



## 2024 Candidate Survey on the Environment

**Rob Blanchard, Democrat**  
**Senate District 28**

### 1) Open Question:

In my local elected capacity in both Fairfield and Middletown, I've advocated and supported sustainable funding for community farmers markets, helped pass measures that made Middletown the first in the state to join Sustainable CT in 2017, preserved large swathes of land for wildlife, conservation and education, and funded measures to create community farming programs.

I am committed to partnering with our land trusts to fund grants to preserve swathes of land and better maintain and protect our environment and open spaces. HB 5004 did have a wide range of support, including from CBIA, and while it did fall victim to partisan attacks and misinformation, it included critical components in the legislation that we ought to push to advance and pass next session, which I would happily join the fight to do. Lastly, as I have heard from countless residents, I believe we must explore ways to either lower utility costs or prevent unpredictable and unaffordable spikes for ratepayers. This can be achieved potentially through municipal or community aggregation.

Connecticut's farms are one of our greatest assets. They contribute billions of dollars through food and tourism to the state's economy. I will work to find innovative ways to keep the district's farms strong for generations to come by attracting new customers, addressing labor shortage challenges, and helping to diversify their offerings.

### 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

As a densely populated, heavily forested, and coastal state, how we combat climate change is as much an environmental challenge as it

is a public health issue. That's why I believe we must work to limit carbon pollution by incentivizing and encouraging renewables and instituting an effective plan for working to be carbon-free. While we codified a plan to get there by 2040, as we saw with Connecticut's attempt to shift to zero-emission vehicles over the next decade, sometimes funding and benchmarks don't align to meet our goals. In Massachusetts, then-Republican Governor Charlie Baker collaborated with a Democratic legislature to enact a sweeping climate change bill that creates a net-zero greenhouse gas emission limit by 2050. As environmental as it is economic, the law takes steps through incremental goals set every five years to reach a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030, before finally meeting the 2050 goal. They also invested in offshore wind, energy efficiency standards for alliances, and benchmarks for electric vehicles and charging stations. I believe Connecticut has to explore ways to prioritize these initiatives.

### **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?**

- Yes

Yes, I will proudly support and advocate for a standalone 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. As we continue to grapple with the impacts from climate change, we are also witnessing the erosion of biodiversity, destruction of natural habitats, and deteriorating ecosystems. With a little more than half of our state being covered by forests, we must incorporate nature-based solutions to protect our environment, improve our health, and biodiversity. While legislative efforts such as HB 5004 and SB 11 did not make it across the finish line, I'll work with colleagues and advocates to ensure passage and future implementation. As someone who hopes to represent a unique district that has forests and coastlines, it's imperative.

### **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, and I previously supported SB 4, which was adopted in 2022. We've fallen behind as well in our EV goals. It is estimated that we need 1,500 more charging stations by 2025. Achieving these goals will take collaboration and help from the federal government, such as the recent funding of \$250K to build out EV charging infrastructure for trucks and buses along the I-95 corridor from the EPA.

**5) Environmental Rights Amendment:**

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

- Yes

Yes, I support creating a "Green Amendment" to our state Constitution. Coming off the hottest day on record and continuing to fall behind in our effort to curb the impact of our climate crisis, we should not only be working tirelessly to create a clean, safe, and healthy environment but guaranteeing that people have a right to that environment. By enshrining these rights, we must then work to provide healthier air, water, soil, and ecosystems for the public's health.

**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

Yes, I support designating food scraps as a "recyclable" item and requiring large-scale food generators to create plans to donate edible food to both combat toxic methane emissions and reduce food insecurity. While we led the way in 2011, we have fallen behind by not including smaller food waste producers. At a time when countless members of our communities are hungry, Connecticut throws away over half a million tons of food annually. If we can keep household food out of the trash, we can create new programs that make it easier to donate or compost unused food. Additionally, at a time when our towns and cities need to be more frugal with their budgets, by better addressing the state's waste crisis, we can lower costs for dealing with food waste and reduce what's burned at plants. This is also an excellent economic policy as there are green jobs and businesses set up to support this endeavor, some of which I've seen in action with Governor Lamont, like Blue

Earth. SB 191 attempted to do much of this but did not make it across the finish line in the House. If elected, I would help to lead passage and collaborate with House members to get it done.

