



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CANTON 2018 VOTER'S GUIDE

A mission of the non-partisan 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 be well-informed and to vote on **Tuesday, November 6th**.

This 2018 Voter's Guide was developed to inform voters by asking our candidates for Probate Judge, state House of Representatives and state Senate questions on current issues. Below are their responses, limited to 50 words.

The League provides two additional ways to get to know candidates and the positions they seek:

- Watch the League's Oct. 16 Candidate's Night [on YouTube](#) to hear candidates respond to audience questions.
- See the League's [Voter Toolbox](#) for detailed information on all the races.

For more about the Canton League of Women Voters, see lwvcanton.org. The League welcomes men and women from Canton and surrounding towns.

There will be **2 questions** on the ballot:

- 1. Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to ensure (1) that all moneys contained in the Special Transportation Fund be used solely for transportation purposes, including the payment of debts of the state incurred for transportation purposes, and (2) that sources of funds deposited in the Special Transportation Fund be deposited in said fund so long as such sources are authorized by statute to be collected or received by the state?***

A "yes" vote supports this amendment to prohibit lawmakers from using the state transportation fund for anything other than transportation purposes.

A "no" vote opposes this amendment to prohibit lawmakers from using the state transportation fund for anything other than transportation purposes.

- 2. Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to require (1) a public hearing and the enactment of legislation limited in subject matter to the transfer, sale or disposition of state-owned or state controlled real property or interests in real property in order for the General Assembly to require a state agency to sell, transfer or dispose of any real property or interest in real property that is under the custody or control of the agency, and (2) if such property is under the custody or control of the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, that such enactment of legislation be passed by a two-thirds vote of the total membership of each house of the General Assembly?***

A "yes" vote supports this amendment to: require a public hearing on bills to authorize the transfer, sale, or disposal of state-owned properties, such as state parks, forests, and conserved lands, to non-state entities and require a two-thirds vote of the Connecticut General Assembly to authorize the transfer, sale, or disposal of land under the control of the state agriculture or environmental protection departments.

A "no" vote opposes this amendment to: require a public hearing on bills to authorize the transfer, sale, or disposal of state-owned properties and require a two-thirds vote of the Connecticut General Assembly to authorize the transfer, sale, or disposal of land under the control of the state agriculture or environmental protection departments.

Description of Judge of Probate position:

- The Simsbury Regional Probate District is one of 54 probate courts in Connecticut. It has jurisdiction over the towns of Avon, Canton, Granby and Simsbury.
- Probate Courts have the power to hear and make judgments in certain types of cases including: estates of deceased persons, testamentary trusts, adoptions, conservators, commitment of the mentally ill, guardians of the persons and estates of minors and those with intellectual disabilities, and certain name changes.
- Judges of the Connecticut Probate Courts are the only judges in the state to be chosen in partisan elections. They serve four-year terms.

The candidates running for Judge of Probate are:

Cynthia C. Becker, Republican

Charles Houlihan, Democrat

QUESTIONS::

1) What experience do you have to help you be an effective Probate Judge?

Mrs. Becker: For 20 years I have applied probate law and procedure as a probate judge, and have overseen the operation, budgeting and staffing of a probate court. I have chaired the Probate Assembly's Education Committee for 10 years, and served as staff attorney for a Probate Court, and practiced probate law.

Mr. Houlihan: I have served the legal needs of Farmington Valley residents for decades. I represent clients in hotly-contested litigation and transaction negotiations. I was trained and certified as a mediator. My trial and mediation skills and real-world understanding, give me a broader perspective. I have earned bipartisan support through performance.

2) What are the Probate Court Judge's most significant responsibilities?

Mrs. Becker: People involved in Probate Court proceedings are stressed and grieving. It is critical that the Probate Judge has a thorough knowledge and understanding of probate law and procedure in order to efficiently oversee the business of the Court and effectively solve the problems of the people that come before it.

Mr. Houlihan: Everyone arrives at the Probate Court in crisis. Treating people with compassion and respect while still being decisive and responsive is critical. I will make crucial decisions promptly, not leave unaddressed requests made to the court.

3) Do you have ideas to improve the work of the Probate Court?

Mrs. Becker: Some states have implemented "unsupervised" probate whereby the Probate Court is involved in estate settlement, but does not impose upon beneficiaries burdensome paperwork in some instances, rather it is on "standby" to resolve disputes. Participation is not mandatory, but could simplify the process and be cost saving for the system.

Mr. Houlihan: Where dispute among family members becomes apparent, pro-active judicial involvement is beneficial. Grievances aired, however unrelated to the probate proceedings, can build a path for more productive activity going forward. It takes listening, counseling and experience to provide for families the best outcomes in the present and the future.

Description of the 17th district House of Representatives position:

- The 17th District of the state House of Representatives includes Canton and part of Avon.
- Members of the state House of Representatives serve two-year terms and are not subject to term limits.

The candidates running for House of Representatives are:

Eleni Kavros DeGraw, Democrat

Leslee B. Hill, Republican

QUESTIONS :

1) What experience do you have to help you be an effective Representative for the 17th district?

