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League of Women Voters
2005 Legislative Interview Questions
Questions for Pennsylvania Legislators

Question 1: Energy

a. What do you think is our most critical energy problem and why?

Pennsylvania, not unlike many other states across the country, is facing the challenge of trying to preserve our environment, to promote alternative energy resources, and to make energy resources available and affordable to consumers. As such, it is difficult to say one issue is more important than another.

As a state representative, I recognize the need to protect our environment and our energy supplies through a balanced approach that addresses the needs of our citizens and our industries. To that end, I joined my colleagues last session in support of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard Act. This measure promotes the use of clean and alternative energy sources, reduces our dependence on current energy resources, and stimulates our economy. Under this law, 18 percent of the electricity sold to retail customers in the state is required to be from renewable and advanced energy sources within 15 years. Ultimately, this law, Act 213 of 2004, will ease pressure on energy supplies and prices, resulting in lower energy bills for consumers in the long run.

Furthermore, I believe Pennsylvania's energy strategy must be focused on ensuring our residents are not overburdened by rising energy and fuel costs. The rising cost of heating fuel and transportation fuel is particularly burdensome for seniors and working families on fixed incomes. Consequently, I support efforts to provide more Commonwealth support for the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assist low-income households pay for home heating and repair costs.

b. What do you think is the most effective and quickest way for the U.S. to become independent of foreign oil?

As a state representative, I am limited in my ability to influence our country's dependence on foreign oil. Nevertheless, I recognize the need for Pennsylvania to do its part. Consequently, I have supported efforts to encourage the increased use of alternative fuels in Pennsylvania. As mentioned previously, I supported the Act No. 213 of 2004 known as the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act. This measure seeks to reduce our dependence on foreign oil by requiring the use of alternative energy sources. Moreover, I supported Act No. 178 of 2004 that enables the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to offer an incentive for citizens, school districts, local governments, nonprofit entities to use alternative fuel or purchase an alternative fuel vehicle.

c. Why should we be concerned about electricity utility emissions?

Clearly, the potential environmental health risks related to emissions of any kind should be of concern to our communities and our residents. However, I also believe we need to ensure these issues are addressed in an appropriate manner

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without placing an undue hardship on our industries. Like many others in Pennsylvania, I recognize that emissions and air quality standards are a national issue and should be dealt with as such. I do not believe we should have a "one size fits all standard" that negatively impacts our region when a significant amount of the problem is the result of upwind pollution. While I am pleased that the Environmental Protection Agency has worked with Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection to address the problems borne by our region, I believe we need to continue to explore ways to address our air quality and emissions problems without putting any particular area at a competitive disadvantage.

d. What do you think are the best ways to modernize our electric grid?

Work with Power Co's - help - tax credits

As a state representative, I am again at a disadvantage with respect to affecting policy related to the more national problem of our electric grid. I do believe we must consider ways to explore advanced technologies in this area and move to ensure this critical component of our economic security is keeping pace with the times.

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Question 2: Civil Liberties

The USA Patriot Act allows law enforcement to obtain personally identifiable information regarding library and bookstore patrons without their knowledge and without a subpoena. Do you support local enforcement of this provision?

Sacrificing essential liberty for security to have neither liberty or security.

While I understand and appreciate the need to make sure our citizens are protected from acts of terrorism, I am concerned with having our freedom come at the expense of some of our civil liberties. At this writing, I believe it is important to monitor how this provision may be implemented in Pennsylvania. As a state representative, I will work with my colleagues should we have an opportunity to impact how the federal government plans to impose and enforce the provision of the USA Patriot Act. Whether it is related to library usage or travel, I think it is important that we ensure this sweeping law does not adversely impact innocent individuals.

No

Question 3: Public Transportation

Will you support dedicated, reliable funding for public transit as a permanent line-item in the Pennsylvania state budget? Why or why not?

I recognize the need to address Pennsylvania's mass transportation policies. At this writing, my colleagues and I are working to determine what course to take in order to address the funding concerns of Pennsylvania's rural and urban transit agencies. Meanwhile, many of my colleagues and I recognize the need to address this issue from a larger perspective as it relates to our entire transportation system. In trying to determine a final remedy to the problem we face, however, I am concerned with the prospect of using a "band-aid" approach. I do not believe we can legislate a quick fix to the immediate problem and neglect the fundamental problem as it relates to funding transportation programs in Pennsylvania.

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserves neither liberty or safety" B.F.

Personally, I believe it is important for any final proposal to include funding for our local transportation needs, especially efforts to promote commuter rail service between Greensburg and Pittsburgh. In my opinion, we need to address this project as well as other smaller transportation plans that will help relieve traffic congestion and promote our economic stability.

Clearly, as we look toward trying to negotiate an agreement on this issue, many different funding mechanisms will be explored. While I am continuing to examine the various proposals out there, I am intrigued by a few ideas out there such as calling for a tiered vehicle registration fee based on the type of vehicle to be registered. For example, one proposal calls for increased fees for vehicle registrations based on the size of the vehicle as opposed to one set fee. At this writing, this is one of many proposals being deliberated so I remain open to what can be done to address this issue.

quality of life issues!!

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