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The League of Women Voters of Norwalk invited all candidates for State Senate and State Representative in Norwalk's districts to submit responses to a six-item questionnaire, a photo, and a campaign URL.

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**Connecticut State Senate District 25**

| <b>Bob Duff* (D)</b>   | <b>Ellie Kousidis (R)</b>   |
|--|---|
|  A portrait of Bob Duff, a man with short dark hair, wearing a light blue dress shirt and a red and white striped tie. He is smiling and looking directly at the camera. |  A portrait of Ellie Kousidis, a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blue blazer over a white top. She has her arms crossed and is smiling at the camera. |
| <a href="https://bobduff.com/">https://bobduff.com/</a>  | <a href="https://www.kousidis4ctsenate.com/">https://www.kousidis4ctsenate.com/</a>   |

\*incumbent

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Senator?**

**Duff:** My public service career began at age eight. I had written a letter to the mayor of Norwalk concerned about the future of Duffy Field. We still have our Duffy Field, now renamed

Veteran's Park. My parents had instilled in me a belief that activism is a civic duty. In college I earned a degree in political science while interning with former senator Chris Dodd. I learned how "the system" works and how to make it work for my future constituents.

My years as a long-term substitute teacher in Norwalk and as a real estate professional taught me the value of listening and understanding people's needs, wants, and don't wants.

As a member of the state legislature since 2001, and currently Senate Majority Leader, I've been very effective at building consensus among my colleagues, regardless of political affiliation or personal ideology, to move Connecticut forward.

**Kousidis:** Just as I have always had a student-first approach to education, I will have a citizen's-first approach to legislation and issues that concern our community.

I am an educator, a mother and a wife of a small business owner. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology, as well as two Masters degrees; one in Teaching and the second in Educational Technology. Additionally, I hold three State of CT teaching certifications including, Secondary Social Studies, Library Media Studies, and Technology Education. I am passionate about making sure all children have access to the tools and resources they need to be successful. In 2018, I was the proud recipient of the Stamford Public Education Foundation Excellence in Education Educators Award.

Throughout my years as an educator, I've seen what it takes to make positive educational experiences that lead to improved outcomes for students and extra bureaucracy is not the answer.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Duff:** There are people on both sides of this issue who view police accountability as anti-police. Not so. This is not an us vs. them issue. It's about improving public relations through increased transparency and enhanced professionalism. That is what I support.

Nothing in our recently passed legislation hinders a police officer's ability to control crime or enforce laws, two of the three primary responsibilities of police. And it does aim to enhance that third responsibility, one the public has cried out for – maintaining order, or as we used to say, keeping the peace.

Police work is tough. It's often dangerous. Every officer wants to go home in one piece at the end of their shift. My hope is that this new legislation makes for renewed public trust in and community support for the police, making a police officer's job easier and safer.

**Kousidis:** The police accountability bill is a sweeping piece of legislation that will drastically change policing practices in Connecticut and overturn decades of Supreme Court precedent. Connecticut Democrats rushed this bill through the House and the State Senate during a special session with little comment or analysis. Many legislators, police officials, and officers have voiced their concerns about how this bill will severely damage police retention and recruiting. This will make our communities less safe and it is not necessary in Connecticut.

I think we need community solutions for community issues. The one-size fits all approach taken by our current administration creates more problems than it solves.

Connecticut ranks 8th best in the nation on the U.S. News Safest States report. USA Today ranks Connecticut ninth best, noting in particular safety in Connecticut schools. The Norwalk Police Department has been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement since 1995.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Duff:** The challenge at the state level is crafting policy that's workable in diverse communities, from urban, to suburban, to rural. We've made good progress in affordable housing in recent years. Look at just about any mixed-use development and you'll see provisions for affordable housing. By far the biggest issue is a community's opposition. That's the current issue at many proposals.

We've had legislation in place since 1989 to promote affordable housing. But today we still have too many families, elderly and young people, all with limited incomes, who are locked out of the housing market. If we are ever to achieve economic class and racial integration, we'll need to change people's hearts. And that's something we can't legislate.

**Kousidis:** Connecticut is ranked 48th in the nation for fiscal health. It is no surprise that our community is struggling with affording housing. We are saying goodbye to businesses regularly. Connecticut was once one of the largest manufacturing states. We need to bring these jobs and businesses back to Connecticut. Our answers to affordable housing must include a broad approach to becoming a thriving state that is conducive to businesses. State control of local zoning is a narrow approach and does not address the true problem. The state should stay focused on creating policies to ensure thriving communities.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Duff:** The word “regionalization” has been co-opted – transformed into a divisive political term. It means nothing more than sharing services between communities. The goal is to maximize dollars spent in order to save taxpayers their hard earned money. With 169 municipalities and 162 school districts, we have a lot of duplication in our state. Approaching housing, transportation and other municipal functions with an eye toward maximizing efficiency and saving taxpayer dollars is a goal we should all share.

