

# Campaign '09



Dear Voters:

The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford (LWVGH) is pleased to bring you the 2009 Voters Guide for the West Hartford municipal election in cooperation with LIFE Publications. This Voters Guide provides information on all of the candidates, plus a sample ballot and list of polling places.

The League and West Hartford LIFE invite citizens to read the candidates' thoughtful responses and make an informed decision on Election Day, Tuesday, November 3. All candidates for West Hartford Town Council and Board of Education were asked to respond in writing to questions posed by LWVGH. Responses appear exactly as submitted.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization celebrating its 89th 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 nearly nine decades of service to the community.

We hope you find the Voters Guide helpful as you prepare to vote. We also encourage you to check out the schedule for the League-moderated debates that are conducted in cooperation with WHC-TV

(Channel 5). See [www.whctv.org](http://www.whctv.org). An online version of the Voters Guide can be found on the LWVGH website [www.lwvgh.org](http://www.lwvgh.org). Candidate profiles can also be found on [www.MyWestHartfordLIFE.com](http://www.MyWestHartfordLIFE.com).

*Carole Mulready, Chairman of Voter Service  
League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford  
Christopher White, Publisher  
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## Issues at a Glance

Candidate	Should West Hartford provide more incentives to assist and encourage small businesses?	Would you support reducing activities at senior centers to save money?	Should the town provide additional safe bike lanes?	Would you support an ordinance requiring developers to replant a tree for every tree removed in town?	Do you support prioritizing energy efficiency upgrades in the capital improvement budget?
Steve Adler (R)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Timothy Brennan (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shari Cantor (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Judy Casperson (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Justin Clark (R)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Leon Davidoff (R)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Rob Durbin (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denise Hall (R)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Rob Sisk (R)	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Scott Slifka (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joseph Verrengia (D)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joseph Visconti (R)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Town Council

### Steven Adler Republican



In 2007 Councilman Adler was elected to the Town Council and assigned to the Public Safety and Administration and Technology Committees. He was also appointed Legislative Liaison to the State Capitol. He served on Town Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands Commissions and was the town's representative to the Capital Region Council of Governments. He is a Manager of Risk Services and Crisis Management with Hartford Life. He earned a B.S. in Public Administration and M.S. in Business Management. The Adlers have lived in West Hartford for 12 years.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

The integration of the Board of Education (BOE) and Town Information Technology Departments as one single operating function. I would recommend the BOE take the lead on managing all town wide IT hardware, software and infrastructure planning and business requirements since BOE has a significant IT demand and more mature service delivery capabilities in providing technology services to our community. This proposed IT shared service model would reduce operating costs by reducing staffing needs, improve procurement planning and allow BOE and town administration to use common IT infrastructure.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

There are many cost savings opportunities in this area. Connecticut has 169 government entities which means there are a number of administrative services that are duplicated throughout the state. This gives West Hartford a huge opportunity to partner with neighboring towns using municipal shared agreements with such back office functions as animal control, building code enforcement, tax assessors and human resources. For the record I am strongly against sharing such services as police and fire departments and education. Currently many Connecticut municipalities have implemented successful regional cooperative relationships with their neighboring towns and are now enjoying the cost saving benefits from these smart decisions.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

Challenges: Identify affordable housing solutions for our growing baby boomer generation and middle class families who want to have a long term living relationship in West Hartford.

Opportunities: An increased diverse population amongst our residents improves our public perception of social inclusion while supporting the human rights of everyone.

### Tim Brennan Democrat



Tim Brennan serves as Deputy Mayor and is seeking a second term on the Council. Tim is an investment attorney for The Hartford, a graduate of Providence College, Washington University School of Law and spent a year studying at Oxford University. Tim and his wife, Deb, are proud parents of Jack, age 7, and Madeline, age 5. On weekends, Tim can be found volunteering as a coach for the kids' baseball and soccer teams. The Brennans are members of St. Helena's Catholic Church. For more information, please visit Tim's web site: [www.VoteTimBrennan.com](http://www.VoteTimBrennan.com).

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

Services to residents should not be reduced; rather we need to continue to get scrappy to cut costs while maintaining or improving services. Successful examples include:

Adoption of Connecticut's first Comprehensive Energy Plan, which will save millions of dollars for public safety, education and other services.

