

2014 Candidate Survey



CONNECTICUT LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS

- BEFORE YOU COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE SAVE IT TO YOUR COMPUTER AND USE THAT FILE TO RETURN TO US.
- Please complete this survey by August 1, 2014.
- Email your completed survey to: ctlcv@ctlcv.org

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|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Candidate Name: <u>Elissa Wright</u> | | |
| Running for: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> House <input type="checkbox"/> Senate | District No: <u>41</u> | Party: <u>Democrat</u> |
| Candidate/Campaign Mailing Address: <u>P.O. Box 9196, Noank, CT 06340-9196</u> | | |
| Phone: <u>860.536.1813</u> | Website: <u>elissawright.com</u> | Email: <u>elissa.wright@gmail.com</u> |
| Are you enrolled in the Citizen's Election Fund for public campaign financing? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Do you have a primary? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Are you an incumbent? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Part 1: If elected, what position do you expect to take on the following environmental issues?

Please mark boxes named "Support," "Uncertain," and "Oppose" with an x.

| Topic | Question | Support | Uncertain | Oppose |
|-----------------------|--|---------|-----------|--------|
| Parks | Would you support state park and forest revenues going to park and forest operations and maintenance rather than to the General Fund? | X | | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Transportation | CT is one of the 10 states most dependent on federal funds as a percentage of their transportation expenditures. More than half of the states and localities have moved forward on increasing their funding share. Do you favor this and how might we do it in CT? | X | | |

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|--|--|---|--|
| Comments: We should consider congestion toll pricing. | | | |
| Property Tax Reform | CT's property tax burdens small towns, strangles cities, undermines mass transit and drives sprawl. Would you be an advocate on behalf of the environment in the tax reform debate, especially with regards to property tax? | X | |
| Comments: It is widely acknowledged that the extent of our reliance on the property tax to fund municipal government operations and K-12 public education, contributes to sprawl and un-strategic development. The global financial crisis precipitated by the sub-prime mortgage debacle nearly six years ago, together with rising gas costs, have revealed vulnerabilities and inefficiencies of the suburban build-out mode. We need to continue to make progress to reform our tax and regulatory framework to eliminate barriers to smart growth; to channel new development and redevelopment investment to established areas with existing infrastructure; and to better encourage the kinds of development and transportation choices that result in more climate-friendly, energy-efficient, lower-cost patterns of growth – that protect farmland and open space, revitalize urban centers and downtowns. We need to provide a variety of transportation options reducing VMT and global-warming emissions, and help regions and the state grow in sustainable ways moving us to an energy-independent and carbon-constrained future. More of our transportation capital funding should be devoted to safe and reliable public mass transportation projects and to investing in streets that are safe for walking and biking, as well as for taking the bus or driving. And we need to encourage municipalities and regions to take advantage of existing opportunities for regional cooperation including on major commercial projects, saving billions of dollars on infrastructure costs. | | | |

| <i>Topic</i> | <i>Question</i> | <i>Support</i> | <i>Uncertain</i> | <i>Oppose</i> |
|--|---|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Pesticides | The American Academy of Pediatrics and many other science and medical institutions have warned that pesticides (including herbicides) are harmful to human and ecological health. CT has a ban on use of lawn care pesticides on grounds of elementary and middle schools. Would you support legislation to extend this ban to high schools and public parks where children play? | X | | |
| Comments: Pesticides are toxic chemicals that have long-lasting effects on our land, water, air, wildlife – and especially on growing children. Connecticut's landmark legislation banning the cosmetic use of lawn care pesticides at nursery schools, day care centers and schools grade 8 and under should be extended to high schools and public parks where children play. | | | | |
| Pesticides | Should towns have more authority to limit or guide pesticide applications within their borders, including roadside spraying and applications of pesticides in wetlands and surface water? | X | | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Water Source Protection | CT normally uses decades old data for setting standards and guidance for stormwater management. Would you support requiring the state to upgrade its standards using scientifically validated, up-to-date statistics on volumes of water associated with extreme storms and annual precipitation? | X | | |
| Comments: | | | | |

