To the voters:

The November 8 presidential election is upon us. There have been many opportunities to hear what the candidates for president are proposing for the next four years at the federal level. This Voter’s Guide is focused on the so-called “under ticket”. The candidates highlighted in this issue are vying to be your representative in the Connecticut State Legislature, specifically for the 18th, 19th, and 20th House districts and the 5th Senatorial District. Those elected will shape the actions of State government for the next two years. They are the people who can be more responsive to you because they are government close to you, your neighbors. The League believes that by reading the candidates’ thoughtful responses and by viewing our candidate television debates done in cooperation with WHCTV, Channel 5 Public Access, citizens can make their own informed decision on Election Day, November 8.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization celebrating its 96th year. It was established in 1920, the year in which the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed women the right to vote. From its inception, the League has been committed to promoting responsible political action through informed participation of citizens in government. Our mission “to produce informed voters” has not wavered over our nearly 100 years of service to the community.

We hope you find this guide helpful. We thank West Hartford LIFE for assisting us in making this voter information available to you. Check out the televised debate schedule by going to www.whctv.org.

Carole Mulready,
LWVGH President
www.lwvgh.org

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**Sample Ballot**

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*The column for state representative will differ depending upon which Assembly District you reside in.

**18th District:**
Andrew Fleischmann, Democrat
Rob Levine, Republican

**19th District:**
Derek Slap, Democrat
Chris Barnes, Republican

**20th District**
Joe Verrengia, Democrat is unopposed
Questions for CT General Assembly Candidates

1. What are your top three legislative priorities for next session?

2. Given the state’s budget challenges, what do you believe is the appropriate balance of program cuts and tax increases? Overall, how would you help CT break the cycle of annual budget deficits?

3. Some other parts of the country have embraced regionalism, which some feel improves public transportation options, draws businesses, reduces costs and enhances the economy. The West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District and the MDC stand as examples of regional efforts in our area. Would you encourage enhanced regionalism? Why or why not? Please provide specific examples.

League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford® 2016 Finance Drive

The people listed here make this voters’ guide possible. We greatly appreciate their generosity and support in bringing you this voter service.

PATRON:
Miriam Butterworth, Cynthia Huge, Alice Kugelman, Anmol; Emily Rankin, Richard & Mary Ellen Thibodeau, Frances Thompson

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Victoria Albert, Eleanor Caplan, Mary Everett, Susan Fellman, Annette Gavens, Kathleen Golas, Mary Hourdequin, Catherine Reynolds, Terry Schmitt, Anne P. Streeter

CONTRIBUTOR:

State Senator
Beth Bye
Democrat

Bio:
Currently State Senator for West Hartford, Farmington, Burlington, and Bloomfield. She previously served in the House of Representatives and on the Board of Education. Beth is the former director of the School for Young Children and Trinity College Child Care. She is the director of the 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm. Beth lives in West Hartford with her wife Tracey Wilson. They have five children.

Question 1:
Workforce: Connecticut has some of the highest quality workers anywhere. We must continue to invest in education at all levels to keep this advantage. We also need to create an ecosystem that attracts and keeps young people. Environment: I have achieved significant policy changes here. I led the passing of the first-in-the-nation ban on BPA in children’s products, helped protect funding for state parks, helped pass bills to make it safer to bike to work/around town. Last year I fought to protect CT’s drinking water resources. State Aid: I worked over the past three years to help towns, making sure the state didn’t pass budget shortfalls onto municipalities. In fact, we increased town aid to hold down car and property taxes. This is critical for the well-being of businesses and residents.

Question 2:
For the past three years, we have had challenges balancing the state budget. Revenues came in below projections, and we had to cut well over a billion dollars. These cuts were incredibly difficult. I continue to work hard on balancing the budget while protecting vital services such as public safety, health care, roads, and supporting people with disabilities. We break the cycle of annual budget deficits by creating an innovation economy that grows good paying jobs.

Question 3:
Sharing resources can save tax dollars. Collaboration among municipalities can have a positive effect on the budget and services, if done right. Any initiative needs to have a public discussion with public support.

State Senator
Mark Merritt
Republican

Bio:
Candidate Bio: I am a first time candidate for public office, having spent my career in the financial services industry. I currently serve as Managing Director of Relationship Strategies for Nationwide Financial. I have lived in West Hartford for 23 years with my wife Michelle and am the proud father of three children. During my time in town I have always enjoyed giving back to my community through coaching little league and serving in other volunteer roles such as the Finance Committee of the Emanuel Synagogue.

Question 1:
My top three priorities this upcoming legislative session would be to help create a long-term plan to address our continuous budget problems, seek tax relief for Connecticut families and business, and identify and begin to address the reason that so many jobs are leaving Connecticut.

Question 2:
I would make a commitment to the voters to not increase taxes on Connecticut families, and I hope other legislators would do the same. Simply put, the tax increases of 2011 and 2015 were sold to our residents as a fix to solve our budget problems. They have not, and by all accounts our budget problems have become worse. Things have gotten so bad that 4 out of every 10 families would prefer to leave our State. Connecticut does not have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. I would advocate for significant structural changes to the way our State budgets money, and work to achieve a balanced budget through reducing spending, not raising taxes.