Use of technology to cut costs in our Town Clerk's office and improve efficiency in other departments. Reduction in town vehicles.

Obtaining federal grants and cheap financing to further efficiency goals.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

We should continue to explore a regional energy manager to further reduce energy costs and to implement the action items in the Comprehensive Energy Plan. An energy manager, like an IT department for computers, is necessary given our nation's sweeping changes in energy. If accomplished at a regional level, we will save on our tremendous energy costs, share expenses and benefit from experiences of other towns.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

Challenges: West Hartford continues to be viewed by the State and others as a wealthy town. While that perception is not true, West Hartford has continued to receive reduced state aid compared to other municipalities.

Opportunities: Because of West Hartford's ever changing demographics and the quality of our Town, we have had an outpouring of volunteerism in the schools, sports, human services and in countless other areas. We need to continue to utilize and promote volunteerism, not only to save money, but also to further improve the Town through new ideas and community involvement.

### Justin Clark Republican



Justin grew up in West Hartford. He is an attorney with a local Hartford law firm, prior to which he was an auditor at a national accounting firm. He is a third generation West Hartford native and lives in the Webster Hill neighborhood with his wife Kelly and his three daughters. Learn more at [www.clarkforcouncil.blogspot.com](http://www.clarkforcouncil.blogspot.com).

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

I don't accept the premise that services in West Hartford need to be reduced. Unfortunately, for too long we have seen services decrease while taxes increase. West Hartford is blessed with many resources, the most important of which are our people. So that we can continue to provide the services we have come to appreciate, we need our people to continue to be an engine of economic growth to broaden our tax base by keeping West Hartford affordable and attractive for families and businesses. Therefore, we need to keep local property taxes under control.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

Regional cooperation has its benefits, but as we have learned with regional entities like the MDC, it also has its drawbacks. On the council, I will fight any effort to regionalize or otherwise dismantle our neighborhood school system. This crown jewel of West Hartford needs to remain under local control, which is under threat from the state legislature and its racial imbalance law. This law improperly attempts to assign children to schools based solely on their race and I will fight it.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

West Hartford's diversity is one of our biggest assets. Having people of all different ages, races, colors and creeds makes this town great. I want to make sure that every child, regardless of background, has the same opportunities as I did growing up. Making sure our kids have these opportunities in the future is our biggest challenge. That is why I want to keep our taxes low, preserve town services and protect our system of neighborhood schools.

### *Full text of questions for Town Council*

1. Which West Hartford services can be reduced and still be viable (assume no increase in state aid)?
2. West Hartford and Bloomfield partner to operate the Health Department. What additional regional cooperative efforts could ease our economic situation?

## Town Council

### Shari Cantor Democrat



She is a lifelong resident of West Hartford, having attended West Hartford Public Schools and graduated from the University of Connecticut. She worked as a CPA at Coopers and Lybrand and Cigna. She has been married to husband, Michael for 24 years and has four sons. Shari has been a member of the Council since December, 2004 and serves as Chair of the Finance and Budget Committee, member of the Community Planning Committee, and Liaison to the Senior Citizen Advisory Commission and the Foundation for Public Schools. She is a member of the Board of the American Heart Association in CT and an executive Board Member of the Hillel for the University of Connecticut.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

Actually, past budgets have already reduced lower utilized services including, pool hours, office hours of some departments, library hours and mailings to residents. The budget includes reductions in capital expenditures, streamlining and adjusting trash, snow removal and leaf pickup while preserving the service as a whole. We continue to look for these opportunities.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

Regional participation also includes MDC and CRRA. We purchase energy and health insurance in consortiums to reduce costs. Service to residents and cost are always our primary concern. We look at opportunities with other municipalities and when appropriate we do a cost benefit of regional efforts. If it will benefit our residents, we will pursue regionalization to provide services at reduced costs.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

We are an economically and culturally diverse community. These demographics mirror those of our country. The needs of our residents vary dramatically. These varied cultures make us richer as a community but the economic situation has increased the need for assistance in fuel, food pantry, transportation, education and health and wellness education. We continue to balance the needs of the community and while maintaining our AAA bond rating keeping West Hartford financial secure.

### Full text of questions for Town Council

3. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities of our changing demographics?

### Leon S. Davidoff Republican



Republican Minority Leader of the Town Council seeking re-election to second term.

