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2009 Environmental Questionnaire for Westchester

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PERSONAL INITIATIVES

1. Please share with us accomplishments or experiences that would indicate your commitment to advancing a sustainability agenda for Westchester. These may be professional or personal.

Since my election to the State Assembly in 2002, I have demonstrated a deep commitment to introducing and co-sponsoring legislation that will enhance, protect and sustain our environmental resources while encouraging smart growth. Since 2002, I have consistently received top overall scores from major environmental organizations concerning my voting record on environmental legislation. I have co-sponsored every Environmental Super Bill since 2005. I was named an environmental superstar by the League of Conservation Voters in 2007. I have served on the Environmental Conservation Committee of the State Assembly since being elected in 2002 and have been Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) since 2005.

In the current legislative session, I introduced the Environmental Access to Justice Act (A.3423), which has passed the Assembly every year between 2004 and 2009 and was named a Super Bill this year. In addition, I have introduced the following bills in the current legislative session: the New York State Environmental Sustainability Education Act (A.3726), which instructs the Department of Education to establish a model, age-appropriate, K-12 program to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive environmental sustainability education program to be made available to public schools; legislation that establishes the new crime of unlawful defilement of a water supply (A.3194); legislation that requires that an affected municipality, upon request, be designated as a co-lead agency under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (A.3431); legislation that would cap the tax credits available for redevelopment under the Brownfield Cleanup Program which, if used by a small group of large developers, could deplete the credits available under the program, when a request for participation in the program was denied by the DEC, but the denial is subsequently overturned by a court (A.7998); and legislation that authorizes the Town of Bedford to offer sustainable energy loans to help homeowners and businesses within the town finance the installation of certain renewable energy sources and energy efficiency improvements (A.8387).

In 2007, one of my bills, the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act, was enacted (Chapter 596 of the Laws of 2007). This legislation gives municipalities in Westchester and Putnam counties the authority to create community preservation funds, using a local real estate transfer fee of up to two percent, subject to approval by local referendum. In 2005, legislation I introduced expanded the list of protected species to include species of special concern and certain species vulnerable to commercial trade was enacted (Chapter 706 of the Laws of 2005).

Since 2007, I have co-sponsored the bigger better bottle bill, a Super Bill which passed both houses of the legislature as part of the enacted 2009 budget (I voted for the part of the budget that included the bigger better bottle bill). I co-sponsored three other Super Bills this year, all of which passed the State Assembly in 2009: the wetlands protections bill, which provides the DEC with regulatory authority over New York's freshwater wetlands of one acre or more (A.6363); the Greenhouse Gas Control Act, which directs the DEC to promulgate rules and regulations establishing a statewide limit on climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions from all sources (A.7572); and the electronic waste recycling bill, which requires the recycling and safe handling of electronic equipment (A.7571).

As Mayor of White Plains, I will continue to adhere to the strong environmental commitment that I have demonstrated as a member of the State Assembly, as outlined in the responses to this Questionnaire. I will also continue the thoughtful and progressive approach to sustainability that is reflected in my legislative record as well. White Plains is fortunate to have the NYPA building, which is an excellent example of thoughtful building construction in a dense, core urban area. As Mayor, I will continue and expand this type of sustainable development.

ISSUE QUESTIONS

Our sister organization, the NYLCV Education Fund, identified key principles of urban sustainability in its recent [Blueprint for a Greener Westchester](#). By building constructive policies around these core areas, we believe Long Island can get on the path toward a sustainable future. NYLCV has endorsed these goals and others that promote the following core principles that represent a sustainability agenda for officials seeking elected office.

Please articulate specific policy and budgetary proposals that would advance the following goals:

2. Combating climate change by reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption

I have introduced legislation that authorizes the Town of Bedford to offer sustainable energy loans to help homeowners and businesses within the town finance the installation of certain renewable energy sources and energy efficiency improvements. This legislation is intended to reduce energy demand from existing buildings to allow the town to meet statewide energy efficiency goals and reduce carbon emissions. In 2008, I co-sponsored the Global Warming Pollution Cap/Greenhouse Gas Pollution Control Act (A.10303 of 2008), which directs the DEC to establish a greenhouse gas emissions limit no greater than 1990 emissions from all New York sources. It also requires that statewide greenhouse gas emissions are reduced eighty percent below specified levels. In 2007 and 2008, I voted for the Climate Change Solutions Act & Fund (A.7365-a and A.7366-a of 2008), which would earmark revenue from the sale of carbon dioxide emissions allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative for energy efficiency and clean energy and creates a dedicated clean energy fund.

3. Promoting sustainable land use policies

In 2007, one of my bills, the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act, was enacted. This legislation gives municipalities in Westchester and Putnam counties the authority to create community preservation funds using a local real estate transfer fee of up to two percent, subject to approval by local referendum. In the current legislative session, I introduced the Environmental Access to Justice Act, which has passed the Assembly every year between 2004 and 2009 and was named a Super Bill this year. This bill restores the original legislative intent of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) by allowing groups or individuals to challenge a SEQRA decision if they can demonstrate that they will suffer injury from a proposed project's environmental impact, without having to show that the harm they will suffer is different than that suffered by the public at large. This year, I co-sponsored wetlands protection legislation, which provides the DEC with regulatory authority over New York's freshwater wetlands of one acre or more.