Question 3:
While certain regional services make sense, I would not support an increase in regionalization. Each community in our region has its own unique challenges, and its own unique character. Those towns should remain free to make the decisions that meet the needs of their residents on their own. In addition, I also do not believe that towns in the Region should be responsible for helping Hartford out of its financial struggles.
Voters’ Guide ’16

Election 2016 is November 8th
All polling places are open 6AM to 8PM

Polling Locations:

District #1  King Philip Middle School, 100 King Philip Drive
District #2  Bristow Middle School, 34 Highland Street
District #3  West Hartford Town Hall, 50 South Main Street
District #4  Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Avenue
District #5  Wolcott School, 71 Wolcott Road
District #6  Conard High School, 110 Beechwood Road
District #7  Sedgwick Middle School, 128 Sedgwick Road
District #8  Braeburn School, 45 Braeburn Road
District #9  Hall High School, 975 North Main Street

Not sure where you vote?
Do an online search of West Hartford Registrars of Voters; then on the displayed page in the EXPLORE box on the left, click on Voter Registration Lookup; fill in your town, name and birth date; your voting site will be displayed.

Voter ID Requirements
Before you vote at the polls, poll workers will ask for identification - a drivers’ license, utility bill, paycheck or other ID that has voter name and current address.

Vote November 8
Let your voice be heard!

Debates and 2 minute candidate profiles sponsored by LWVGH and West Hartford Community TV can be seen on WHCTV and streaming at www.whctv.org right up to Election Day.

18th Assembly District

Andrew Fleischmann
Democrat

Bio
I was born and raised in West Hartford, attended local public schools, and graduated from Hall High. I earned a Bachelor’s degree in public policy from Princeton, and a Masters from Stanford. Outside the legislature – where I’ve been honored to serve our town – I’m President & CEO of Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters, a nonprofit that serves children in need. My wife Caroline and I live near Bishop’s Corner with our two daughters, Emily and Kelly.

Question 1:
My top three priorities are:
• Job creation – catalyzing private sector growth. The Small Business Express program, which provides grants and low-interest loans to small businesses that promise to create new jobs, is a great catalyst that I support continuing. Dozens of West Hartford businesses and thousands of individuals have benefited. State support for large employers like Sikorsky and Pratt will also help us keep growing employment.
• Getting more of our young people stay in Connecticut after they graduate from college or complete career training. To incentivize Connecticut young people to stay, I support tax credits for those who work in-state for five years following school – to help us retain our best and brightest.
• Making state finances more stable (see details below).

Question 2:
The path to long-term financial stability for our state is sustained economic growth – which means effective economic development and jobs programs are key – as are initiatives to retain our educated workforce, and maintain our quality of life. Together these elements will bring steady economic growth – meaning strong, stable state revenues. Short term, we need lean budgets – reducing back-office operation costs and finding efficiencies.

Question 3:
In this era of constrained budgets, encouraging local governments to work together on shared services when feasible – to become more efficient – is common sense. We might explore increased cooperation in maintenance of roads and bridges, leisure services, and perhaps emergency services. Whatever the area, it’s key that all participating communities support proposed approaches – and that all achieve savings.

18th Assembly District

Rob Levine
Republican

Bio
I have been a small business owner for 6 years now, while working as a realtor in total for over 11 years. I also serve on the West Hartford Board of Assessment Appeals. In addition, I am serving as the treasurer on the board of directors for the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors. My background in government goes back many years: I spent my Fall Semester of college as a White House intern in Washington, DC. My first job after Graduate School was a policy analyst on the Speaker’s task force on education in New York State. After a time, I became a budget analyst on the ways and means committee. I also had consulting jobs doing program evaluation and financial audits for public housing authorities and child support enforcement agencies around the country. My educational background includes an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts and a Master’s degree in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon University.

Question 1:
State Budget, Education and Social Services.

Question 2:
Tax relief is essential to the State recovering economically. There should be no new tax increases. The State should be reviewing programs every two years to determine if they are achieving results desired. If not, then eliminate those programs. We need to make our government more effective and efficient. Develop an economic plan that incentivizes small and large businesses to grow and relocate to our State. The State needs to stop the crony capitalism of picking winners and losers and have a plan to reallocate funding to make the State more desirable for all businesses.

Question 3:
I would support regionalism where there was an obvious financial benefit. It should not be used as a tool for one town to raid the budgets of other towns due to its own fiscal mismanagement. Regionalizing 9-1-1 call centers has worked in some other States as well as school districts in different towns negotiating transportation contracts are two areas for potential opportunities.

November 2016 | WEST HARTFORD LIFE  19
19th Assembly District

Derek Slap
Democrat

Bio:
I married my high school sweetheart and we live in West Hartford with our three young children. My father was a minister, my mother a nurse. They taught me to give back. I've spent 20 years working in journalism and public service. I'm currently a manager at the UConn Foundation, where my priority is increasing scholarships so students can attend Connecticut's flagship university.

