



The League of Women Voters of New Jersey

Date: September 8, 2007

Dear NJ Leagues,

As we move into the 2007 Legislative election season each of the different regions of the state, even different districts within the regions, have different issues. Some are strictly local issues and only you can formulate the appropriate questions for your candidates. However, the LWVNJ Board of Directors has recognized that we may be in a unique position to provide each of you with some help in formulating questions. Here is a list of many different topics, some with subordinate issues as well. These questions have been formulated for your use, taking into consideration many issues which are not only topical to the general population, but of special interest to the LWVNJ. Use the questions in letters to the editor or to the candidates, posed directly to the candidates, in local candidate forums, or in other venues. Please, if you use the question do not change the wording.

Secondarily, please notify the office if you feel that this list has been helpful, if it has served your needs. Critique the list and the content of the list, so that we may better serve your needs in the future. Let us know if the questions were answered to your satisfaction when you posed them to your candidates. All feedback is appreciated and useful.

Sincerely,
Vicki Ray
LWVNJ Director.

Our Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



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Questions for Legislative Candidates, November, 2007 Elections

1. Election reform:

- a. What measures would you support and/or initiate to make voting more accessible to all NJ citizens, e.g., registration difficulties, special needs voters, more voter-friendlier day and time for elections? Would holding elections on a different day of the week increase voter turnout?
- b. Do you support the implementation of the "Helping America Vote Act" (HAVA) fully in NJ? Are there any specific points about the law that you see as being particularly relevant to NJ?
- c. Would you support and work for a statewide system of voluntary **public financing** for legislative candidates with limits and requirements for participation at a level that would enable a diversity of candidates to participate? Why or why not?
- d. Would you support tightening and strengthening the statewide restrictions on **pay-to-play** in order to make the regulations truly effective? Would you support leaving the statewide restrictions as they presently exist? Do you believe that the best interests of NJ residents and their communities are served when a pay-to-play system is sanctioned?

2. Education and school funding formula

- a. Re the national "No Child Left Behind" legislation, - should NJ expand funding to cover early intervention for babies who are born with disabilities?
- b. School Facilities Construction: Recently the Governor signed the new legislation forming the School Development Authority to address the oversight and process problems of the now defunct School Construction Corporation. How should the legislature enable the completion of the original task since funding has run out for the school districts which still have serious needs for safe and adequate facilities?
- c. How would you reform the school funding formula or the reliance on local property taxes to fund schools in New Jersey?
- d. After nearly 20 years the original school districts taken over by the state are still not ready to operate autonomously. Is there anything about the state take over and oversight that you would suggest changing?

3. Eminent domain

- a. The NJ Supreme Court and recent appellate courts have tightened the uses of eminent domain for economic development, overturning lower court decisions that would have allowed use of eminent domain in several NJ towns. Do you agree with this tightening?
- b. What specific issues must be addressed by the legislature? Would you take a leading role?

4. Healthcare and insurance coverage.

- a. Many New Jersey residents do not have health insurance, regardless of whether or not they are employed. How would you deal with this problem?
- b. Do you feel that universal health care is needed?

5. Fiscal responsibility:

- a. NJ budgets have often been criticized for using "gimmicks" to achieve a balanced budget and reduce property taxes. Do you agree with this criticism and if so, what are your ideas for significant budget improvements?
- b. NJ has been criticized for over reliance on bonding. Are you concerned about our indebtedness, and if so, do you have specific plans for addressing this problem?
- c. What would you suggest to restore New Jersey's balanced budget and premier credit ratings and to encourage sustainable economic growth?



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6. **Reproductive Choice:** In the aftermath of recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings regarding access to abortion services, would you propose any legislation to ensure access to abortion services and reproductive choice for NJ women?
7. **Number of governmental units:** Would you favor steps to reduce the number of local government units and/or school districts in New Jersey? Why or why not? If so, what would you propose?
8. **Immigration** is a national issue with local impact.
 - a. What positive and negative aspects do you see to the current immigration situation in New Jersey?
 - b. What state or local legislation and enforcement would you like to see, or should it all be national?
9. **Environmental Issues:**
 - a. What should New Jersey policy be on preservation of open space? Should it be encouraged or financed? How?
 - b. What should State policy be to ensure an adequate safe water supply to meet future growth needs and demand?
 - c. How should future development be balanced against the need to protect natural resources? How should private interests be protected in this process? Do you have specific recommendations for implementation of the Highlands Act?
 - d. Do you see a need to develop a mass transit policy to protect the state's natural resources? Is it affordable? Viable? How?
 - e. Should New Jersey help lead the way to combat global warming and formulate national energy policy? How?
 - f. Would you support a gasoline tax increase to pay for maintenance of roads/bridges, or natural resource protections?
10. Could you comment on the real or perceived practice of leaving what many believe to be important issues that require legislative action until after the '07 election?
11. In discussions concerning property tax reform, no one mentions the fundamental issue of the enormous disparities in property tax RATES among municipalities. Under the present system wealthy communities are rewarded for their exclusionary zoning practices with very low rates, while towns that provide the most affordable housing are severely punished with extremely high rates. This enormous property tax burden further reduces property values (the tax base) causing the disparities to continue to grow. How should the legislature address this problem?