**Kousidis:** Top on my agenda for state legislations is to promote local control of our communities and schools, and stop forced regionalization. Forced regionalization will add levels of bureaucracy to our schools that is just that...an extra level of bureaucracy. It will not bring better education to our schools and I have seen first hand of how local control benefits our children.

Every community has different needs and the more local the solutions, the better outcomes we can expect.

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Duff:** I am support all efforts to make the right to vote as convenient and expedient as possible. Amending the state constitution is a lengthy process that requires a good deal of thoughtful consideration. However, Connecticut is behind where many other states are in this area and we should provide easier access so everyone can participate in our democracy.

**Kousidis:** I believe it is a right and a privilege to vote. We are in unprecedented times but we are a people that can solve problems. We should be able to find the balance between having the safest and most secure election process. And as with so many items, it will take input from the local towns and municipalities.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Duff:** Continue leading with science and facts to ensure the health of our people. That we open up responsibly, not repeating the mistakes of many states. We've had one of the lowest rates of infection in the country. At the same time we've opened 95 percent of the state's economy, with an over 85 percent economic recovery rate.

And rather than closing the 2020 fiscal year with a COVID related deficit, we had a small surplus. That money goes into our "rainy day" fund, now at a record high. In fact, it's more than 15% of our budget, so the extra is adding to our efforts to pay down long term debt.


As a legislator, I know we'll have to work on helping our small businesses, non-profits, arts organizations get back on their feet. With our strong fiscal position, we're better prepared to be a good partner.

**Kousidis:** We are currently in Stage 2 of reopening in our state. COVID-19 cases have been brought under control, schools are reopening, the move to stage 3 continues to be a long and drawn out process.

We need our legislators back at work participating in these conversations and representing the people they were elected to represent. It is critical that the people have a voice in this process.

We must work together to keep our citizens informed and educated with clear benchmarks. Transparency is key to building trust in our community.

**Connecticut State House District 137**

| <b>Chris Perone* (D)</b>  | <b>Ellen Wink (R)</b>   |
|---|---|
|  |                                   |
| <a href="http://www.ChrisPerone.com">www.ChrisPerone.com</a>                      | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1072792704">https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1072792704</a> |

\*incumbent

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Perone:** In 2009, at the height of the great recession, myself along with then Majority Leader Denise Merrill convened the Majority Leaders economic roundtable. We brought in economists, business leaders, academics, tax professionals and other citizens to review new ideas about how to get our economy moving again – and how to put our citizens back to work. The resulting legislation which spawned initiatives in green jobs, R&D tax credits, job training, the origins of the small business express program, regulatory reform and advanced manufacturing assistance continue to bear fruit today. It is because I went through that experience, learned to prioritize what the most effective approach should be to restarting our economy and helping our residents find work, I feel make me uniquely qualified to take on the challenges of rebuilding our states economy as we reopen.

**Wink:** I have been the Go To person for my whole life. Give it to the busiest person you

know and it will be done. I have a degree in Biology, a life experience of Long Term Care Administration, a business owner for 21 years, in a family business for over 42 years. I've stepped up on numerous occasions as a Coach, Commissioner for Norwalk Athletic Association, asked to co-chair a fundraiser for the purchase of Thermal Imaging Cameras for Norwalk, City Clerk, Commissioner Redevelopment Agency and running for Office within Norwalk.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Perone:** I supported the police accountability bill. Job training prevented me from being in the chamber to vote on the legislation but had I been there I would have voted "yes." Going forward I will make sure that the tenants of the statute are supported and funded in the way they were intended to be. However, this was landmark legislation. It was brand new in depth and scope which means there still many things about it which need to be worked out as it is being implemented. That's why input from both the law enforcement community and the community at large is still vitally important.

**Wink:** THIS HAS TO BE TOTALLY SCRAPPED! This bill leaves every Citizen of Connecticut vulnerable, not to mention the Police and First Responders. The only population this serves are the Criminals. We also have large defense contractors within our State and would be a first target.



**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Perone:** Protection from eviction and bankruptcy insurance are two areas that are vitally important to the residents of Connecticut. While our focus is to get everyone reemployed as quickly as possible, our focus also must continue to be on ensuring that all Connecticut residents have a roof over their heads.

**Wink:** The Towns should have their own say in their OWN YARD. No State Interference.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Perone:** The pandemic has complicated the question of the utility of state mandates vs local autonomy. I have always considered the 1,300 unfunded mandates on the books to be a problematic cost shift to municipalities. The economic impact of closing the economy and the fact that its effect is being felt differently by towns and cities must also be factored in to the mandates discussion.

Statewide or regional consistency of effectiveness of mandates, I believe, needs to be viewed in context. One example would be mandates on greenhouse emissions. According to the American Lung Association, Fairfield County has among the worst ozone pollution in the northeast – as do most counties in the region. Now add to that a dangerous respiratory virus and

the mandates regarding tougher pollution controls and improved air quality take on a much greater importance than in other parts of the state.

**Wink:** Many statewide laws and mandates are old and out of touch with today. They drain Municipal budgets with little consequence and effect. Connecticut is so diverse- as our Towns and Cities have different needs. Some consolidation has occurred for certain services. Review and Revise!

