

Voters' Guide 2012 by League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

Election 2012 questions for Bloomfield legislative and senatorial candidates

Quentin Johnson – Republican candidate for the 15th Assembly District



Biography: Quentin Johnson graduated from Central Connecticut State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Philosophy. He was an active part of the student body participating in the Economics Club and volunteering to tutor students in economics and math. Quentin has been an employee of The Hartford for 10+ years and he continues to develop and grow within the company. His current position consists of programming pricing models for the commercial markets actuarial division. Quentin celebrated his one year wedding anniversary to his loving wife Elizabeth this fall. He is very excited to announce the birth of their first child Abigail Elizabeth on September 16th. Quentin is active in his community. Quentin has proven to work across party lines to accomplish goals for the betterment of Bloomfield. Voters should elect Quentin because he will continue to protect the programs that better our communities while providing a new and unique prospective. Specifically, if

elected, Quentin is committed and focused on utilizing technology [for] economic opportunities

Q 1: If elected, what incentives would you suggest to promote job development?

I will encourage private and public institutions to offer student loan incentives in the form of forgiveness, lump sum, or installment payments as a standard part of their benefit packages. This will encourage talented individuals to remain in our state while providing a solution for the exorbitant cost of acquiring advanced education. This will also provide incentive to pursue advanced degrees with the peace of mind that there are policies in place to reward educational commitment. I will also promote infrastructure investment specifically in the form of sustainable mass transit. This includes moving towards fleet replacements with green vehicles while replacing bus lines with commuter rail alternatives. These investments will position our state for sustainable future success and provide employment opportunities.

Q2: How would you deal with underfunded state employee pensions?

This is our opportunity to combine sustainability, accountability, and affordability as it pertains to taxation and workforce management. Regarding the current underfunding I would agree with the assessment of benefit packages for future employees while NOT affecting current beneficiaries. The state must maintain accountability for entering into unsustainable contracts. Eventually hybrid pension plans with employee contributions will have to become some sort of standard. With regard to future situations it is a matter of culture change. We need to incorporate the concept of sustainability. The mentality of sustainability should apply to everything from green concepts to spending and taxation.

David Baram – Democrat Candidate for the 15th Assembly District



Biography: State Representative, 15th District (Bloomfield/Windsor), March 2009 - present. Serving on the Judiciary, Banking, and Vice Chair of General Law. (www.housedems.ct.gov/Baram)

- Appointed by House Speaker to serve on the Domestic Violence Task Force and as Vice Chair of the Town Functions Committee of MORE (Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies).
- Appointed to Chair Task Force to Reform the Real Estate Disclosure Form.
- Chairman, Bloomfield Democratic Town Committee, 2006 – present.
- Commission Chairman, Bloomfield Center Fire District, 2005 – present.
- Mayor, Town of Bloomfield, 1983-1989.
- Chairman, Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), 1988-1989.
- Member, SS&C SummerWind Performing Arts Center in Windsor.
- Managing Member, Law Firm of Baram, Tapper & Gans, LLC in Bloomfield (www.ctattys.com)
- Married to Paula Wagner Baram. Sons Danny and Matt.

Q1: If elected, what incentives would you suggest to promote job development?

Job creation is our most important mission as we exit the Great Recession. Jobs can be pursued in many ways. First is to create a positive business atmosphere, including less bureaucracy and lower taxes. Second is through economic incentives such as our Small Business Revolving Loan program, in which small businesses with less than 100 employees can borrow up to \$500,000 at 4% over 10 years. Our First Five Program provides loans, grants, tax credits to larger companies, provided a minimum of 200 new, full time jobs are created within CT over five years. Third is to lower medical insurance and energy costs for businesses. Fourth is to promote infrastructure repairs to our roadways, rail lines, shipping centers, and Bradley Airport, all of which will create thousands of jobs. Fifth is to pursue out of state company relocations to Connecticut targeted in areas of high tech, bio-science, energy, research and development. Lastly I favor the support of Incubator Projects that allow start-up companies to share space and secretarial help, to reduce overhead costs, helping these businesses to grow and expand.

Q2: How would you deal with underfunded state employee pensions?

The State must continue to properly fund its pension liability so we can reach actuarial solvency over time. We should also explore whether through various incentives, employees are willing to transition to a defined contribution plan.

Beth Bye - 5th Connecticut Senatorial District



Biography: A 15-year-resident of West Hartford with a Master's degree in child development, Beth, has spent the last 30 years as an early childhood educator and program manager. She previously served on her local Board of Education and as State Representative. As Senator, she chairs the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. She is a member of the West Hartford Unitarian Universalist Church and is married to Conard High teacher Dr. Tracey Wilson.

