amendment:

Will you support an Environmental Rights Amendment to our State Constitution?

- Yes

This is a great idea. Too often, the poor and disenfranchised get saddled with all the environmental externalities of systemic issues. An environmental rights amendment makes it much harder to force these externalities onto those communities.

6) Food Waste Diversion:

Will you support designating food scraps as a "recyclable" item and requiring large-scale food generators to create plans to donate edible food?

- Yes
This is extremely unpopular at the local level. My Clean Energy Task Force has been very unsuccessfully trying to advocate for more municipal food waste collection programs. From what I've heard, no town or municipality wants to be first as there isn't much public interest. That being said, methane emissions from food waste are a critical concern for mitigating climate change, while also offering a huge economic opportunity for reducing tipping fees and increasing natural gas capacity in New England (which is already constrained, and likely to get worse).

7) Neonicotinoids:

Will you help push for legislation to ban the sale and use of neonics for non-agricultural use in Connecticut?

- Yes

8) Rodenticides:

Will you support banning the use of certain rodenticides, with a few well-defined exceptions, to help prevent the deaths of its unintended victims?

- Yes

9) Environmental Justice:

Will you support a legislative fix to Connecticut's Environmental Justice statutes to include all polluting facilities?

- Yes

10) Bears:

Will you support legislation that requires humane responses to conflicts with wildlife such as providing better support for the public seeking help, removing attractants, minimizing shooting incidents, and strengthening programs to deal with orphaned wildlife?

- Unsure

Public education is a terrific idea for mitigating the harms of human-bear interactions. I would definitely support legislation to make bears safer by attempting to mitigate human actions that endanger them. However, bears are supposed to be really smart, and once inured to human contact, never really regain the fear and can be a real and persistent danger to people. I don't know if there is yet a real solution for this, short of reducing contact before individual bears reach this point. I absolutely support these kinds of programs though.

11) Tree Cutting Protocols:

Will you support legislation to require stronger science-based tree cutting protocols based on conservation values?

- Yes
Lots of folks in my district are very upset about this. Limiting it would be great.

12) Ranked Choice Voting:

Should Connecticut pursue Ranked Choice Voting?

- Yes
This is also extremely important, but not necessarily for conservation reasons. I very strongly support ranked choice voting.

CANDIDATE COMMITMENT TO WORK ON ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

If you support any or all of our top priority legislation during the 2025 session, will you add your name as a legislative co-sponsor?

- Yes

Will you plan to attend our annual Environmental Summit in January?

- Yes

If requested, will you meet with CTLCV at least once during the legislative session to review priority legislation?

- Yes