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Perone:** In 2019 I supported a resolution authorizing a referendum on amending the Connecticut Constitution to permit early voting, something that is permitted in most other states.

In short the referendum would have asked voters if they want to remove a constitutional prohibition on early voting. While the resolution ultimately didn't pass the senate, if elected, I would support a similar referendum in the future.

**Wink:** No, I will not support this change.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**



**Perone:** The pandemic abruptly reoriented the Connecticut's near and long-term priorities that will require legislative solutions to address. Specifically budget decisions related to COVID, preparing for the second wave of the pandemic, ensuring that we have enough PPE, increasing our testing and tracing capabilities and reopening safely.

Recovery depends on protecting public health. It also means bolstering human capital, which can be done by helping individuals stay in their jobs or attain the skills they need to find new ones. Additionally, we need to focus on easing critical expenses, and providing businesses with regulation relief and liquidity support to prevent them from closing or filing for bankruptcy.

Maintaining a safe learning environment for both students and educators continues to be critical to our overall recovery. Testing and screening protocols, mask wearing, social distancing while still allowing for student activities requires clear communication between state and local health officials and school districts.

**Wink:** There are better qualified individuals to handle this situation than any of us reading this answer! Heed their advice. I do understand infection control but this Virus is deadly! I am upset that the State of Connecticut placed Covid infected persons into our Long Term Care Facilities (who remain underfunded and over regulated).

**Connecticut State House District 140**

| <b>John Flynn (R)</b>   | <b>Travis Simms* (D)</b>  |
|---|---|
|  A portrait of John Flynn, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white vertically striped dress shirt and a dark tie with a gold pattern. |  A portrait of Travis Simms, a Black man with a mustache, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a red and white striped tie. |
| <a href="https://www.facebook.com/JohnFlynn2020/">https://www.facebook.com/JohnFlynn2020/</a>   | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/StateRepSimms/">https://www.facebook.com/StateRepSimms/</a>   |

\*incumbent

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Flynn:** My MBA in finance/and BS degree in Business from Villanova will be used to recognize and solve problems. I have held 20 Securities licenses, am trained in insurance/variable and derivative products. I was a biotechnology analyst (Vaccines), own my own NASDAQ Member Firm, Greenwich Global LP, purchased in 1997. I was a portfolio manager in 1990's, and a position trader/market-maker and partner for a premier Convertible Bond hedge fund and trained others in risk/reward). I am a contractor, carpenter, electrician, plumber, trained engineer and arbitrator. I have a legal background in Pro-se litigation (350 cases), an accounting background

with experience in police misconduct cases (11-5013600), money-laundering cases (14-5014345), financial crimes, home-invasion cases (10-5013544-s) and white-collar crime. I am a practicing Catholic, father, and caregiver. I would use my life-experience to assist the community, like no other. 149.

**Simms:** My desire to run for re-election for State Representative for the 140<sup>th</sup> District is conditioned on being part of a broad solution to the issues we face in Norwalk and throughout the state. I want to continue serving and fighting for the taxpayers in the city, and I know the solutions cannot be achieved in one term. Being a lifelong resident of Norwalk, I have strong ties to the community I represent and have always served honestly and with integrity. I've served on the Democratic Town Committee representing District B for the past 15 years. Prior to becoming a State Rep, I served on the Norwalk Common Council for nearly 10 years and in the House of Representatives I currently serve on the Appropriations Committee, Environment Committee, and as Vice Chair on the Transportation Committee.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Flynn:** As written, I oppose. Malloy Judges refuse to allow evidence into the record protecting the Municipalities and their own re-appointments. In the pending Police Case (20-Fst cv 5023122); 21 Police Officers are being named. I claim the body cams were falsified 4 hours after the TASER. In a related case, the Defendant in (CV 14-5014296) on Jud.ct.gov, was Governor Dannel Malloy, who appointed the Judge that heard the RICO case and denied us a Jury (Conflict of interest). 300,000 felonies occurred. The Accountability Bill gives more power to

these Judges, who already have absolute immunity, its racketeering. The bill gives the State's Attorney more power. Our Chief State's Attorney, Richard Colangelo, is currently under investigation for bribery and falsifying an autopsy. This bill strips needed protection when discretion is needed.

I propose revamping the Claims Commissioner to handle Misconduct, making it public. 99% of these cases are currently dismissed by

**Simms:** The tragic deaths of Eric Garner, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless others have highlighted the serious issues of racial injustice and police brutality. Now more than ever, it's important that we recognize what's going on in our communities and do something about it. Police brutality is a federal, state and local issue, and as lawmakers it's critical that we put forth legislation to combat these issues, ensure human and constitutional rights are upheld, and to hold abusers accountable. H.B.6004 addresses these issues, and provides police officers with the training and support they need to better protect citizens in the communities they serve.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Flynn:** Housing is the largest problem. Norwalk's Washington Village was a nightmare. 30 Tenants were poisoned with rat spray, human fecal matter, a year-long gas leak, mold, PCBs and VOCs. The Vesta Corporation recently sued the Norwalk Housing Authority; both accused the other of every conceivable unscrupulous activity (paragraph 17). A private settlement cost the City \$1.2 million. Police are not trained to handle mental illness, so the drug dealers fight with the elderly to keep their limited # of apartments. Currently there is a bed bug infestation at Cedar Court. And the City has its hands tied due to the Vesta settlement agreement. The owner of

Cedar Court, Arthur has claimed in the past to have bought Politicians and Judges.

