

Southeastern Connecticut Central Labor Council



AFFILIATED WITH

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND
CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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2013 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Ronna Stuller		Office Sought: NL City Council	Party: Green
Incumbent? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		Primary or <u>General</u> (please circle one)	
Address: 19 Evergreen Avenue		Occupation: Retired ECE teacher	
City/Town/Zip: New London, CT 06320		Email: rstuller@snet.net	
Home Phone: 860-447-9823		Cell Phone: 860-772-8439	
Have you ever held municipal office before? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES			
If yes, what office: New London Board of Education 2009-11			
Are you now or have you ever been a union member? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO			
If yes, what union:		Union office held:	
Town Committee Name: New London Greens			
Campaign Manager: Joan Sullivan-Cooper		Phone: 860-442-6697	
Campaign Treasurer: Chris Nelson			
Treasurer's Address: 7 Greens Alley			
City/Town: New London, CT		Zip: 06320	
DO YOU USE A UNION PRINTER? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES			

1. **Taxes**

Will you join other like minded municipal officials to lobby for less reliance by our state on property tax, through tax reform that includes a shift to a more progressive income tax and a greater reliance on taxing large profitable corporations?

X YES

EXPLAIN

Property tax as it is now administered is very damaging to cities, which tend to have over 50% of their land off the tax rolls, so less reliance on it would be a good start. I also favor a more progressive income tax. Additionally, potentially helpful reforms would include 100% PILOT funding, state funding of education mandates (especially SPED), and split rate property tax (LVT) which would have the added benefit of reducing sprawl.

2. **Binding Arbitration**

A. Binding arbitration is a process intended to provide stability and balance within the collective bargaining system. Binding arbitration for both teachers and municipal employees was established to prevent strikes or any other serious disruption during the bargaining process. Specific time lines as well as criteria were established for arbitrators to use, and arbitrators were given final authority. The final decision by arbitrators was intended to be binding on both parties.

Over the years, legislation has passed that has changed the process and made binding arbitration increasingly more one-sided as well as binding only on the unions.

We oppose any further legislative changes to binding arbitration that would make the process even less fair for teachers and municipal employees.

Will you oppose any additional efforts to change either the TNA (Teacher Negotiations Act) or MERA (Municipal Employees Relations Act) that would further tip the scale to favor the employer?

X YES

EXPLAIN

Over the past several years, workers' rights have been steadily eroded. I would oppose any changes that would apply unequal standards to employers and employees in binding arbitration.

B. Will you oppose any effort to change the rules of collective bargaining, such as modification or elimination of binding arbitration, during a state takeover of a municipality?

X YES

EXPLAIN

Again, I am disturbed by the recent erosion of workers' rights, and I would not want to see the rules of collective bargaining changed during a state takeover.

3. **Privatization/Consolidation**

A. We believe that quality public services are best provided by public employees who are accountable to the municipality and most importantly the taxpayers. Describe your approach to privatization, consolidation and the use of quasi-public agencies.

EXPLAIN

As a general rule, I oppose privatizing services that provide "public goods" because (1) anticipated savings are often not realized and (2) public accountability is compromised. Consolidation potentials should be examined on a case-by-case basis: we can't afford to support redundant services, but

shouldn't assume that consolidation will prove desirable. Quasi-public agencies are risky, since they combine public funding with reduced transparency and accountability.

B. If privatization or contracting does occur would you require that cost benefit and other analysis be done before privatizing these services?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I would certainly want to know if savings due to lower wages at the labor level will be offset by the contractor's profit margin. While on the Board of Education, I voted against replacing union VNA school nurses with non-union privately-contracted ones (through Delta T.)

4. Employee Representation

Would you support a requirement that any municipal commission, task force, or oversight board that impacts employee issues include employee representation?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I think all stakeholders need to be included, as best practice in general, and in this specific situation.

5. School Reform

We believe that every student deserves a quality public education. We believe school reform should be a collaborative effort between 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. Would you support a collaborative approach to school reform?

X YES

EXPLAIN

Absolutely! All stakeholders must be represented in any effort to improve schools. I attended public schools K-12 as I was growing up in Philadelphia and strongly believe that the inclusiveness provided by public education is the foundation of our democracy. That said, I am disturbed about the current trend that equates excellence in urban schools with a highly regimented curriculum that fails to address the needs of the whole child.