Q1: What will you do to promote job creation and economic development?

As the Chairwoman of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, I have promoted measures to make it easier for students to become involved in manufacturing, by allowing internships at a younger age and by providing funding to four community colleges to build state-of-the-art machine shops. There are 1,000 open manufacturing jobs right now in Connecticut, but there aren't enough qualified precision machinists.

I believe we should leverage our intellectual strengths to businesses. "Workforce quality" ranks higher than "cost of doing business" when it comes to where companies relocate, and part of Connecticut's higher costs are because our workers are more highly educated and demand higher pay. Let's leverage that. I supported the Jackson Labs project to create 16,000 private sector jobs because I know Connecticut has the type of worker that these highly-technical companies need.

Q2: Do you support current proposals to (1) open the CT state employee plan to nonprofits, and/or (2) develop a health program that offers coverage to residents who earn too much for Medicaid but who can't afford health insurance?

- (1) -If opening the plan helps more residents afford high quality health care, and the non-profits pay their share of the premiums, it makes good sense. Many non-profits and small businesses pay high premiums solely because they have small numbers of employees.
- (2) The federal health care law directed states to set up exchanges where affordable insurance can be purchased. We need to see how this exchange plays out before making further changes.

**Senator Bye is unopposed.*

Malvi Garcia-Lennon – Republican for the 2nd Connecticut Senatorial District



Biography: Occupation- Independent Insurance Adjuster; Education- Hillsborough Community College. I have spent all of my adult life in the private sector. Having owned a small business, I am deeply aware of the challenges small business owners face every day. This type of understanding and “hands on” business skill is precisely what is needed on the road to economic recovery. Connecticut needs jobs, and I recognize what the government must do to create an environment conducive to private sector job growth. In addition, reaching settlements through negotiations is what I do for a living. Negotiating is an art that has been lost in our state government. I possess the interpersonal skills needed for successfully finding middle ground and moving our state forward.

Q 1: If elected, what incentives would you suggest to promote job development?

- Tax reduction along with sensible regulatory reform.
- Work to reduce gasoline tax, which is among the highest in the nation along with the overall cost of energy.
- Educate small business owners as to the multitude of financing programs available to support small businesses and simplify the rules and regulations governing small business loans, and grants.
- Enact legislation stipulating that to the extent possible businesses using taxpayer-funded subsidies they must hire Connecticut workers.
- Education/business partnerships, to develop a highly trained and employable force.

Q2: How would you deal with underfunded state employee pensions?

- Shift newly hired employees into defined contribution 401(k)--style pension plans
- Increase retirement age for newly hired
- Increase contributions for newly hired
- Increase contributions for those earning \$200K or more.
- Stop pension padding. Benefit should be calculated on salary without overtime.
- Do away with double dipping.

Eric Coleman – Democrat for the 2nd Connecticut Senatorial District



Biography: Eric Coleman graduated from Columbia University, and UConn's law school. He is an attorney in private practice. In 1995, Coleman began service in the senate. He is Deputy President, Chair of Judiciary, Vice Chair of Planning & Development and Human Services and a member of Program Review. He served in the House of Representatives from 1983 to 1994, including a term as Deputy Speaker. Senator and Mrs. Coleman have three adult children and three grandchildren.

Question # 1: If elected, what incentives would you suggest to promote job development?

The state should expand its efforts to provide tax incentives and other financial and technical assistance to employers to encourage such employers to hire more employees and to expand operations. Tax incentives should include deductions and credits for hiring Connecticut residents. Financial and technical assistance should include wage subsidies and grants for the acquisition of equipment. State efforts should be particularly targeted toward small businesses and distressed municipalities and other locations where substantial unemployment and under employment persist.

Question # 2: How would you deal with underfunded state employee pensions?

In order to address severe general fund budget deficits, previous administrations negotiated agreements to forego full annual contributions to the state employee retirement system. As a result, as of February 2012, the state employee pension unfunded liability was \$11,003,960,000. As of that date, the system was funded at the rate of approximately 48% rather than the generally accepted funding rate of 80%. In order to fix this, I propose to increase the annual contribution to the fund to an amount that exceeds the annually required contribution. Additionally, the state should authorize the issuance of bonds, the revenue from which should be used for the specific purpose of addressing the unfunded liability of the state employee retirement system.