



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW JERSEY EDUCATION FUND

Voters Guide - District 22

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund encourages informed participation in the electoral process. As part of this mission, we formulated the following set of questions to ask all the New Jersey candidates running for New Jersey State Senate and Assembly. Answers have been truncated at 125 words and *[truncated]* indicates this in the body of the candidates' answers. Answers have not been edited for spelling or grammar, but text using foul language, or attacking another candidate has been replaced with *[content removed]*. If a candidate did not return the questionnaire or did not provide a response to a particular question, "No Response Received" appears next to his or her name.

Candidates for State Senate (in alphabetical order)

Michael W. Class (Republican)
Nicholas Scutari (Democratic)

Candidates for State Assembly (in alphabetical order)

Jeffrey D. First (Republican)
Jerry Green (Democratic)
Linda Stender (Democratic)
Joan D. Van Pelt (Republican)

1. Property taxes concern many New Jersey residents. Do you think current programs, such as a cap on property tax hikes and rebates, are effective ways of dealing with them? What, if anything, do you think should be done about property taxes?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: For the short term goal, caps and rebates may work. However, the largest budget item in any company is payroll. Reducing municipal and county administrative positions, and looking at realistic compensation benefits and exploring continued shared services will result, I believe in long term savings.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: While caps and rebates are good short term measures to control property taxes, the long term solution is an overhaul of municipal governments and school staffing. Trimming municipal and county payrolls by eliminating high cost administrative positions, establishing realistic compensation packages and exploring shared services would result in long-term, sustainable savings to the taxpayer.

2. In July, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics released preliminary unemployment figures that showed New Jersey with a 9.5% seasonally adjusted unemployment rate. While this is comparable to the national average of 9.2%, it is higher than our neighboring states. What is your plan to lower New Jersey's unemployment rate?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: We need to reduce the cost to the private sector employer. Include tax incentives to hire and train new employees.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: The Legislature needs to pass reforms to our present tax structure that encourage hiring in the private sector. These can include, for example, tax incentives to hire and train new employees or restructuring taxes paid per employee to reduce the costs to the employer.

3. Currently, N.J legislators are working on the "Opportunity Scholarship Act" a pilot program providing tax credits to entities contributing to scholarships for low-income children. Do you support this pilot program and/or expansion of this program?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Children regardless of residence should have the same quality of education. However, I do not believe imposing additional taxes to accomplish this goal.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: Quality education should be available to all of our children. The Opportunity Scholarship Program would provide incentives for the private funding of educational opportunities for students from certain districts designated as under-performing. I would support this bipartisan effort as a step toward improving the opportunities for children from targeted districts without imposing additional tax burdens

on citizens from across the state. I would encourage greater state oversight of these targeted districts with the goal towards improving their performance to a point where parents would not want to seek alternative schools.

4. As a result of the current economic crisis and associated budget cuts, municipalities are receiving less state aid. What, if anything, do you propose on the issue of state aid to municipalities?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: We need to review the current state level programs and unnecessary positions and eliminate funding. We would then utilize these funds for municipal assistance.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: Unfortunately, too many municipalities have relied for too long on the State to step in and balance their budgets. Because of the economic downturn, the State cannot afford to increase aid to municipalities until it funds its many other obligations. Given that we have a flat income stream, I would support further examination of spending at the state level to eliminate funding for unnecessary programs and positions in order to free up monies for assistance to municipalities. At the same time, municipalities have to be realistic about their resources when creating their budgets. We need smaller, smarter government at all levels.

5. Do you think the state should fund family planning services? Why or why not?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Family planning is essential. Choices about health care should not be based upon economic status. A state funded program should include access to family planning.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: I believe that access to family planning is essential for all women. No one should be denied the opportunity to make informed choices about health care issues because of her economic status. Any state funded health care program should include access to family planning.

6. New Jersey's energy needs are expanding. What is your plan to meet the increasing energy requirements in our state?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Alternative sources of energy are a good thing for New Jersey. Solar, wind, and nuclear should be developed. Drilling off shore and hydraulic fracturing is still under my review before I can comment.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: I fully support the development of alternative sources of energy in New Jersey. While New Jersey is a leader in solar energy use, it could easily expand on these efforts. Wind is also an important source of energy that needs to be developed. In addition, I would support consideration of expanding the use of nuclear energy in the State. I oppose the implementation of hydraulic fracturing pending the report from the EPA. I also would oppose implementation of drilling off the shore for oil.

7. Charter schools were originally written into legislation to innovate and share those innovations with school districts. Is that the mission you see for charter schools still or do you believe their main purpose should be to provide parental choice?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Educational alternatives are a good thing as long as it does not exclude.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: Charter schools should remain part of the public education system with a primary mission to explore innovative educational alternatives. The goal of these tax-payer supported schools should be to enhance the education provided for all of our children, not just the select few who are chosen to attend these schools.

8. In a 2010 budget report, the United State House of Representatives identified the need for a focused study of hydraulic fracturing. The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to complete the study by late 2014 with initial study results available by late 2012. As a New Jersey legislator, how would you approach the issue of hydraulic fracturing?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Until I know more from the EPA regarding hydraulic fracturing, I reserve comment.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: I am opposed to approving the use of hydraulic fracturing until the EPA studies are completed and the Legislature has the opportunity to consider the results.

9. The NJ Transportation Trust Fund, which funds construction and repairs of New Jersey's bridges, highways, and mass transit system, has been under-funded and in danger of going bankrupt. There has been much debate over how to fund needed infrastructure development and repairs. How would you suggest funding New Jersey's transportation infrastructure needs?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Fee for service increase. Review the fee structure for motor vehicle registration.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: First, monies intended for the Transportation Trust Fund should not be diverted. Second, we should consider restructuring motor vehicle registration fees to reflect the stress the vehicle places on the infrastructure and to provide incentives to be environmentally responsible. Finally, I believe the state should investigate innovative technology to provide more durable, cost efficient repairs to our infrastructure.

10. The legislature has not enacted reforms to the state's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, despite recent Supreme Court (*Gallenthin v. Paulsboro*) and Appellate Court (*Harrison Redevelopment Agency v. De Rose*) decisions which call the existing statutes into question. If elected, how would you propose to update the state's land use laws to conform to the above cited court decisions?

Senate Candidate Responses

Michael W. Class: *No Response Received*

Nicholas Scutari: *No Response Received*

Assembly Candidate Responses

Jeffrey D. First: Since the interpretation of the NJ Supreme Court that eminent domain can only be used in cases of blight and not to seize property that is "not fully productive" I welcome the change to ensure that it is not an avenue for developers.

Jerry Green: *No Response Received*

Linda Stender: *No Response Received*

Joan D. Van Pelt: Recently the use, and misuse, of the right of eminent domain, has been called into question. Eminent domain should not be a vehicle for the enrichment of developers who have friends in elected office. I agree with the interpretation of the New Jersey Supreme Court that eminent domain can only be used in cases of blight and not to seize property that is "not fully productive." To the extent that the holding in Gallenthin requires that the land use laws be clarified, I would be happy to work with experts in the area to draft appropriate amendments to the statute.