6. Healthcare

Would you support a Connecticut specific health care reform law which includes a new health insurance plan for businesses and municipalities to join voluntarily?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I am disappointed that the United States has not managed to implement a single-payer "Medicare for All" healthcare system that would free employers from the burden of providing insurance as an employment benefit. The high cost to employers to provide insurance coverage threatens our nation's ability to compete in a global economy, and burdens the public sector as well. I continue to advocate for Single Payer, but in the meantime I support any intermediate efforts that would increase options for businesses and municipalities without compromising the quality of care.

7. Organizing

Will you publicly support the right of workers to organize a union? Will you use your authority to help in local administrative actions to limit employer opposition to workers who are organizing unions? (Please sign the attached pledge and return it with your questionnaire.)

X YES

EXPLAIN

I believe that every worker deserves to be a party to the terms of the contract under which s/he will be working. I have been involved in a couple (unsuccessful) attempts to unionize my former workplace (a large nonprofit organization) and was appalled by my employer's opposition and tactics.

8. Picket Line

Would you speak for workers and join in their struggles on an approved legal picket line or strike?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I have in the past occasionally joined picket lines to demonstrate solidarity with the workers and their goals.

9. Prevailing Rate

Do you support or oppose the existing law on prevailing rate for public works projects? Will you support the use of Project Labor Agreements on public works projects in your town?

X YES

EXPLAIN

Workers' wages should not be depressed to enable low bidding on public works projects. I would support the use of Project Labor Agreements, but would want to include provisions guaranteeing the inclusion of local workers and minority contractors.

10. Pensions

Do you support current defined benefit pension plans for municipal and Board of Education employees or do you support changing to defined contribution pension plans?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I support defined benefit plans, but have to acknowledge that current trends favor defined contributions plans, which shift risk and uncertainty onto retirees. I would be interested in working towards a system that is equitable for the city and for employees. As a long term measure, I advocate for the creation of a public bank in Connecticut, modeled after the one in North Dakota, which would be the repository of pension funds and has been shown to reduce risk to invested moneys.

11. Economic Development

Would you support economic development assistance to companies only if they create good jobs, pay fair wages and provide decent benefits?

X YES

EXPLAIN

I am generally skeptical of tax incentives economic development; studies have shown that there is better return when available funds are spent improving infrastructure or investing in education. But in any case, we should never give public money to businesses that create poverty level jobs. But I have other criteria as well. Living in New London, I cannot support any economic development assistance that requires tearing down a neighborhood; it is important to protect workers' jobs, but also important to protect their homes. And I would like to consider the long-term value of any project

being considered – many up-and-coming “green collar” industries can be the source of good jobs while also benefiting the environment, enhancing our quality of life, and creating a better future for our children.

AFL-CIO Statement of Principles for Public Officials

The Freedom to Choose a Union

As an elected official or candidate for office, I am committed to making our community a better place to live and work. I believe that unions contribute to the economic vitality of our country by playing a key role in making and maintaining good quality jobs that are essential to creating and sustaining thriving communities. I respect the right of every working person to pursue equality, opportunity, a voice on the job and a better life by forming a union. I understand that the decision to join a union should be the free choice of an employee, absent employer coercion. I believe that employers who interfere with, harass, threaten, or fire workers for trying to form a union or who deliberately manipulate the legal system to prevent or delay organizing are harming not only their employees, but our entire community. Such tactics have the effect of denying workers their basic human right to organize and bargain collectively, and drive down standards for the community as a whole.

- I fully support the principle that all workers are entitled to freedom of association at work, as recognized by the International Labour Organization, a United Nations-related body, and I support the right of workers to form a union and bargain collectively - in an environment free of interference, intimidation, coercion, harassment, reprisals or delay.
- I will publicly support workers who are forming unions by reaffirming the importance of unions to our communities and by taking actions such as issuing public statements, attending rallies supporting organizing, sponsoring public forums, and the like.
- I will urge employers to respect their employees right to form a union, to remain neutral during union organizing campaigns, to recognize a union voluntarily when a majority of their employees choose to form one, and to bargain in good faith and reach an agreement.

Name (print): Ronna Stuller Date: 9/26/2013

Signed: 

Office Held/Sought: New London City Council