As a member of the State Assembly, between 2003 and 2009 I co-sponsored smart growth legislation (A.543 of 2009), which requires that New York State agency projects that construct, expand or reconstruct public infrastructure comply with smart growth criteria, including sustainability criteria, and maximize use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs to taxpayers. As Mayor of White Plains, I will continue to be committed to smart growth policies that allow for growth while preserving environmental resources and encourage clean-tech industries and "green collar" jobs.

4. Developing sustainable solid waste policies

I assisted Westchester County in its effort to obtain money to address issues regarding its antiquated sewage treatment plant along the Long Island Sound. In 2008 (A.11702) and 2009 (A.8535), I introduced legislation that authorizes certain sewer district extensions to preserve water quality in the New York City watershed. In the current legislative session, I co-sponsored electronic waste recycling legislation that requires the recycling and safe handling of electronic equipment. In 2008, I voted for recyclables in landfills legislation, which would prohibit the disposal of recyclable materials in landfills and incinerators and identifies materials for mandatory recycling (A.3318 of 2008). Since 2007, I have co-sponsored the bigger better bottle bill, a Super Bill which passed both houses of the legislature as part of the enacted 2009 budget (I voted for the part of the budget that included the bigger better bottle bill). In 2007, I co-sponsored the Burn Barrel Ban, which extended the prohibition of open burning of solid waste, excluding certain materials, to towns with populations under 20,000 (A.5457 of 2007).

5. Reducing congestion and increasing mass transit ridership

I supported the recommendation of the Ravitch Commission to toll the East River bridges. I also support additional toll increases if necessary to reduce congestion and increase mass transit ridership. As a member of the State Assembly, between 2003 and 2009 I co-sponsored smart growth legislation (A.543 of 2009), which requires that New York State agency projects that construct, expand or reconstruct public infrastructure comply with smart growth criteria, including enhancing transportation choices, and maximize use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs to taxpayers.

6. Protecting our extensive shoreline and improving water quality

In the current legislative session, I introduced the Environmental Access to Justice Act, which has passed the Assembly every year between 2004 and 2009 and was named a Super Bill this year. This bill restores the original legislative intent of the SEQRA by allowing groups or individuals to challenge a SEQRA decision if they can demonstrate that they will suffer injury from a proposed project's environmental impact, without having to show that the harm they will suffer is different than that suffered by the public at large. This year, I co-sponsored wetlands protection legislation, which provides the DEC with regulatory authority over New York's freshwater wetlands of one acre or more. In 2008 and 2009, I introduced legislation that authorizes certain sewer district extensions to preserve water quality in the New York City watershed. In 2008, I voted for the Great Lakes Compact, an eight-state agreement that limits water withdrawals from the Great Lakes while protecting the rights of Basin states to continue their use of Great Lakes water (Chapter 27 of the Laws of 2008). In the same year, I voted for ballast water legislation, which would prohibit the discharge of untreated ballast water into New York State waterways to prevent the introduction of exotic/invasive species (A.1355 of 2008). In 2004, I voted for school water lead testing legislation, which would require school districts to test drinking water for lead (A.1898 of 2004).

7. Improving air quality

In 2007, I co-sponsored and voted for green power purchasing legislation that would have allowed municipalities to spend up to fifteen percent more to purchase electricity produced from wind, solar and other selected clean sources (A.2162 of 2007). I co-sponsored legislation enacted in 2006 that requires New York State to decrease air pollution from diesel powered vehicles which it owns or operates through the use of low-sulfur diesel fuel and retrofitting vehicles with more modern air emissions controls (Chapter 629 of 2006). In 2005, I voted for small business pollution prevention legislation, which created programs that provided information, on-site audits and technical assistance relating to pollution prevention and compliance for small businesses (Chapter 654 of 2005). In 2004, I voted for legislation intended to reduce the sulfur content of diesel vehicle fuel in advance of federal requirements and to reduce the sulfur content of home heating fuel (A.3923-a of 2004).

8. Committing to green procurement

In 2008, I voted for healthy green procurement legislation, which establishes a protocol for the purchase of services, commodities and technologies by state agencies with the goal of minimizing adverse impacts on the environment and public health (A.7483 of 2008). I also was a multi-sponsor of green state building construction legislation, which requires construction of new state buildings or substantial construction on existing buildings to comply with energy consumption and resource use standards established by the DEC in consultation with the New York State Energy & Research Development Authority (Chapter 565 of 2008). I also voted for green residential building grants legislation, which created a green building grant program to support construction of new residential buildings or substantial renovations to existing buildings that meet certain standards (Chapter 631 of 2008). As the above record indicates, as Mayor of White Plains, I will remain committed to green procurement policies.

9. Supporting a sustainable economy by encouraging clean-tech industries and “green collar” jobs

As a member of the State Assembly, between 2003 and 2009 I co-sponsored smart growth legislation (A.543 of 2009), which requires that New York State agency projects that construct, expand or reconstruct public infrastructure comply with smart growth criteria, including sustainability criteria, and maximize use of existing infrastructure to minimize costs to taxpayers. As Mayor of White Plains, I will continue to be committed to smart growth policies that allow for growth while preserving environmental resources and encourage clean-tech industries and “green collar” jobs.