

Your State of Connecticut Candidates Respond to the League

One of the main missions of the League of Women Voters of Canton is to educate voters on current issues that affect the citizens of our town and our state. We encourage citizens to vote on Tuesday, November 8th and to be well-informed voters. We are a non-partisan organization.

The 2016 League of Women Voters of Canton Voter's Guide was developed to inform voters of pertinent issues, by asking our candidates for State of CT. positions a series of five questions on issues of education, natural resources, infrastructure, gun violence, and mental health. Below are their responses, which were limited to fifty words.

Please be sure to come to our **L.W.V. Candidate's Forum on Tuesday, October 18th**, at the **Canton High School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.** to see and hear these candidates and to pose your own questions for them.

THE 2016 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CANTON VOTER'S GUIDE

The two candidates running for State of Connecticut Senate are: incumbent Senator ***Mr. Kevin Witkos (Republican) and Mr. David Peña (Democrat)***. The candidate for State of Connecticut House of Representatives is incumbent ***Mr. Timothy LeGeyt (Republican)***, who is running unopposed.

QUESTIONS:

1) How should the Connecticut legislature respond to the Superior Court's finding that Connecticut's system for funding education is unconstitutional?

Mr. Witkos: The recent court ruling regarding education funding should be a wake up call to the legislature that they cannot hand out funding based on political favors. We need to develop a formula that appropriately takes into account the educational needs of students ensuring they get the education our constitution guarantees.

Mr. Peña: Request extension of the deadline by 90 days to accommodate the state legislature not being in session until January.

- Form a task force of key stakeholder groups, teachers, legislators, administrators, etc.

-Get a commitment that the findings of this task force would be binding and presented to the legislature to approve.

Mr. LeGeyt: Once the Supreme Court rules on the validity of the Moukawsher ruling, the Legislature must respond to the directive of the Court. The Legislature may well have to fashion a new funding formula that doesn't allow "adjustments" for individual districts because of extraneous factors which has happened too often.

2) What is your fiscal philosophy regarding funding infrastructure?

Mr. Witkos: Funding our infrastructure, especially our roads and bridges is a core government service. Senate Republicans and I have proposed a Prioritize Progress plan that would provide nearly \$70 billion over 10-years for transportation infrastructure without tolls or new taxes, like the Mileage Tax. Read about it on my website kevinwitkos.com.

Mr. Peña: We need to focus on infrastructure projects that are integrally linked to enhancing the business growth. A few examples are affordable housing, high speed Internet, transportation alternatives, and affordable energy sources.

Mr. LeGeyt: Along with Health, Safety and Education, Infrastructure is one of the four pillars of government. We must maintain our roads, bridges and highways, but the infrastructure must be maintained with a schedule that is reasonable and strategies that are efficient. Bonding is an appropriate vehicle for infrastructure spending.

3) What can Connecticut do to reduce carbon emissions and preserve natural resources?

Mr. Witkos: Preserving our natural resources is one of the most important things we can do for future generations, so I authored a constitutional amendment to better protect state parks and forests. This amendment passed this year and needs to pass again next year for it to be before voters in 2018.

Mr. Peña: As a state, we must continue to promote programs that encourage the use of solar energy and other alternative energy sources, such as wind power. In addition, we must learn to utilize waste materials in a more positive manner, such as developing ways to recycle more waste into renewed energy sources.

Mr. LeGeyt: Vehicular petrofuels and home heating oil burning create a significant aggregate of carbon emissions. Clean energy sources such as wind and water can do much to mitigate our consumption of carbon fuels. Electricity generation can be augmented with wind and water source energy creation.

4) What can the Connecticut Legislature do to reduce gun violence in our State?

Mr. Witkos: In order to reduce gun violence, we need to take the steps necessary to reduce the number of illegal guns available. This should be done by reinstating the Statewide Firearms Trafficking Task Force. The Task Force was responsible for investigating and seizing the sale, transfer and possession of illegal guns.

Mr. Peña: To reduce gun violence, there needs to be more implementation of community policing programs using existing successful models such as Neighborhood Watch programs & Project Longevity. Furthermore, we must pass more common sense gun safety legislation and provide more community education programs about gun safety.

Mr. LeGeyt: We have made significant strides in controlling the use of guns by law-abiding citizens, especially since the Newtown tragedy. Further reductions in gun violence must be effected by an observant neighborhood alliance that provides law enforcement with guidance regarding those citizens who use firearms in violation of state law.

5) Given the current budget situation and cuts, how would you assure people have access to mental health services?"

Mr. Witkos: Ensuring that people have access to mental health services is all a matter of priorities. Rather than funding programs that are pet projects of politically connected lawmakers, the state should be making sure that the critical services needs by our residents are funded. It's time to put people before politics.

Mr. Peña: While this is a critical area for investment of budget dollars, we have to identify several less life-critical areas where funding can be reduced and reinvested in the mental health services area.

Mr. LeGeyt: Delivery of mental health services is complicated by a resistance of those afflicted to reach out for assistance. There is a well-developed web of quasi-public organizations that can provide access to bridge the gap for people who need services. I would place a priority on funding for this system.