Congresswoman Rosa De Lauro is now worth 38 million. Colonial Village, Harbor View and Rodner Court have other unaddressed problems like handguns, Candice Greenberg, BPW and FOI.

**Simms:** Affordable housing is a top priority for me. On the state level we will need to do more work with the federal government to fully address the issue.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Flynn:** Districts within a City like Norwalk are different. The 140 has stone crushing, surrounded by residents with Asthma, COPD, in a cancer cluster, during a respiratory pandemic. All the Covid death and all crime is in the 140. Rowayton gets leaf pick up 50 times per year, my street, once. Discrimination, yes? The 3.7 million Residents have over 1.2 million disabled or elderly. Cities like Bridgeport have substantially greater basic unmet needs and more "undocumented". Look at \$55 million in bonuses to Eversource from Bob Duff? We have been lied to about Manresa. 600 municipalities and clubs dump contaminated dredging material off Norwalk's Oyster beds. We have 80 contaminated brown fields and many leaking superfund clean-up sites. The Statewide mandate for Milestone is ludicrous. Local autonomy would assist Norwalk in turning Manresa into a viable transmission station to broker electricity to and from Long Island saving millions.

**Simms:** While I feel the state should have more oversight over municipalities for consistency, I also understand the need for local autonomy to ensure inclusivity and equality for all.

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Flynn:** We need to Vote in person primarily and provide ID with masks and distance one another, the normal exclusions should apply. I recently mailed 100 letters from the Voter rolls of Greenwich; 30 came back undeliverable. The voter fraud in Milford and other places is disturbing. Our Chief of Police Kulhawik, is an Ethics Commissioner of Milford, which had a case of voter fraud. As a resident of Milford, of course, two ladies falsified absentee ballots for \$400 each and he found no wrongdoing. I have 13 unanswered ethics complaints filed in 2018 and 2019 with the City Norwalk.

I have recently sued Denise Merrill for voter suppression, due to the one-party dictatorship we call a Government. I am not opposed to changing the Constitution by VOTE that no one recognizes in the Constitution State. Denise Merrill does not have the power to make changes reserved for the legislature.

**Simms:** I will be in support of amending our State Constitution to allow early voting/no excuse absentee voting. This will allow every voice to be heard.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Flynn:** Return to school. Testing is essential, getting back to work is vital. The Covid testing is patented, so is the Virus itself, so it is man-made. This problem was pre-ordained. A friend, Joe



Stacey worked for Emerson in Danbury (Branson Ultrasonics). They had a Chinese plant, which was closed; the employees were sent back to CT. Three were infected. Joe caught the virus; 8 weeks in a coma, organ failure and died at age 55. What did CT do? Congressman Himes gave Emerson a 10 million \$PPP forgivable loan to fire all the CT employees and outsource the labor to Massachusetts and New Jersey. Forgivable Federal tax money used illegally like Vanderbilt, Planned Parenthood, and other unconscionable acts.

A first priority is to have HIPAA changed because the hospital refused all informational requests and others in Danbury are now infected because Contact Tracing is seriously flawed.

**Simms:** My top priorities will remain the same. I will continue to educate myself and the public on the importance of following state health guidelines. As the state continues to reset, I will continue to address issues we face with our new school system, rent stabilization for citizens and small businesses, and unemployment.

**Connecticut State House District 141**

**Terrie Wood (R)\*** [\*incumbent, unopposed]



[terriewood.com](http://terriewood.com)

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Wood:** I came to public service seeing a need and gathered a group of like-minded women around the issue of environmental awareness by co-founding the Darien Environmental Group, a 501.c3 organization. From this experience, I was asked to serve on other community non-profit boards, developing leadership and board governance skills serving as president of several of them. I learned early on, the power of listening to find solutions and have developed strong and trusting relationships with fellow legislators in Hartford. We don't always agree, though we

always respect our differences. I'm known for being a good listener, problem solver and to seek common sense solutions by working together. I believe in bottom-up government that is transparent / accountable to the people. I believe in the power of the people, their individual voices and will continue to represent constituents with honesty, courage and compassion.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Wood:** The Police Accountability bill was inspired from the public outcry for racial justice sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Connecticut has some of the highest recruiting, training and accountability standards in the country. Many provisions of the bill have been in practice in Norwalk and Darien Police Departments for years. I voted against the bill for two reasons. One, it eliminates qualified immunity. Current federal law already allows bad officers to be held accountable. We also need to protect our good officers. This bill allows good officers to be sued for unmerited / frivolous reasons. This damages recruitment efforts and will encourage early retirements of good officers, all impacting public safety. Eliminating qualified immunity was a poor decision and needs to be corrected. Second, this bill was rushed through the process without a proper public hearing, input from stakeholders and precious little time for appropriate due diligence.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Wood:** This question begs a deep dive into our state's economy. Connecticut has an enormous unfunded pension liability, a large bureaucratic state government unfriendly to job creators, and a majority party that continues to prove their allegiance to the state unions with the richest