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|---|--|---|--|--|
| Microbeads | Many personal care products such as shampoos and toothpaste are being manufactured using tiny plastic microbeads. Once microbeads are washed down the drain, they can enter lakes, rivers, and eventually the ocean through sewage overflows or pass through sewage treatment plants. Microbeads, like other plastics, can absorb toxic chemicals. They can be mistaken for food by aquatic life and can be passed up the food chain to larger fish, wildlife, and humans. Would you support legislation to protect our waterways from this new environmental threat? | X | | |
| Comments: There is growing evidence of the seriousness of the quantity and consequences of micro-plastics in the environment, and a pressing need to address and reduce the sources, and the accumulation, of plastic-derived chemicals, particularly on shorelines and in the marine environment. In terms of the fate of emerging substances in the environment, the full extent and consequences of nanoparticles in the environment also is a serious issue of increasing importance. | | | | |
| Conservation Lands | Would you support passing a state Constitutional Amendment to better protect state conservation lands from being given away for non-conservation purposes? | X | | |
| Comments: In addition to adopting the changes embodied in PA 14-169, the legislature also should start the process for amending the state constitution to include a provision such as the Constitution of the State of New York provides at Article XIV, Section 4 thereof i -- or that the Massachusetts Constitution provides at Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment thereto ii -- namely that land and water resources entrusted to the care and custody of the state because of their natural and scenic beauty, historical, geological, or ecological significance shall not be taken or otherwise disposed of except by law enacted by the legislature. Ultimately, a constitutional amendment along these lines would ensure the strongest long-term protection for these important public assets by requiring an affirmative act of the legislature, either by a supermajority of both chambers (as in Massachusetts) or majority action at two successive regular sessions (as in New York), before divestment can occur and the solemn dedication of such lands can be undone. | | | | |
| Energy | Would you support policies or legislation to protect and expand the state's cost-effective energy efficiency programs opposing any attempts to raid the CT Energy Efficiency Fund for state budgetary needs? | X | | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Energy | While other states promote shared net metering and sub metering for solar, fuel cell and other distributed renewable sources, CT imposes regulatory barriers that effectively prevent development of these projects in our state. Would you support legislation that removes these barriers and enable clean renewable distributed generation to move forward? | X | | |
| Comments: | | | | |
| Toxins | Would you support legislation that requires the Department of Public Health to identify chemicals of high concern to children, manufacturer disclosure of those chemicals and a process for recommendations to reduce exposure? | X | | |
| Comments: Yes, I have supported, and co-sponsored legislation, including last session's HB 5354, AAC Chemicals of High Concern to Children, to protect children from chemicals that can cause them harm and will continue to support such legislation. | | | | |



Part 2: What environmental issue has lacked the attention in Connecticut that it deserves? As a legislator, what will you do to change that?

We need to promote an integrated ecosystem approach to planning and management of land resources especially within watershed and river basins. To help achieve this goal, we need to strengthen the statutory and regulatory framework for assessing the appropriateness of proposed land use projects, taking into account the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed project, in combination with other projects and human activities, on the natural environment and also on the built environment within the watershed (e.g. to reduce flooding). The overall objective should be a coordinated approach that transcends political boundaries and requires the permitting entity to identify and take into consideration where the cumulative impacts of a major project may occur, and the likely impact interactions with other past, present, and future projects.

Part 3: What are the environmental priorities in your district?

- 1. Helping to make our coastline more resilient to future severe weather and flooding impacts from global warming and changes in sea level. Measures include support for the new Community Resiliency and Climate Adaptation Institute at UConn Avery Point which serves as a hub of interdisciplinary research and education on coastal preparedness and sustainability and better protect communities in climate-induced natural disasters. The Institute grew out of an initiative that I introduced and championed as a member of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force and brings together a wide array of disciplines including coastal management, mapping, coastal and environmental engineering, hydrology, coastal ecology and impacts to improve our ability to protect against future storms. Going forward, we also need to begin a serious conversation about the legal implications of rising seas and changing climate.**
- 2. Significant investments in clean-water, nitrogen-reduction wastewater treatment activities are contributing to improved water quality in Long Island Sound, but the jobs and food resources once provided by commercial and recreational fisheries remain under threat from non-point source pollutants from residential and urban runoff and the accumulation of pharmaceuticals, insecticides, plasticizers, nanoparticles, and other emerging contaminants in the waters of the Sound. I have worked effectively with legislators, experts, and state, local, and federal officials – and as a member of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force and the Long Island Sound Caucus Steering Committee – to address vulnerabilities of the Sound. If re-elected, I look forward to expanding on successful initiatives and developing new strategies to protect and improve the Sound’s health in areas of water quality, habitats, land use, and coastal resiliency to future storms and changes in sea levels.**

**Part 4: If you are elected, what would be your top environmental priorities for the 2014 legislative session?
Please identify up to three and rank the three in order 1, 2, or 3:**

- Parks
- Transportation
- 2 Pesticides
- Water Source Protection
- Microbeads
- 3 Conservation Lands
- Energy
- Toxins
- 1 Property Tax Reform
- Other (please explain)

Comments: