



2020 Candidate Survey on the Environment

Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox Democrat
House , 123

1) **100% Zero Carbon:**

Do you support codifying this legislation?

- Yes

Beyond the glaring environmental need of reaching zero carbon, this goal is the right move to get Connecticut's economy on the right track as well. Just like after the Great Recession, working on climate change, such as by achieving our zero-carbon grid, can also jump-start Connecticut's economic recovery after COVID 19. To do so, however, requires substantial investment to modernize our electrical grid, expand our capacity for community solar projects, expand our capacity for energy storage, and to become a leader in offshore wind.

2) **Environmental Justice:**

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

- Yes

In 2008, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a law requiring facilities located in "Environmental Justice Communities" to file an Environmental Justice Public Participation Plan. However, a dozen years later, it is clear that this existing legislation is not strong enough to be effective. With the country focused on racial injustice and inequity, and with a recent Connecticut Health Foundation study demonstrating that black children are five and a half times more likely to go to the emergency room with asthma than whites, now is the time to strengthen this legislation by requiring more robust notification and community input as House Bill 5103 would do.

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 we emerge from COVID-19, Connecticut needs to sustain and take advantage of the economic boon that is derived from New Yorkers' newfound appreciation for suburban and rural living, while still preserving the open spaces that are once again causing city dwellers from other states to rediscover Connecticut. This modest legislation, which retains municipal flexibility and does not increase mill rates, is critical for maintaining Connecticut's open space advantage.

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

The problem of bottle redemption takes on added urgency this year because Connecticut was one of eight states to suspend bottle redemption in the spring due to COVID-19. Oregon provides a good example of how a more expansive law can lead to a much better redemption rate than Connecticut's.

5) Climate Change Education:

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

- Yes

In 2020, it is surprising that climate change education is not already a central part of our curriculum. Since our young people will have to cope with the pernicious effects of climate change to an even greater degree than we will, I think this is essential. I do not want my daughters to be able to graduate from a public high school in Connecticut without a substantial knowledge of the threat to our planet. As State Representative Christine Palm, one of the co-sponsors of the bill, has pointed out, the mandated curriculum is already available to Connecticut's school districts.

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

DEEP must have sufficient funding not only to clean up existing brownfield sites but also to investigate, locate, and clean up toxic sites that are not subject to a pending land transfer.

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)?

- Yes

If utilities are allowed to provide discounts to customers, those discounts should incentivize companies to align with the environmental priorities of the state. Providing a discount for producing more bottled drinking water has the opposite effect.

8) Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS):

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

- Yes

I am concerned that, according to the Connecticut Mirror, the \$2 million that the CGA had set aside in March for PFA cleanup has not gone through, and that there appear to be general delays in state action on PFAs. Prohibiting PFAs is a necessary step. If it is not taken now, it will only increase the cost of remediating PFA pollution in later years.

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

My friend Tara Cook-Littman has educated me on this issue. The amount of Chlorpyrifos being used on golf courses and on crops--at least 758 gallons in Connecticut last year--is unconscionable. Moreover, under the Trump administration, it seems clear no federal action will take place, despite the fact that in 2015 the EPA determined that there is no safe level at which Chlorpyrifos can be used. It is critical that Connecticut take action as soon as possible to address the use of this harmful chemical.

10) No New Gas Infrastructure:

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

- Yes

In addition to the problems with new gas pipelines that you cite, I am also concerned about the disruptions to our local communities that laying down new pipelines causes.

Open Question:

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

- As the Director of the Global Engagement Fellows Program and a Fellow at the Albert Schweitzer Institute at Quinnipiac University, I have worked with my students on a number of environmental projects, including reducing food waste on campus and working on planning a permaculture garden at the Albert Schweitzer Institute. In my courses on human rights, I incorporate discussions of climate justice and environmental racism. As the Executive Director of the Oxford Consortium for Human Rights, I have brought two community action summits to Connecticut, both of which emphasized on environmental justice. My top environmental priority for the 2021 legislative session will be to ban Chlorpyrifos and to take action to improve access to open spaces and clean water.

Additional Comments:

- There is overwhelming scientific evidence of human-caused climate change. I support the Connecticut Green Bank and Connecticut's ongoing efforts to promote solar and wind energy. Connecticut's leadership at the cutting edge of the new green economy will provide economic savings for the state as we become better prepared to tackle the ongoing challenge of climate change.