Education: J.D. Case Western Reserve University, B.A. Clark University.

Municipal Government Experience: Member Finance and Budget Committee, Member Human and Leisure Services Committee, Past Chairman/Member of Town Plan and Zoning Commission, Twice Elected to Newington Town Council.

Community Service: Past President Newington Chamber of Commerce, Past Treasurer Aiken School PTO, Past Rotary Club President & Paul Harris Fellow. Family Life: Attorney and Co-owner, The Paper Station; Member of Emanuel Synagogue; Married to Alexis, Father to Becky and Lani.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

As a member of the Town Council's Finance and Budget Committee, I have thoroughly examined and asked probing questions about the town budget. We must continue to examine how we deliver services to our residents, while preserving our community's core services: public safety, education and infrastructure. I believe that there are areas where we can reduce services without negatively impacting our community. For example, I support the elimination of half of our twenty (20) polling places. Further, I would support further consolidation of services between the general government and Board of Education, especially in the areas of information technology and health plan administration.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

Regional partnerships can assist municipalities by eliminating duplication of programs and services. When specific cooperative opportunities present themselves, I will continue to evaluate whether there will be a significant cost savings by forming a mutually beneficial arrangement with regional partners without jeopardizing local control.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

Our biggest challenge is "to keep West Hartford a top-notch, affordable, and terrific place to live, work and raise a family." I will continue to be fiscally responsible with our limited financial resources. Further, I will explore opportunities that will enhance our quality of life so that all residents will be proud to call West Hartford home. A strong commitment to public safety, excellent schools, and quality infrastructure are keystones of our community that I will continue to strongly support.

### Judy Casperson Democrat



I was born and raised in Denver, Colorado in a warm and loving family with 6 siblings. I attended public and private schools graduating from Parks College in Business. I have accepted a position with M.W. Financial wealth management team. My husband Olaf, our 2 daughters and I moved to town upon his retirement from the Air Force. Living 9 years on Auburn Road, I have served 6 years on the Bridge Family Center Board of Directors, school PTO's, Valley Community Church volunteer.

West Hartford embodies the best of our living experiences from Colorado and around the world with excellent schools, great public safety and services for seniors, families and young people alike and a thriving destination downtown. I would choose it all over again.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

The economic downturn combined with our continued lack of full funding of state aid for West Hartford has meant that we have to be very creative and to prioritize. Fortunately, while our residents have seen some changes to service delivery, we have been able to avoid elimination of essential core services. The cooperation of the town council and our unions helped us to stay strong in this challenging economic recession without risking our safety or services. We will endeavor to continue to make wise choices while seeking long-term State and federal assistance and, if reductions cannot be avoided, we should first maintain our priorities in education, public safety and senior services.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

I will work towards any type of government partnership that will help us save money for our taxpayers without reducing the quality of our services. Based on my business background, I believe that some efficiencies can be achieved by reducing administrative overhead and combining bidding and procurement functions with neighboring towns and regional organizations.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

The challenge is affordability. West Hartford draws young families for our schools, young professionals for our services and growing social scene, and seniors for our safety and town services. Maintaining quality services is important but I want to ensure that West Hartford remains affordable through thoughtful planning.

## Town Council

### Denise Berard Hall

#### Republican

Hall is a SVP and manager in Webster Bank's Treasury Department. A Conard High School graduate, she received her BA from UCONN and an MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She serves on the Town of West Hartford's Risk Management Advisory Board, formerly serving on the Investment Advisory Committee. She was the treasurer of the West Hartford Veterans Memorial Committee, former President of the Board of Trustees of Mercy Housing & Shelter, current member of its finance committee and associate member of the Government Finance Officer's Association.



#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

In times of economic slowdown, businesses don't stop providing customers with their products and services; they find ways to deliver the services in a more cost effective manner. West Hartford should not reduce its services, it should analyze and implement cost saving solutions to mitigate rising costs. Through my involvement with the Risk Management Advisory Board, I have seen how the Town saved \$165,000 in insurance premiums through reduction in the number of town vehicles, compliance with property loss control recommendations and commitment to safety compliance. I would advocate for an environment of continuous improvement and efficiency town wide to reduce and control costs without impacting services.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

West Hartford is the envy of many communities for our physical and human resources, level of professionalism in town administration, and overall economic strength. Unfortunately, this makes any regional cooperative efforts difficult as there is little that a neighboring town can offer us in reciprocity. Continued cooperative efforts with federal, state and local law enforcement could, however, help the town fight crime, which in turn promotes a better business environment and improved economic results.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

A town's changing demographic makeup is something that can't be controlled, but must be forecast, implications assessed, and possible outcomes projected. Comprehensive plans to react when there are shifts that cause a greater demand for services from any segment, such as senior citizens or returning veterans, or create a change in school populations, will ensure that the Town is prepared to react accordingly, without disrupting services or school systems.

### Rob Durbin

#### Democrat

I was born in Kansas into a hard-working family. My father, an oil driller, and my mother, a nurse, moved my family to Wasilla, Alaska, a few months after I was born. When I was fourteen, my family moved again to Great Barrington, Massachusetts, where my father ran a small business drilling residential water wells. I was a beneficiary of terrific public schools. After high school, I worked my way through Harvard College, Oxford University, and the University of Virginia School of Law.

My wife, Nuala Droney, a lifelong West Hartford resident, and I are proud to own a home on Lemay Street, near Sedgwick Middle School. Like many young couples, we chose West Hartford for its schools, extraordinary town services, and safe neighborhoods. I now practice law at Reid & Riege, P.C., a Hartford law firm. Outside work, I spend time with my wife, our two dogs, and I volunteer time with HARC, a non-profit for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

West Hartford's residents need and deserve the services the town provides. We should continue to explore safe, reasonable ways to lower the cost of services. We should also continue to find additional funding sources. For example, West Hartford recently replaced a significant number of traffic lights, at no cost to West Hartford residents, with federal funds.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

State and federal funding exists for regional services such as job training and housing initiatives. We should pursue such initiatives provided they are cost-effective and do not create an unnecessary, additional layer of government. Further, West Hartford must remain as autonomous as possible and avoid entangling itself in complicated, long-term commitments.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

West Hartford must continue its tradition of providing one of the best public school systems in the country. We should also continue to support our veterans and to explore tax relief for our seniors. The state's property tax structure disproportionately impacts seniors and residents with fixed incomes. We need to work with the state to get our fair share of state funding and to obtain relief from unfunded state mandates.



### Rob Sisk

#### Republican

Energy industry executive with 32 years experience in strategic planning, business development and union and non-union organizational management including 17 years with entrepreneur Roger Penske. Degrees from Rice University (Mechanical Engineering) and Université Paris Sorbonne (French). Married 29 years to Aude (Courcelle). Three children and one grandchild. More information at [www.siskforwesthartford.com](http://www.siskforwesthartford.com).



#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

Particularly as one gets further away from the classroom, patrol car or firehouse, all services are candidates for reduction. However, once we regain control over the runaway costs of employee/retiree benefits, (which are 259% of what they were in 2001, are increasing at over 10% per year and are siphoning off funds which otherwise would be providing services), there will be no need to reduce or eliminate services. Even in this election year, when the Council uncharacteristically restrained overall budget growth, the cost of benefits soaked up an additional \$2,500,000 that otherwise could have provided services to the community.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

As MDC clearly demonstrates, not all regional cooperative efforts work in favor of West Hartford. Each must be judged on its individual merits and on any future limitations it might impose on our ability to independently address serious challenges we face.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

Our community is unique in that we have almost 50% more "Over 65's" and over 100% more "18-24's" than peer communities. These low and fixed income demographics represent 30% of our adult population, are the most economically vulnerable and have been seriously hurt by the >50% increase in property taxes since 2001. Adding to their burden are the indirect taxes recently enacted (leaf pick-up, user fees) In 2008, I presented a five-year Town budget forecast and discussed the very real concern over Tiebout Sorting, a vicious cycle in which high taxes cause non-school households to relocate, to be replaced by school households, increasing demand for services without a corresponding increase in revenue, resulting in yet higher taxes (for more information visit [www.siskforwesthartford.com](http://www.siskforwesthartford.com)). In order to preserve the unique demographic make-up, and improve the affordability, of West Hartford, we must protect these most vulnerable residents by controlling spending at sustainable levels.

## Town Council

### Scott Slifka Democrat



A lifelong West Hartford resident and graduate of Hall High School, he has served as Mayor since 2004 and on the Town Council since 2001. An attorney with The Hartford, he received his B.A. and J.D. from George Washington University. Scott and his wife, Noelle, reside on Grennan Road and are proud parents of a 1 year-old daughter, Betsy.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

West Hartford has reduced its workforce by 1/3 since 1991 and we're 7% smaller since I took office. This past budget we cut spending by more than \$600,000 and reduced our capital budget by approximately \$35 million, while maintaining our AAA bond rating and keeping our core services of education and public safety intact. We achieved this, in part, via a combination of hiring and salary freezes and staff reductions. This is not sustainable in the long run absent comprehensive reform at the State level. So, assuming no increases in State aid and/or meaningful property tax reform, the answer is none.

West Hartford will continue to endeavor to do more with less and to work creatively with employees and taxpayers to ensure continuity and quality of services.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

West Hartford has long been a leader in regional/cooperative efforts that reduce costs to our taxpayers. In addition to the Health District, our membership in CRCOG enables us to save money through regional bidding for products and services. Any additional such efforts that reduce costs to our taxpayers without sacrificing quality of service or local control should be considered. Public works, employee management and investment functions present specific regional savings opportunities that we're presently pursuing.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

West Hartford is one of the most successful inner-ring suburbs in the country. We have become more diverse ethnically, racially and economically, while maintaining our excellence in education, our wonderful neighborhoods and growing into a regional entertainment destination. This has provided us with a great marketing opportunity in terms of attracting homeowners and businesses. The great challenge in coming years is affordability, whether we can continue to provide the same level of services that are largely responsible for our success.

### Joe Visconti Republican



Joe graduated from Hall High in 1974 and the University of Hartford in 1978. His three children, Joey, Gabriella, and Michael have all attended/are attending West Hartford Public Schools. He began his career as a Sound Engineer for Local 84 at the Hartford Civic Center and Bushnell Auditorium. During the 1980's Joe worked in the family construction business and remained connected to the Arts through composing music which he began at Hall High School. In the 1990's in Florida he became an Advocate for the Disabled as Chairman of Disabilities & Possibilities Foundation and an Emmy Award winning producer for its television series. Also a New York trained Actor, destiny led Joe to step into a new role in 2003 as a Community Activist who fought against public subsidies for private developers and continues his fight on similar National issues. Joe was last year's Republican Candidate for U.S. Congress in CT's 1st District and is presently working on completing a book, releasing his latest Music CD and running a small business as he volunteers as a West Hartford Town Councilor and raises his family.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

School Bus Transportation could be reduced by monitoring student participation and reaching capacity limits, saving energy, labor and the amount of buses necessary. The daily equivalent of one elementary school is absent daily in West Hartford (about 400 students) which is another cost driver.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

Regionalizing a Vacuum/Bag-it collection program utilizing a smaller group of independent leaf collection vendors along with Public Works vehicles can lower costs to participating communities. Armed with GPS tracking devices on all participating vehicles coordinated with the public online and employing energy efficient equipment, the opportunity is ripe to increase efficiencies in environmental recycling and increase public safety while providing support for labor intensive services to the public.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

Changing demographics is West Hartford. As we have in the past, we will continue into the future, representing all residents equally. Our challenge is to hold the State of Connecticut and the Federal Government responsible and accountable for funding their mandates and revoking those which are unsustainable.

### Joe Verrengia Democrat



A life long resident of West Hartford. He was educated in the West Hartford Public Schools and attended Wolcott Elementary, St. Brigid, Talcott Junior High and Conard High School. He also attended Northeastern University.

He is a nineteen-year veteran of the West Hartford Police Department. Verrengia is a two term incumbent on the Town Council. He serves as Chairman on the Community Planning and Physical Services Committee and serves on the Human Services Committee. He also serves as a Commissioner to the Metropolitan District Commission.

#### *Services reduced, but still viable?*

No one service is exempt from being reduced. I will continue to evaluate all town services to ensure that we are providing them in the most efficient manner. I will continue to prioritize town services with an emphasis on public safety and education.

#### *Additional regional co-ops to ease economic situation?*

West Hartford and Bloomfield partner to operate the Health Department. As a Commissioner of the Metropolitan District Commission I believe there are cooperative opportunities within the MDC particularly in the area of public works. I will continue to explore other cooperative opportunities especially now that we are in this very difficult economic climate.