pension / benefits of any state in the country. Because of this, we are neither an affordable nor competitive state. There are those in our state that believe that affordable housing is a right and an economic driver. This is a philosophy, not economic reality. The bigger question is, should the government be providing affordable housing? Is this a purpose of government or is this better left to the private sector? I will continue to advocate for common sense policies that encourage families, seniors, students and job creators to come to and stay in Connecticut. Good jobs and a vibrant economy will foster affordable housing.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Wood:** The Councils of Government have been a productive roundtable for municipal CEO's to exchange ideas and discuss important regional initiatives. They are a grass roots, bottom up problem solving venue. Regionalization makes sense when done on a voluntary – not forced – basis. Zoning and schools should remain under local control of individual municipalities. Recent statewide polling in Connecticut widely supports this bottom up rather than top down approach to government. Bottom up, local municipal governance is far more accountable and transparent to the people than a top down government.



**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Wood:** In 2019, I voted to support adding early voting / no excuse absentee voting to our state Constitution.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Wood:** My top priorities are to address our dynamic education needs by ensuring state funding confronts the dramatic impact of school shutdowns now and in the future. We need to make sure all children are educated fully and appropriately especially those children in the urban districts. Children should be in school for not only academic reasons but also social emotional reasons. In addition, we must rebuild our local economy by placing great urgency on recovery for our local merchants, restaurants and small businesses to ensure their viability. All of this needs to be done with a keen eye on maintaining public health and safety protocols. Lastly, we must bring sustained fiscal prudence to our state by re-evaluating state budget priorities and supporting policies that attract job creators.

**Connecticut State House District 142**

| <b>Lucy Dathan* (D)</b>   | <b>Fred Wilms (R)</b>  |
|---|--|
|  |  |
| <a href="https://www.lucy2020.com/">https://www.lucy2020.com/</a>                 | <b>FredWilms.com</b>   |

\*incumbent

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Dathan:** I see my strong constituent service record as State Representative being based upon my values and priorities as a mother of school-age children and engaged member of my local community, combined with the skills and experiences acquired over 25 years working in business finance and accounting. I started out as an auditor in Public Accounting and progressed to executing deals as an investment banker before becoming the CFO for start-up technology companies. This gives me deep understanding of what goes into long-term business plans and strategies and how best to achieve them. Much of my life has been spent working in different countries and cultures where I have learned how to collaborate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Connecticut needs to stabilize its fiscal future to ensure ongoing funding

for our schools, healthcare, transportation, and more, and my experience enables me to contribute strongly in the state's budgeting process.

**Wilms:** In my 19 years of Norwalk and State public service, I have always sought a calm, thoughtful leadership approach – one that brings people together. I try to listen and place a huge importance on keeping my word. When I chaired the Norwalk BET we produced eight city budgets, all approved unanimously – despite much of that time in the volatile Great Recession.

I was honored to be your State Representative from 2015 -2019. I have a unique finance background: of the 187 legislators, the only one who was a banker plus chaired their town's fiscal authority. The State needs more people with this background. I started my banking career on Wall Street after receiving my BA Economics from Northwestern University and MBA from the University of Michigan. For the past 17 years, I have been a Senior Vice President at Webster Bank, working with small businesses in our area.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Dathan:** As a legislator, I am committed to creating an environment that fairly and equally protects the rights of all constituents. While Connecticut has not been in the national spotlight with egregious manifestations of systemic racism, we must be honest and acknowledge there are events in our state where people's rights are violated. This bill was drafted after much bipartisan discussion and thoughtful review of constituents' experiences with police. I strongly support our police officers, but if we can further the overall goal of fairness and equality under the law for all, then I must support this. Preserving justice was at the crux of our nation's formation. Who

would want to deny a victim, or their family, the ability to seek redress in a case where wanton police action violates their rights? This law strengthens the relationship between police and communities, and am proud to have voted in favor of it.

**Wilms:** The Norwalk police have been nationally CALEA accredited since 1995, They have served us well, and made enormous efforts to be constructively engaged in the Norwalk community. Yet the Hartford democrats unfairly treated Norwalk's police as if they were from Minneapolis. Now some of these same democrats are going out of their way to defame our police. All of this makes no sense. Our police deserve our support.