Ms. DeGraw: I have two decades of experience leading in our communities and building relationships at the government level. As board member for various organizations, one with a budget of millions, I saw first hand how state level decisions affect working families and communities, and I did the work to find solutions.

Mrs. Hill:

- 17 year Canton resident, Connecticut attorney
- Canton Board of Education 2008 – 2015
- Canton First Selectman 2015 – present

Served on Capitol Region Education Council; Capitol Region Council of Governments; Farmington Valley Health District
First-hand understanding of impact of legislation on residents, schools, towns and businesses.

2) What are the three priority steps that the legislature must take to solve the state's budget crisis?

Ms. DeGraw: To get the state budget under control, we must examine efficiency while updating processes, explore zero-based budgeting, and maximize partnerships between the state, innovative companies, small business, educational institutions, and non-profits. If we assess more thoroughly what is working, we can make better and more impactful decisions with taxpayer dollars.

Mrs. Hill: The FY19-20 budget must fund all state expenses/obligations including state employee pension/medical obligations. Require an independent audit of all state departments to identify cost savings. Require zero-based budgets from all state departments. Require all state agencies to submit budgets reflecting a 5% spending reduction to stimulate cost-saving analysis.

3) How would you assure access to healthcare insurance for all residents?

Ms. DeGraw: No one should have to choose between medicine and food or end up in financial ruin over necessary healthcare. Our Legislature was unsuccessful in 2018 in passing a provision to combat already high and rising healthcare costs including prescription drug pricing – I will make common sense healthcare measures a priority.

Mrs. Hill: Health insurance is currently mandated by the ACA. The state must improve communication and outreach to residents of the coverage available through AccessCT, and fund the Medicare Savings Program. Connecticut P.A. 18-10 ensures coverage for health benefits currently required under the ACA in the event the federal law is repealed.

4) How do you propose to equalize school funding to ensure that the highest funding goes to the schools with the most need?

Ms. DeGraw: Since its creation, the state's Education Cost Sharing Formula has never been fully funded, leaving towns without the full complement of resources for effective public education. Teachers are the first to see the consequences of bad policy decisions; I am the strong advocate who will fight for fair funding.

Mrs. Hill: Redistribution of ECS funding is in process. Avon's ECS funding was eliminated in the last state budget while thirty low-performing districts (Alliance Districts) received ECS increases. Underfunded towns are receiving immediate funding increases. High performing districts should still receive basic funding to ease the burden on local property taxes.

Description of the 8th district Senate position:

- The 8th District of the state Senate includes the towns of Canton, Avon, Hartland, Simsbury, Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, Harwinton, Torrington, Granby and Norfolk.
- Members of the state Senate serve two-year terms and are not subject to term limits.

The candidates running for Senate are:

Melissa E. Osborne, Democrat

Kevin Witkos, Republican

QUESTIONS:

1) What experience do you have to help you be an effective Senator for the 8th district?

Ms. Osborne: I've been an attorney for 21 years, practicing first in high-value private equity investment real estate, and now in family law. I'm a certified mediator, was Vice Chair of the CBA's Child Welfare & Juvenile Law Committee, and served on Simsbury's Clean Energy Task Force and Charter Revision Commission.

Mr. Witkos: My varied life experiences as father, retired police officer and former small business owner, in addition to my years of public service as a five-term state Senator, 3-term state Representative and a member of the Board of Education have given me the ability to see an issue from different angles.

2) What are the two top needs of the 8th Senate District that you will advocate for?

Ms. Osborne: A data-driven, long-term prospective economic development policy, and a 21st Century over-haul of our dilapidated physical infrastructure and of our digital infrastructure in order to make CT competitive for business creation, growth and relocation, and smart investments to make that happen.

Mr. Witkos: The top two issues I will fight for are growing our economy and preventing any more tax increase from being tacked onto our residents. We need to reduce the over-regulation of state government that makes it nearly impossible to run and grow a business creating good paying jobs.

3) Do you have ideas on how to work with members of the other party to come up with creative solutions?

Ms. Osborne: Yes, first as a corporate negotiator and now as a certified mediator this is where I have built an expertise: I help parties find ways to make agreements that they can all live with, and that will meet their business needs or serve the best interests of their families.

Mr. Witkos: I've demonstrated my ability to work with everyone wanting to make a difference at the capitol. During the last session, I worked hand in hand with a Democratic State Representative pass with 2/3rd's majorities in both chambers the constitutional amendment on protecting public lands that will be on the ballot.

4) What steps would you take to increase revenue AND/OR what programs would you decrease funding or eliminate to balance the state budget?

Ms. Osborne: We need an economy in which rising tides raise all ships. We increase revenue by investing in 21st Century drivers of economic competitiveness, establishing a process for the State and municipalities to secure maximum federal funding, and collaborating with neighboring states to strengthen our region's competitive position

Mr. Witkos: Our state budget has tremendous waste. One example is that every state agency has its own human resources department. We could save millions of dollars by having one central HR department for state employees. We also have to stop the bailouts of our cities like Hartford.