#### *Changing demographics — challenges and opportunities?*

West Hartford's demographics have changed. I am proud to live in a town that is rich in diversity. I believe our town has done an excellent job in identifying the changing demographics. Like anything else with change I think there is room for improvement when it comes to meeting the challenges of our diverse community but I also believe as a community we can work together to meet those challenges and opportunities.

## Board of Education

### Andrew Bannon-Guasp Republican

Former Conard representative to school board.

Educated in our public schools, Conard and Charter Oak graduate.

Proponent of neighborhood schools and closing the achievement gap.

History major at Trinity College.



*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

West Hartford is a naturally diverse town, with 36% minority population in our elementary schools. We should be held up as the model for a successful integrated district. Instead, the state holds us hostage to enforce an antiquated statute. The Racial Imbalance Law is a statute that would have us treat children differently based on race. The Board of Education has failed to live up to its moral obligation to do what is in the best interest of our students, their parents and the taxpayers. The board should retain legal counsel and mount a challenge to this statute, and do so as soon as possible. I've read dozens of pages of correspondence between our Superintendent and the State of CT on this issue that were obtained through a request filed under the Freedom of Information Act. I am outraged by references made by our own administration to our schools having "too many minority students." Plans (never publicly voted on) to "encourage" neighborhood students to attend schools in other parts of the district, and statements like "once we get these students away from the neighborhood" ought to raise a red flag for those of us who view our neighborhood school system as the life-blood of our town. Equally troubling are the board's intentions to fully reveal the details of their plan to comply with this statute after the election. How convenient. This board has been operating in the shadows on this issue, and has abdicated their moral and legal responsibilities. It is time to finally do the right thing for our children and challenge this statute. That is exactly what I would proudly — and publicly — vote to do.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

Yes, with quality instruction and a sound curriculum we can.

*What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?*

There should not be, and will not be, any tolerance for bullying in our schools.

### Elin Katz Democrat

Born in Slingerlands, N.Y., I have lived in West Hartford for thirteen years. I have been married to my husband Steve, a West Hartford native, for 15 years and we have two school-age children, twin boys Justin and Zachary. I hold a B.S. from Cornell University, a J.D. cum laude from Boston University School of Law and an MA with honors from Trinity College. I am an attorney, a Visiting Lecturer at Trinity College and a professional writing consultant. Most importantly, I am a parent.

*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

Don't mess with success. We have great neighborhood schools that reflect the communities which support them. I will promote diversity in our schools and compliance with applicable law, but without disrupting our neighborhood schools. Of course we must respond to the Department of Education's concerns, but I believe that conversation should focus on our continuing ability to meet the educational needs of a diverse and vibrant student body in each of our schools, not on arbitrary formulas concerning racial composition.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

No one can predict what comes next in this economy. We are fortunate that last year the Board of Education was able to preserve programs vital to our students' development without an increase in the budget. Realistically, no school system can maintain quality over the long term without some budget increases to address the rising cost of energy, supplies, staffing, and other essentials. In the short term, we don't know what challenges the next budget cycle will bring, but I will work with stakeholders to once again maintain school excellence while living within our means.

*What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?*

Students are entitled to a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment. The Board has programs to promote tolerance and respect for diversity, as well as a comprehensive anti-bullying policy. These generally work well. That said, any amount of bullying is too much. I seek to increase programs that promote student-to-student communication and peer conflict resolution, to increase tolerance and promote school safety.



### Ellen Burchill Brassil Republican

Elected to School Board in 1997, re-elected 2001. All four children graduated Duffy, Sedgwick, and soon Conard. Lifelong resident. Librarian, Sacred Heart University. Supports local control, neighborhood schools.



*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

The state has rejected voluntary measures and is bearing down on West Hartford to heed a statute that would move children to schools beyond their neighborhoods based solely on race. This must stop. West Hartford is a shining example of a wonderfully diverse model school district. When the issue erupted back in 1994, the democrats responded with the controversial K-2/3-5 plan. That scheme (overturned following a citizen uprising) would have completely dismantled our neighborhood school system. The board back then voted to redistrict every child by placing them on buses for half of their elementary school years even though that plan lacked educational benefit and would have spent money moving children around rather than addressing authentic educational needs. The democrats' record on this issue would treat children differently based on the color of their skin. Recent, startling correspondence between the State and our district has surfaced and refers to "too many" minority students at Charter Oak and Smith, and "too many" white students at Bugbee, Duffy, and Morley. Those letters include specific statements on how our board and administration plan to comply with this offensive statute, even though plans were submitted without public debate or a board vote. During my years on the board, I consistently supported local control, neighborhood schools, and student achievement. Sadly, the current board leadership has concerned itself with social re-engineering, sleep patterns, and what should be allowed in school vending machines. It's time to put education first, reaffirm our commitment to neighborhood schools and do what is right for children. Challenging this oppressive statute would be a good start.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