While many of the reforms in the police accountability bill were good, I will vote to restore qualified immunity for our police officers. Taking that away only hurts good cops and stops proactive policing. I support a complete reexamination of the police accountability legislation, but this time holding proper public hearings coupled with receiving testimony from all sides. This time we need to take a bipartisan approach.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Dathan:** Norwalk has achieved the 3rd highest percentage of affordable housing in Fairfield County. I believe the best way to build on this is to incentivize towns to voluntarily create it, not through state mandates that towns will fight. We can revive financial support for towns that convert abandoned buildings into safe, affordable housing and support those that need Federal Brownfields Funding to remove legacy pollution and ensure that old buildings are eligible for Brownfield Cleanup Funds. I also think that we can reduce the amount of government regulation in building which I feel is holding back economic growth. Affordable housing also includes the



ability to afford utility expenses. I would consider the adoption of minimum/baseline Green Building Design Standards including solar installation and energy efficiency measures for all housing construction. Towns like Norwalk should be rewarded for creating affordable housing and help grow Connecticut's population in additional educational funding.

**Wilms:** Norwalk has always taken the lead on affordable housing. Statute 8-30(g) requires ten percent of a town's housing stock to be affordable. Norwalk has exceeded that threshold for many years. Affordable housing has enjoyed bipartisan support within Norwalk and this provision is further captured in our local ordinances. I support Norwalk always staying above this threshold.

However too much of anything can stop being good. We learned this from the POKO/Wall Street fiasco that tried to achieve 40% affordable housing. Fifteen years and \$5 million of state funding later, Wall Street is still a mess. As long as we stay in the 10% to 15% affordable range, future projects can be either self- financed, or covered by the banking community. We do not need taxpayer bailouts for failed POKO style projects.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Dathan:** When balancing statewide consistency and local control the priority for me has to be the well-being of the individuals living in any given community. While sometimes necessary to ensure standards are met, a common issue with statewide laws is unfunded mandates and generalized approaches that do not solve for local concerns. I believe we should always consider

options for empowering municipalities with local autonomy whenever practical. It is our duty as legislators to avoid mandates that cannot be funded and to fully fund those that we've determined as essential to Connecticut residents' quality of life or to provide mandate relief to towns. One specific example where I see an opportunity is to allow towns to post legal notices in online newspapers - as opposed to in hard print - and provide links where readers can find more information. This would save towns publishing fees.

**Wilms:** I support local Norwalk control wherever possible. State-wide mandates generally hurt Norwalk. That is because the State is controlled by legislators from the failing cities of Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport plus legislators aligned with the state employee unions. Their sponsored bills are meant to address their peculiar problems, which are typically worse than Norwalk's. I do not support Norwalk being saddled with State answers for problems we do not have. For example, I fought Bridgeport attempts to have all WPCA's regulated by PURA. The Bridgeport WPCA hired attorneys to collect past due bills; they were subsequently accused of harassing Bridgeport citizens. I suggested Bridgeport adopt Norwalk's approach of combining the sewer bill with the property tax statement. Scrapping the lawyers would end the harassment. My suggestion only received a blank stare, and new state-wide legislation.

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Dathan:** Connecticut currently has some of the strictest in-person voting laws in the country. I strongly supported and sponsored bills for both of these measures in 2019. By allowing early or no-excuse absentee voting, we will increase voter turnout significantly and enable a more representative democracy where the 'voice of the people' is more clearly heard in Hartford. A

2013 study found that voting by mail increased turnout by two to four percentage points, with traditionally low-participating voters more likely to be impacted than others. And as has been well established by many investigations and studies, these forms of voting can be trusted and have negligible cases of voter fraud, contrary to what some would like us to believe. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the problems with our current voter laws and we should embrace this opportunity to put Connecticut back as a leader in supporting the individual right to vote.

**Wilms:** Connecticut already has one of the highest voter turnouts in the USA. Proposals such as early voting or no-excuse absentee voting would result in only marginal increases. While maximizing voter turnout is a laudable objective, it cannot come at the expense of the integrity of our electoral process. The Legislature has yet to fully examine these concerns. On a related note, I agree with the absentee ballot expansion to allow for the COVID virus as a valid reason.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Dathan:** During COVID-19, my priority is our physical and fiscal well-being. I worked with relevant agencies to secure resources including food and healthcare, fix issues with unemployment applications and help businesses apply for aid. We expanded tele-medicine, brought additional COVID-19 testing sites to our community, opened a COVID-19 recovery center, expanded affordable childcare options for front-line workers and delayed due dates for state income and municipal property taxes. I worked directly with the Board of Realtors, Governor Lamont and DECD Commissioner Lehman to ensure the functioning of real estate transactions during the shut down. While we continue to be guided by public health experts, ensuring that local Health Departments are given adequate funds to include more effective public


outreach, we have an opportunity to build a stronger state. Going forward, I am focused on our state's financial health and ensuring businesses have access to testing and PPE to operate safely.

**Wilms:** We need to follow the CDC guidelines for COVID, and continue our balanced approach. That means wearing masks and social distancing, while looking for ways to reopen our economy. With our COVID cases low, reopening our schools made sense. Initial feedback however is that educating children online is exceedingly difficult. As such we need to migrate more towards in-person learning. I support moving forward into the Phase 3 reopening and providing relief to our hard hit hospitality sector.