**7) Neonicotinoids:**

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

- Yes  
Yes, I will help push for legislation to ban the sale and use of neonics for non-agricultural use in Connecticut because neonics are dangerous to our health, our ecosystem, watersheds, and the pollinators we rely on. I was proud to work for State Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr. who helped pass the country's most comprehensive pollinator health law in 2016. Just as he did, I hope to collaborate with key stakeholders and my colleagues to make more progress on this issue.

**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  
Yes, I support banning the use of certain rodenticides, such as second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs), with a few well-defined exceptions, to help prevent the deaths of its unintended victims. While the poison may be effective in reducing mice, it has resulted in the deaths of countless birds of prey and other mammals who unknowingly consume mice that ingested rodenticide. We can protect our wildlife, while also reduce infestations, through better measures such as alternatives to pesticides, including traps and fertility treatments

**9) Environmental Justice:**

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

- Yes  
Yes, from highway pollution to energy plants, our Black and Brown communities are disproportionately subjected to the dangers of environmental inaction, which is both an environmental and public health crisis. This tragically results in higher rates of asthma, eye irritants, and puts many at greater risk of damage to their cardiovascular health. If last year's Canadian wildfires showed us

anything, it's that our urban cores nearly suffocate from such toxic pollutants. As a candidate running to represent a district that abuts Bridgeport, I cannot simply accept that my child in Fairfield will have a vastly different health outcome than my neighbor in Bridgeport, which is why I'm committed to supporting and investing in clean energy, working to eliminate pollution, reduce greenhouse gases and other harmful pollution, reimagine how we handle trash collection and disposal and support grants for open space, conservation and urban farming. I would also stand in opposition to the permitting process to construct future polluting facilities.

**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?**

- Yes  
Yes, I 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. When we shoot or relocate bears that are deemed a "nuisance," we don't actually fix the problem, because the problem is what's attracting them in the first place--which are our trash, recyclables, bird feeders, greasy grills, and more. We do not need to create a cycle of human and bear conflict when we can instead better educate the public on removing attractants, eliminating dangerous shooting incidents, and supporting ways to humanely address bears and wildlife.

**11) Tree Cutting Protocols:**

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

- Yes  
Yes, absolutely. I believe our relaxed regulations have allowed the utility companies and state agencies such as DOT to go well beyond protecting rights of way and utility infrastructure with their trimming. This has resulted in damage to healthy trees and the destruction of habitats and tree canopies.

**12) Ranked Choice Voting:**

**Should Connecticut pursue Ranked Choice Voting?**

- Yes  
At a time when the public's trust in our elections is eroding and voters are becoming increasingly cynical about the two-party system and how much their vote matters, ranked-choice voting (RCV) provides voters with more options that ultimately benefits voters and our democracy. I support Governor Lamont working to explore this concept further in our primary and municipal election process as it is a method of voting that has worked well in other states and for a variety of state and local elections. I do believe that a great deal of resources will be needed to ensure there is proper voter education on both the process and benefits. RCV will allow the voices of voters to be heard, ensure voting is more equitable, and alleviate our dependence on the two-party candidate system. I understand the Attorney General has outlined some concerns around the constitutionality of RCV and the plurality requirement but I would be committed to partnering with fellow legislators, the Governor, advocates, and members of the public on the best path forward on this potential reform. As we are seeing with this year's Presidential election, the negative campaigning and limited options will only drive down voter turnout that will undoubtedly carry over into next year's municipal elections. RCV can help attract and drive up municipal turnout where we need it most.

### **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

Yes, my door will always be open to anyone from CTLCV and their volunteers. I hope to collaborate with CTLCV on passing effecting legislation next session.