Question 1:
First, we must retain and grow high-quality jobs. We do this by capitalizing on Connecticut's strengths. Overhaul our transportation infrastructure to connect our educated workforce with opportunities. Invest in higher education so students are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow and reduce red tape wherever possible so entrepreneurialism can thrive.

Second, we must protect our public schools. Empowering our teachers and supporting our students is critical for our economy and quality of life. We also need fairer funding for our local schools.

Third, Connecticut needs a balanced, affordable and sustainable budget that doesn't drive up property taxes or shred the social safety net. A more efficient government and a vibrant economy will get us there.

Question 2:
We need to be honest with voters. When it comes to budget cuts, the low-hanging fruit is long gone. Still, we must make smart spending cuts: increase government efficiency, slash energy costs and reduce back-office bureaucracy wherever possible.

Ultimately, the solution to Connecticut's budget challenges is to grow high-quality jobs. We need more taxpayers, not higher taxes for those who already pay their fair share.

Question 3:
Connecticut's small towns are special but the fragmented structure can also increase costs for taxpayers and make it more difficult for our cities to thrive. We all have a stake in Hartford's ability to attract businesses.

Municipalities should cooperate to reduce costs when possible but West Hartford residents cannot be disenfranchised in the process. The MDC / Niagara bottled water agreement left a bad taste in many people's mouth. There must be ample opportunity for public input before decisions are made.

19th Assembly District

Chris Barnes
Republican

Bio:
I am currently serving my second term on the West Hartford Town Council and I am running to represent the 19th House District in the Connecticut General Assembly. My wife, Stephanie, and I have lived in West Hartford for 20 years, and we have 3 daughters. I have coached youth lacrosse, served on the town’s Risk Management Advisory Board, volunteered for and supported a number of local charities in town, and currently I am a mentor and volunteer in the West Hartford Public School System.

Question 1:
My priority is to fix our broken state government and unleash our state economy. Our state is in a permanent fiscal crisis. Tax revenue is down, spending is up, and our future unfunded liabilities are staggering. As a result, people and businesses are leaving the state, including young workers who cannot find the jobs to support the high cost of living in our state.

First, we need to restructure and right-size our state government. Second, our state needs to become business-friendly. We need to cut the regulations, mandates, and taxes that make it more difficult to operate and grow a company in Connecticut. Until we do these two things our State will continue to move in the wrong direction.

Question 2:
Year after year the state budgets are unbalanced and unrealistic. If this was not an election year, the legislature would likely already be in a special session just three months into the fiscal year addressing the unrealistic revenue projections and spending numbers. The legislature has passed the two largest tax increases in state history under Governor Malloy and our budget deficits have only increased. The State needs a combination of spending cuts and economic growth. Tax increases are not an option.

Question 3:
Regionalization is a partnership and should be created voluntarily by towns and cities where it makes economic sense and creates efficiencies. It should not be forced on us by state government.

20th Assembly District

Joe Verrengia
Democrat

Bio:
State Representative Joe Verrengia is a lifelong resident of West Hartford. He was educated in West Hartford Public Schools and attended Northeastern University. Rep. Verrengia was a three-term incumbent on the West Hartford Town Council before leaving to serve the 20th House District in Hartford for the past six years. Rep. Verrengia retired from the West Hartford Police Department after serving 25 years on the force and currently serves on the Judiciary Committee, Transportation Committee, Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee, and as Vice-Chairman of the Public Safety Committee.

Question 1:
Budget – I support broad based reforms to lower property taxes and bring predictability to Connecticut’s finances. We need to move away from our heavy reliance on our already broken property tax system.

Economic Growth – The perennial generational funding is beginning to transform our economy, and Connecticut needs to make sure we are competing in that marketplace. I support a plan allowing students to deduct student loan interest from their state income taxes and giving first-time homebuyers a tax break for the first three years that they own a home.

Public Safety – In the wake of the recent controversy police related shootings, I introduced a bill to create an independent task force to review how police officers are trained. The task force will look to ensure that the state of Connecticut is adhering to nationally recognized standards.

Question 2:
I do not support program cuts that impact our most vulnerable population particularly people with disabilities. I support measures that would stabilize our economy by reducing our heavy reliance on property taxes, changing the way we fund our pension system, and create efficiencies by further consolidation in state government.

Question 3:
I support enhanced regionalism measures that expand regional Health Districts, procurement reforms, purchasing agreements, technology and transportation infrastructure, and shared-services programs. The cumulative effect of addressing the delivery of these services impacts overall government efficiency and effectiveness.

Bio:
I am currently serving my second term on the West Hartford Town Council and I am running to represent the 19th House District in the Connecticut General Assembly. My wife, Stephanie, and I have lived in West Hartford for 20 years, and we have 3 daughters. I have coached youth lacrosse, served on the town’s Risk Management Advisory Board, volunteered for and support a number of local charities in town, and currently I am a mentor and volunteer in the West Hartford Public School System.

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