Switching gears, with COVID putting many out of work, or on reduced earnings, it made no sense for the State employees to receive a \$350 million pay raise this July. Out of fairness, this should have been suspended.

Lastly Governor Lamont recently extended his emergency powers through February 2021. Because I believe in checks & balances, the full Legislature should vote then on next steps.

**Connecticut State House District 143**

| <b>Stephanie Thomas (D)</b>   | <b>Patrizia Zucaro (R)</b>   |
|---|--|
|  A portrait of Stephanie Thomas, a Black woman with short grey hair, smiling. She is wearing a white top. An American flag is visible in the background. |  A portrait of Patrizia Zucaro, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark top. The background is an orange wall with a white mantel and a plant. |
| <p><a href="http://www.VoteStephanieThomas.com">www.VoteStephanieThomas.com</a></p>   | <p><a href="http://zucaroct.com">zucaroct.com</a></p>  |

**1. Considering your education, employment experience, political involvement, and personal attributes, what qualifications do you have to be a good State Representative?**

**Thomas:** I'm fortunate to have had three careers in one. Working in the nonprofit sector has taught me the importance of solving the most intractable problems, on budget, with evidence-based data to back up the results. As a fundraising and strategy consultant for over two decades, I have been tasked with coming up with creative solutions when other plans have failed. I must listen closely and build consensus, cutting through the politics of various stakeholders to find win/win solutions. As a small business owner, I know there are no shortcuts for hard work, transparency, and fair dealing. I have to remain responsive to my environment to solve problems effectively. And most importantly, I have to invest in both my team and in growth opportunities

to really thrive. I will listen first, ask questions, work to build consensus, but make tough decisions; and serve as your proactive voice in Hartford.

**Zucaro:** As an attorney, I am very familiar with Connecticut statutes, the responsibilities of the three branches of government, and the lawmaking process. In reviewing bills, I can quickly sift through legalese and understand the implications of detailed proposals. I've successfully defended small businesses and individuals in a range of complex situations, and I am ready to do the same for constituents. I've managed my own practice, so I understand the issues small businesses face very well. I also know our district well. I'm a Westport native, and I've lived in Fairfield County my whole life. I'm sensitive to the similarities and differences between Norwalk and the two smaller towns of Wilton and Westport. This is my home, I care about these towns and the people who live here – not about political ideologies. I'm not afraid of anything, and I'm ready to make sure they have a forceful voice in Hartford.

**2. In the July 2020 special session, the General Assembly passed a new police accountability bill, which the governor signed into law. Do you support or oppose that bill? If elected, how – if at all – will you change state laws about police accountability?**

**Thomas:** While recognizing that there are strong feelings regarding this issue, I wholeheartedly support the police accountability bill. From the beginning, this bill was crafted with bipartisan support and then vetted in public forums, including a 12-hour public hearing. Unfortunately, just before the scheduled vote, Republicans responded to right-wing pressure and voted against it. Nonetheless, the bill passed and includes critical measures like permitting independent investigations of deadly police shootings, encouraging more minority recruitment so our police departments' composition mirrors our local communities, allowing for public review of police

discipline reports and mandating and providing funding for body and dashboard cameras. While some of these elements are controversial, I believe their enactment will improve the trust between communities and our all-important police forces.

**Zucaro:** I know the law enough to know that any complex bill has parts that I – or anyone else – support, and others I oppose. There are provisions of this bill I support, for example, those that provide enhanced training, use of cameras, etc. But others have implications that I don't support as written, because they are likely to make recruiting good officers more difficult and to diminish the ability of local police to keep our communities safe. During legislative debate, even the strongest proponents said the bill would need "fixing" after passage. Nevertheless, they rushed it through without a properly noticed public hearing, and without legislative committee scrutiny. I believe the wisest course would have been to raise the bill in January, and to work all session to produce legislation that didn't need "fixing", and would have helped our police officers keep everyone safe, while respecting the rights of all individuals.

**3. Affordable housing is an ongoing concern in Norwalk and surrounding towns. What changes, if any, to state laws and/or programs will you support to address this issue?**

**Thomas:** I do not believe that affordable housing can be legislated on a state-wide basis given Connecticut's diversity of rural areas, suburbs and cities. However, we do ourselves harm if we stop the conversation there. Seniors, young people, the recently divorced, small business owners and employees are clamoring for diversity of housing stock. They don't want to leave the district, but cannot afford to stay. Growing our tax base, helping local businesses thrive, and encouraging residents to stay are good for our economy. The formula for success is for municipalities to pro-actively decide what type of usage makes sense in which locations.

Happily, our district is already grappling with this important issue, but we should consider asking the state for land use training for volunteers on local P&Z boards and case studies on what has worked elsewhere so our local boards have the tools and information to help.

