



444 East Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051 (860) 224-4000
2013 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions. Please fill out and return as an *attachment* by email to: mbrokman@council4.org. Council 4 has SPAM blocking software, so to minimize the chances of a failed transmission please rename the completed form using this format for the filename: last name first name initial AFSCME2013 (e.g., Debs E AFSCME2013.doc). *If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt of your email within a day, please notify us by phone immediately.*

Although it is highly unlikely we will endorse a candidate in every contest, Council 4’s delegate body will consider all timely submitted endorsement requests. We rarely take positions in primary elections. The best interests of our members, our communities and available resources will dictate our decisions. We are a large union with many affiliated local unions. As our endorsement process is complex and requires many steps, we encourage candidates to return our questionnaire as early as possible. *We will not make an endorsement without a questionnaire.* Thank you.

CANDIDATE INFORMATION					
Name	Formal	Ronna Stuller	Used in Literature	Ronna Stuller	
Street & No.	19 Evergreen Avenue			Appt. No.	
City, Town	New London		ZIP	06 320	-
Contact Information (Use * to indicate preferred contact numbers)					
Home Phone	*860-447-9823		Bus. Phone	N/A	
Cell Phone	860-772-8439		Fax	N/A	
	N/A				
Email	*rstuller@snet.net		Email	ronna@nlgreens.org	
Previously Held Offices					
Office		# of Terms	From	To	
New London Board of Education		1	2009	2011	
Union Experience and Participation					
Name and local number, if you are currently a union member.					
Titles of any elected/appointed union offices held.					
Job title and union name for any paid union positions.					
Are there any union initiatives or campaigns that you have participated in, either as a union member or ally?			I was active in a couple (unsuccessful) attempts to unionize my workplace in the 1980s and 1990s.		

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION					
Office Sought and District Number	City Council (at large)			Terms Served in Office Sought.	0
Do you anticipate a primary election?	No				
Campaign Committee Name.	New London Greens				
Campaign Mgr.	Joan Sullivan-Cooper	Phone	860-460-8720	Email	mrsj@snet.net
Campaign Treas.	Chris Nelson	Phone	860-287-3627	Email	chris1970nelson@gmail.com
Campaign Treasurer Address	7 Greenes Alley, New London, CT 06320				

ISSUES						
1	<p>Privatization of public services leads to poor service, increased cost, lack of transparency and corruption. A recent study by the UMass Political Economy Research Institute of the proposed privatization of New Haven school custodial services found that privatization actually leads to higher costs for taxpayers as federal and state public assistance programs subsidize private companies paying poverty level wages. Briefly tell us your views on privatization of municipal and board of education services?</p>					
	Comments:	<p><i>I am very cautious about privatizing services, but there is often a lot of pressure to do so. Increased corporate profit margins frequently offset any savings that may be realized at workers' expense. For this reason, while on the BoE I voted against transferring school nursing services from the VNA to the non-union Delta-T group.</i></p>				
2	<p>Council 4 participated in and supported House Speaker Brendan Sharkey's M.O.R.E. Commission, which was charged with helping municipalities find savings by developing economies of scale. However, too often municipalities join regional entities simply to sideline labor agreements and reduce pay rates. Will you oppose efforts to privatize services maintained by regional bodies, such as police dispatchers or trash collection?</p>					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose Privatization	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Oppose Privatization	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure, depends on circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/> Support Privatization	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support Privatization	
	Comments:	<p><i>With 169 CT towns, I favor regionalization to increase efficiency through economies of scale (e.g., synchronizing school calendars to save on transportation, or forming insurance consortia to increase the pool for negotiating rates. However, I oppose the use of regional organizations for the purpose of sidelining labor agreements or depressing pay rates.</i></p>				
3	<p>As a result of poor fiscal management, the City of Waterbury's finances had to be taken over by the State of Connecticut. Under similar circumstances, Council 4 believes the unions should be part of the solution, but the right to collective bargaining and binding arbitration should not be curtailed. Do you support Council 4's position?</p>					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose	
	Comments:	<p><i>Unions are stakeholders and should absolutely be part of the solution. It is frustrating when a one-sided approach is taken to solve budget ills. I believe that every worker has the right to be a party to the terms under which s/he is employed, and would oppose any effort to curtail collective bargaining and binding arbitration.</i></p>				
4	<p>Connecticut's collective bargaining laws have brought continuity and fairness to contract negotiations for the state and municipalities. Despite its success, some have attempted to destroy the interest (binding) arbitration system under the guise of reform. Do you support binding arbitration to resolve public employee union contracts? And will you oppose any attempts to weaken it?</p>					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support Binding Arbitration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support Binding Arbitration	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose Binding Arbitration	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose Binding Arbitration	
	Comments:	<p><i>I support binding arbitration to resolve public employee union contracts and would oppose changes to weaken it.</i></p>				

Social Security, an employer-provided pension and personal savings, commonly referred to as a “three-legged stool,” is America’s retirement system. All three legs are important: contrary to popular belief Social Security is designed to augment a retirement plan not to replace it. A “defined benefit plan” is a real pension; a “defined contribution plan” is just an individual savings plan (usually a 401(k)), not a pension. Real pension plans are perfect for municipalities: the taxpayer cost to pay for retirees is only 26¢ on the dollar; investments are stable and long term; retirees remain in town and boost it’s economy. On the other hand, 401(k)’s are costly and might provide an adequate retirement, if the employee is able to retire when the market is up. The good options are a well-run plan or participation in MERS, the fully funded plan offered by the state. If elected, will you:

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support the maintenance & participation in MERS or a local pension plan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Urge state legislators not to reduce the quality of MERS by increasing employee contributions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Provide employee savings plans only as a savings plan, not a false pension plan replacement

Comments: *I support the creation of a Public Bank in CT, which has been shown to help with pension-related costs in ND.*

In a 2007 property tax study, professor James Stodder found that the wealthiest 1% of Connecticut households paid an effective property tax of minus 1% when combined with Federal and State income tax deductions, while lower and middle class home owners pay over 3% of their income. As a municipal elected leader, what type of property tax reform would you support?