Yes, especially through effective instructional strategies, our outstanding teachers and curriculum.

*What can be done to promote respect and decrease bullying?*

Bullying scars children for life and must never be tolerated in our schools. We must be vigilant and responsive in instances of abuse and bullying and support awareness.

## Board of Education

### Clare Kindall Democrat



I am seeking your support for my re-election to the Board of Education. I am a Board financial examiner and the Board representative to PT Council and WHIRED. A graduate of Wellesley College, cum laude, and the University of Virginia School of Law, Order of the Coif, I have served as an assistant attorney general for Connecticut since 1998. My husband Mark, son Keith and I are active members of St. Thomas the Apostle parish, as well as the proud owners of Rosy the basset hound, and MacBeth the Siamese cat.

*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

Only Charter Oak and Smith are affected by the State Department of Education's inquiry, and both schools are voluntary magnet schools — any neighborhood student at either school may attend another West Hartford school, and magnet students by definition attend voluntarily. Their voluntary enrollment historically has afforded them special status under the state law, which should continue. As a community, we need to support all of our students. The best way to accomplish this is to maintain our high-quality neighborhood schools, to focus on student achievement, and to address each child's needs, rather than to fixate on racial demographics.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

Due to the drastic economic times, my Board colleagues and I adopted a zero percent budget increase last year, while maintaining programs. This was possible only because everyone pulled together — unions gave concessions, students and staff engaged in a successful energy conservation program, and the Town Council and Board worked together throughout the budgeting process. In the long term, it is not possible to maintain quality schools without an increase in the school budget. In the short term however, as long as the community pulls together, our school system will endure this fiscal crisis.

*What can be done to promote respect and decrease bullying?*

Our schools' social health depends upon our ability to embrace the vibrant diversity present in our community. While lessons on respect start in the home, our schools have numerous programs to address issues of respect, peer pressure, and bullying. No amount of bullying is acceptable, and we continue to strive to apply these lessons to students' current circumstances, especially in this age of instant electronic communication.

### Lib Spinella Republican



Lifelong town resident. West Hartford Board of Education, 2005-present. Nurse Supervisor — B.A, Holy Cross; B.S., Cornell University. Grown sons attended West Hartford Public Schools.

*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

As a lifelong resident and member of the school board, I have a genuine appreciation for our neighborhood school system and the will and desire to fight to maintain it. I also remember the turmoil a democrat board inflicted on our town a decade ago when they voted to eliminate neighborhood schools, and to invalidate decisions parents made regarding where their families would live and which elementary school their children would attend. The racial imbalance statute is outdated and singles out/punishes those towns that have a diverse student population. To suggest, as this law does, that West Hartford can have an elementary minority population of nearly 40% and at the same time be racially isolated while ignoring West Hartford's natural diversity is ludicrous. The board has an obligation to retain qualified legal counsel and challenge this statute that goes after West Hartford. Despite their repeated failures to do so, the board majority continues to ask the state to believe they can be successful in convincing parents to have their children leave their neighborhood schools and waste time (and money) on school buses to go to another school in the district. This board majority needs to acknowledge that most parents and children are happy with their neighborhood schools, whether that neighborhood is Charter Oak, Smith, Bugbee, Duffy, Morley or any other. Regrettably, the current board leadership has chosen to keep the public in the dark concerning exactly how they plan to respond to the state mandate. Postponing public discussion until after the municipal elections is a disservice to the community and shows disdain for the very people the board was elected to serve. West Hartford and our children deserve better.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

Yes. High spending never guarantees high results. Quality instruction and cost effective practices in our schools count the most.

*What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?*

All bullying must be eradicated because of lifelong harm to children that results.

