



2020 Candidate Survey on the Environment

Cristin McCarthy Vahey Democrat
House , 133

1) 100% Zero Carbon:

Do you support codifying this legislation?

- Yes

As a legislator representing a coastal community along the I95 corridor, I am keenly aware of the role of clean energy in our long term sustainability and daily health. Green energy jobs are a critical aspect of our economy, today and into the future. I currently serve as Planning and Development and Coastal Caucus co-chair, two roles which have the ability to impact the conversation when it comes to zoning, sustainable building, codes and more. We have to work at every level and stop working in silos. As a member of NCEL, I have participated in past conversations on carbon pricing and regional approaches. I work regularly with the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force and other local environmental leaders and organizations. I have placed solar panels on my own home and am trying to do more to walk the walk in my personal life. I know all of these small steps add up, but we need to make systemic changes. Getting to zero-carbon energy is a critical step for the future of our planet and we are going to need to work in many areas to make this happen. I am committed to that fight.

2) Environmental Justice:

Do you support the provisions that were contained in the Environmental Justice legislation?

- Yes

Rep Reyes has been a champion in this area and I will work alongside him to continue this work, which I know he is trying to advance as we speak, in the anticipated special session. Looking at racial equity is an important lens for our work in the environment and in every aspect of policy making.

3) Municipal Funding Option :

Would you support legislation to allow, but not require, municipalities to establish a dedicated fund for local open space, farmland, water resources climate mitigation strategies through a limited conveyance fee on buyers of real estate?

- Yes

As co-chair of Planning and Development, I worked with Rep, Gresko, other advocates and stakeholders to advance this conversation and try to create a pilot program for a number of communities. If re-elected, I would continue to support and encourage this effort.

4) Bottle Bill :

Do you support modernizing Connecticut's bottle bill by 1) expanding the list of beverage containers accepted, 2) raising the deposit amount on covered containers, and 3) raising the handling fee paid to authorized dealers for each container they collect?

- Yes

I will again reference Rep. Gresko, one of my carpool buddies, as well as local leader Mary Hogue and thank them both for their leadership and advocacy on this. Yes, I support the effort they and others, particularly Rep. Mushinsky, have made. We are going to have to do this and more to address the recycling crisis that has resulted due to the changes in the international market. This is one important step.

5) Climate Change Education:

Do you support a requirement to teach climate change education in public schools?

- Yes

Absolutely. I learned environmental stewardship from my mother and, hopefully, my children are learning from my husband and me as well as other community mentors. Every child needs this opportunity, which belongs at both school and throughout our communities. I am grateful to Rep. Palm for her leadership in this effort and will continue to support her work on this legislation.

6) Transfer Act:

Do you support switching to a release-based cleanup program that would require sufficient DEEP oversight, mandated reporting of all cleanups and other safeguards to ensure a successful program that increases the number of sites cleaned?

- Yes
I have seen the economic and health impact of toxic sites here in my own community. These steps are important to take for both reasons.

7) MDC Water:

Would you support legislation to require rates set by MDC to be approved by PURA (the state regulatory authority that sets rates for private water utilities)?

- Uncertain
I only say uncertain, as I think there are a number of ways to address these valid concerns with MDC. Using PURA as a regulator is one option, but there may be others that are effective. As co-chair of Planning and Development, I was working with legislators who live in the MDC catchment area and are much more familiar with the issues, policies and practices, to advance legislation that would provide these checks and balances. Specific to water rates, I oppose discounts for super users / water bottling companies.

8) Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS):

Do you support advancing legislation that would prohibit PFAS chemicals wherever possible?

- Yes
Yes. An unequivocal yes.

9) Chlorpyrifos:

Will you support legislation to ban the sale and use of Chlorpyrifos in CT (as was the intent of House Bill 301 considered earlier this year)?

- Yes
I have worked and will continue to work with Tara Cook-Littman and other advocates who have championed this issue. I have helped Tara connect with other legislators, including committee and House leaders, to further this bill in past sessions. I will continue to do so if re-elected.

10) No New Gas Infrastructure:

Will you oppose a tax on CT ratepayers to fund new gas pipelines?

- Yes
As I have to date, I will continue to do so.

Open Question:

What environmental issues have you worked on? What will be your top environmental priority for the 2021 legislative session?

- As I have commented above, I have worked on a number of these issues on an ongoing basis and will continue to do so. During my

tenure, I have tried to support the creation of walkable, sustainable communities. How we address transit / transportation, development, zoning and clean energy are the macro level items that will have ongoing, systemic impact. I will focus on these areas, but also on the specific issues, like chlorpyrifos, that impact our health, safety and well being.

Additional Comments:

- Thanks to all of you for the ongoing work you do. It is a pleasure to work alongside you and so many of the amazing advocates who keep us moving towards a safer, healthier, sustainable future.