A real circuit breaker that would guarantee rebates over a fixed percentage of income.

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full funding of state-wide initiatives so municipalities equally share the impact.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Funding of PILOT programs at 100%.
<input type="checkbox"/>	A flat statewide property tax to level education costs.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Separate land and building taxes to minimize sprawl.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No change is needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____

Professor Stodder found that capping property taxes only exacerbates the inequalities in Connecticut’s property tax system. Council 4 strongly opposes property tax caps. Do you support Council 4’s position?

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oppose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Oppose
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Comments: *I would be interested in learning more about Professor Stodder’s research. New London has explored Land Value (split rate) taxation, and I believe it offers a promising approach to property tax, especially in urban areas; I am impressed that AFSCME is taking land use issues (density vs sprawl) into consideration as it explores options for fairer taxation.*

AFSCME believes that every student deserves a quality, public education. We believe school reform should be a collaborative effort between support staff, teachers, administrators, parents and the community. Every district and every school has a different population of students. A one size fits all model for schools is a problem. Will you work to include all stakeholders in the process of school reform?

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Comments: *Absolutely! I attended public schools K-12 and believe that high quality public education is the right of all students and the foundation of our democracy. The important point about public schools is that ALL stakeholders need to be included in any efforts to administer and reform education. School Governance Councils have been disappointing so far (at least in New London), but hopefully still have the potential to be truly inclusive of staff, teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students.*

A growing number of municipalities throughout the state and the nation have enacted Living Wage ordinances that require businesses receiving city contracts and tax breaks to pay employees a living wage and to provide health insurance. Do you support a living wage policy?

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oppose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Oppose
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Comments: *I appreciate the idea behind Living Wage ordinances; in the long run good for workers and for the economy. My only reservation: I was for decades a preschool teacher, and sometimes child care employees are excluded out of fear that centers will close and parents will be unable to work. It is insulting to deny living wages to people because their work is too “essential.”*

Do you support or oppose the existing law regarding prevailing rate for municipal public works projects?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oppose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Oppose
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Will you support the use of project labor agreements (PLAs) on municipal contracted projects?

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oppose	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly Oppose
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Comments: _____

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Many municipalities and boards of education have asked their employees to accept wage and benefit concessions, in some cases with good justification, but sometimes for political benefit without any apparent fiscal need. Please indicate which method you would employ in a fiscal emergency:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Immediately contact union officers; provide detailed information of the problem; tell them the union is an important participant in a successful recovery; agree to a working session with any ideas uncritically accepted for discussion; acknowledge that restoration of losses will be part of a settlement; discuss a method of resolution should discussions fail.
	Notify union that, as a result of fiscal necessity, certain actions will be taken to reduce payroll costs. Should the union wish to, the employer will discuss any matters that are mandatory subjects of bargaining.
	Notify the union that union members will be laid off if the union does not agree to cost saving concessions.
	Implement cost cutting procedures, and respond to union inquiries and demands as required by law.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Work with the union, and be open to ideas from the union, to reduce costs while maintaining benefits. One example is joining the state's health insurance partnership plan.
Comments:	<i>I have never been directly involved negotiations. In my personal experience as an employee, I have found that employers frequently fail to involve workers in the process of finding solutions to fiscal and other problems.</i>
Council 4 has aggressively lobbied for legislation helpful to municipalities, including implementing a more progressive tax structure to better fund public services. Will you lobby with us on this type of progressive legislation that will benefit municipalities, their citizens, and their workers? And will you oppose efforts, like the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities' position, to weaken labor protections for municipal employees?	
12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose
Comments:	<i>I strongly support legislative action that would benefit municipalities, citizens, and workers. CCM has supported some worthy goals such as fairer taxation, but I have opposed its efforts in the past which would expand the power of municipal governments at the expense of the well-being of people (working-class homeowners, as well as municipal employees).</i>
Council 4 works closely with our state Comptroller to find ways to reduce health care costs. One way cities and towns can save money, while maintaining quality care, is to join the state's partnership plan. If elected, would you work with us and the Comptroller to evaluate if joining the state's health insurance partnership plan is a viable option for your town?	
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose
Comments:	<i>I believe that New London has joined the state's partnership plan. I am supportive of this move, but, in reality, I believe that a single payer universal healthcare "Medicare for All" system is really the goal. That employers (whether governmental, nonprofit, or private) are responsible for health insurance puts a drag on our economy while failing to offer the universal coverage that residents of all other industrialized countries enjoy.</i>
Will you support allowing voluntary payroll deductions for federal union PACs?	
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Support <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Oppose
Comments:	<i>Of course I believe that workers should be able to donate to any cause they choose. That said, I do have some reservations about payroll deductions for federal union PACs, because I'm not sure how much influence local rank-and-file members have on the policies and decisions made on a national level. I think I need more information on how these deductions would work.</i>
Additional Comments	
<i>Though I've never been a union member, I have been involved in some (unsuccessful) attempts to organize at my former workplace, which is a large non-profit organization, and I've also advocated on the local and state levels for worthy wages for early childhood teachers. I believe that unions are one of the very few means we have to gain respect and fair wages for service professionals of all sorts, and to level the field between employers and employees in all fields.</i>	