### Naogan Ma Democrat



A member of the Trinity College faculty since 1984, I began my teaching career as an English teacher in China. I have a BA in English from China, a second BA, and MA from Wesleyan university. My husband and I raised two children in West Hartford. They both attended schools in town since kindergarten. Amy is a teacher now and David is in college.

*How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?*

I understand the need to racially balance our schools. I must also stress the crucial element of parental investment in their children's education. Parents spend a lot of money for their children's higher education. Parents should also have choices when their children are ready for elementary school. State Mandate allows us to be more proactive in our effort to promote a racially diverse learning environment. Our goal should be focus on building high quality neighborhood schools, not disrupting them. Only Charter Oak and Smith are affected by the State Mandate, and both schools are voluntary magnet schools. They are building a community, we must support our community.

*Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid?*

I have been a resident of West Hartford for more than twenty years. I have seen our property taxes increase and school budget cut. It is painful but necessary to continue to maintain our quality schools. Just like our own family budget in hard times, however, we have to spend our money more carefully. In the last budget cycle, the board faced extremely challenging economic reality. The board worked with the town council to preserve programs. When budget is tight, it is vital to focus on our priorities.

*What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?*

When I served on the Board, the Board established the policy regarding bullying. Schools must be a safe place for our children regardless of their cultural backgrounds, language barriers, religious beliefs, and physical appearances. I will work to build the communication between teachers, administrators, students and parents to promote respect for differences in our schools. Students should also be encouraged to voice their concerns.

<b>State of Connecticut Official Ballot</b>		<b>West Hartford, Connecticut</b>			<b>Municipal Election</b>		<b>Date of Election November 3, 2009</b>		
<b>Be sure to read the instructions on the reverse side of this ballot.</b>									
OFFICE →			Town Council Vote for Any Six				Board of Education Vote for Any Three		
PARTY ↓									
REPUBLICAN	○ 1A Denise Barard Hall	○ 2A Steven L. Adler	○ 3A Leon S. Davidoff	○ 4A Joe Visconti	○ 5A Justin R. Clark	○ 6A Rob Sisk	○ 7A R. Andrew Bannion-Guasp	○ 8A Lib Brazil Spinella	○ 9A Ellen Burchill Brasill
DEMOCRATIC	○ 1B Shari Cantor	○ 2B Rob Durbin	○ 3B Tim Brennan	○ 4B Judy L. Casparzon	○ 5B Scott Slifke	○ 6B Joe Verrongia	○ 7B Clara Kindall	○ 8B Elin Kutz	○ 9B Naggan Ma
WRITE-IN VOTES →	○ 1C	○ 2C	○ 3C	○ 4C	○ 5C	○ 6C	○ 7C	○ 8C	○ 9C

## Voting Districts

1-1: King Philip Middle School

1-2: St. Mary Home

2-1: Whiting Lane School

2-2: St. John's Episcopal Church

3-1: West Hartford Health & Rehabilitation Center

3-2: Morley School

4-1: Elmwood Community Center

4-2: Charter Oak School

5-1: Webster Hill School

5-2: Town Hall (formerly the main library)

6-1: Wolcott School

6-2: Conard High School

7-1: Norfeldt School

7-2: Hall High School

8-1: American School for the Deaf

8-2: Bugbee School

9-1: Duffy School

9-2: Sedgwick Middle School

10-1: Braeburn School

10-2: Solomon Schechter Day School

### *You can make a difference*

Why not join the League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford? You could help to prepare voters guides like this one. Or you could become involved in studying important issues in our communities such as education, affordable health care, or regionalism.

E-mail Libby Swietek at [flkm@aol.com](mailto:flkm@aol.com) or call 523-1771 for more information. Membership forms are available at [www.lwvgh.org](http://www.lwvgh.org).

### *League of Women Voters Finance Drive*

The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford thanks contributors to the finance drive. Their generosity makes the Voters Guide possible.

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### *More voter information*

You can also find your polling place by visiting [www.westhartford.org/vote](http://www.westhartford.org/vote). Then click voting district information. Then click the first letter of your street address.

- Election Day is Tuesday, November 3.
- Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Remember to bring a picture ID.
- All polling places are handicap accessible.
- At the polling place, refer any questions or problems to the moderator.
- Registration cutoff for elections is up to the 7th day before the election.

Register weekdays in the registrar's office, Town Hall, 50 South Main Street.