**Zucaro:** The need for more and diversified affordable housing is well recognized by the 143rd district towns. Norwalk has many options, but Wiltonians and Westporters want more. They are taking action – not to comply with state law, but because they think diversified housing stock will offer residents more options and attract new residents. I agree. The question is: who makes the necessary zoning decisions? I believe they should be made by local people who are accountable to local residents. While I absolutely agree that many small towns need more affordable housing, I believe 8-30g isn't an effective framework and needs substantial reform. It makes it virtually impossible for small towns to reach the 10% goal; benefits developers, not residents; leads to costly litigation; and denies local officials the ability to approve affordable housing locations and to set requirements for aligning it with local architectural, environmental, historic preservation, landscape, and accessibility guidelines.

**4. What is your view on statewide laws and mandates, as opposed to local autonomy for Connecticut's municipalities? Is the balance about right, or should there be more statewide consistency, or more local autonomy? Give one or more specific examples that apply to our local area.**

**Thomas:** The state should only insert itself in areas where it can be helpful, like articulating best practices and providing incentives to achieve objectives. That said, we need to recognize that while legislation can be a lever for change, it cannot be expected to do all the heavy lifting. For example, dismantling systemic racism at the institutional level is a huge task and will take some



time. Legislation can help, but if, for instance, it mandates that children can be bused to a nearby high performing school district, then we don't have to do the work of thinking about why the curriculum is so skewed to white culture or what happens to the children left behind. Legislation can help nudge us in the right direction, but we need to have real conversations with each other at the local level so we can solve difficult issues.

**Zucaro:** I support local autonomy and control over local issues. Take education. This fall, the state provided guidance on reopening, but left districts flexibility in implementing it. Local boards of education in Norwalk and elsewhere were able to design programs that fit their communities. Parents, teachers, and students were involved in the decision process and the result benefited the community. A few years ago, the state mandated that every school district follow a regional calendar. This was repealed, because coordination didn't work, and there were no savings. Regarding the environment, Westport had to fight to be able to enact its own plastic bag ban, and other towns would like to enact environmental ordinances more rigorous than state laws. Planning and zoning matters should also be decided locally. One-size-fits-all mandates don't work well. Local decisions should be made not by state bureaucrats, but by local people who are accountable to local residents.

**5. If elected, will you support or oppose the State Constitution being amended to allow the General Assembly to provide for early voting or no-excuse absentee voting?**

**Thomas:** Yes, I will support the effort to increase voter access. Providing more pathways for voting is the first step to ensuring that our democracy reflects the wants and needs of its citizens. Connecticut has some of the most restrictive voting laws in the county and this must change. Exercising our right to vote shouldn't be in jeopardy if one gets called away on an unexpected

business trip or wakes up to find a sick child which keeps you at home, or you have an opportunity to work a double shift which can help you make ends meet. We need a system that makes it easier for residents to vote that includes no-excuse absentee ballots, online applications to request an absentee ballot, early voting, and Automatic Voter Registration. Let's join the majority of the country in ensuring safe alternatives for our electorate.

**Zucaro:** While this year has been exceptional for many reasons, the absentee voting process in Connecticut has generally worked very well. I support no-excuse absentee voting, which would simply make more people eligible to participate in the absentee process. If no-excuse absentee voting were proposed to voters in a resolution amending the state constitution in very clear language, I would absolutely support it. The amendment put before the voters a few years ago was not clear, and did not simply propose no-excuse absentee voting. Instead, it basically stripped all restrictions from the constitution's current language, leaving it open for any modifications the legislature might propose later without any public referendum. Not only did it fail, but it confused the voters and left the ultimate outcome in question and out of their hands. I wouldn't want this to happen again. But I'd absolutely support a clear amendment specifically allowing no-excuse absentee voting.

**6. Considering the state's response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, what will your top priorities be in this regard if elected?**

**Thomas:** The state must remain flexible and responsive to business needs in these rapidly changing conditions. Building consumer confidence is key to our economic recovery. We must also maximize every opportunity to bring federal dollars to CT. Taxpayers are at the breaking

point – we need to take a comprehensive look at tax codes and budgets through new eyes. There are many ideas out there to be considered.

Looking forward, individuals are already moving here, but we need to extend that trend after the fear of COVID-19 dies out, consider what industries we can encourage, and work cooperatively with Advance CT to bring businesses to our area. We must ensure that our roads and mass transportation system is viable and reliable, and that our infrastructure is up to the demands of the 21st Century. Sometimes you must invest to see growth; we must look at where we can invest smartly.

**Zucaro:** We must continue to balance data-driven public health imperatives with economic and social considerations, and the legislature must be included in this work with the governor from now on. Safety must remain paramount. We must help businesses, especially small businesses, recover and grow by creating the most hospitable regulatory, administrative, and tax environment for them, with as few onerous mandates as possible. Another priority is for the legislature to act quickly to allow local school districts at least temporary flexibility on calendars, curriculum, and formats to help students and teachers catch up and move forward after months of distance learning. While the pandemic has taken center stage, Connecticut’s other fundamental issues haven’t gone away. We must restore state finances by cutting wasteful spending, paying off mounting debt and unfunded retirement obligations, and reducing taxes, while investing in infrastructure and social services. Increasing Norwalk’s ECS funding remains a top priority.

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