

Westchester/Putnam Central Labor Body AFL-CIO Questionnaire for Candidate for State Political Office

Please complete and return to:
Westchester/Putnam CLB AFL-CIO
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The Westchester/Putnam Central Labor Body represents over 120,000 union members and working families in both Westchester and Putnam Counties and beyond. We are non-partisan and our only goal is to represent the interest of our members, their families, and the thousands of working men and women who strive for good jobs, a healthy economy and a secure future. When reviewing this questionnaire, please feel free to call on us for background on an issue that you are unfamiliar with or need clarification on. You are not limited to the space provided. Please use the back to include any information you feel is important in order to answer any question fully.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Candidate for _____ District# _____ Incumbent ? _____

Telephone # _____ E-mail address _____

Party Affiliation _____ Other lines? _____

Are you in a primary? _____ If yes, which lines? _____

Profession/Occupation _____

Employer _____

Are you a union member? _____

If so, which International ? _____ Which Local? _____

Are you currently endorsed by any unions if so, which ones? _____

Please list AFL-CIO union leaders that you seek input from when developing legislative goals and priorities _____

1) Right to Organize/ Employee Free Choice Unions have contributed to democracy, the economic vitality of our communities and the well being of New York’s working families by providing employees with a voice on the job. However, some employees are still unable to exercise their right to form a union. It’s time for employers to honor their workers decision to join a union after a majority of them signed a union authorization card or petition.

Would you take a public position to fully support the principles, guaranteed under the state and federal law, that employees are entitled to a free choice to form a union without interference, intimidation or fear of reprisals?

What actions would you personally take or have you taken to support workers organizing to form a union or seeking collective bargaining agreements? Examples: walking picket lines, writing a letter of support, offering intermediary support, etc. Explain _____

2) Living Wage. Westchester County passed a living wage bill; however, we at the WPCLB believe much more can be done to improve the quality of life for workers. What do you think should also be done to accomplish this and how? _____

How would you support a living wage ordinance/law that would ensure that all businesses that receive public funds pay their employees a living wage for jobs performed? _____

Do you support a prohibition on contracting for goods or services unless a bidder provides for the living wage and why? _____

What is your position on issues concerning day laborers? _____

3) Education. Do you support tuition tax credits in higher education (college level and above) and why?

Do you support tuition tax credits for elementary, middle and high school levels and why? _____

Do you support the charter school concept and why? _____

What do you think can be done to insure proper funding for our schools and what steps can/should be taken to ensure a quality education for our children? _____

4) Privatization. Are you for or against the privatization of public services and why?

In conjunction with this question, what is your position on (1) prevailing wages on public projects and (2) on successorship contracts in light of the current trend of selling or merging companies? _____

5) Outsourcing. Please give us your views on this subject and any suggestions pro or con.

6) Project Labor Agreements are a comprehensive agreement between a municipality and/or developer and a jurisdictional Building Trades Council that set requirements for a building project. PLAs save money by guaranteeing no strikes or picketing, that correct wages are paid, and that unscrupulous contractors won't victimize the project. PLA projects guarantee unions will work together so the project is of higher quality, are usually finished on or before schedule, use community labor and are often below budget. Are you for or against project labor agreements and why?

7) Tax Breaks. Do you support tax breaks or other benefits for volunteer emergency services workers and why? _____

8) Workers Compensation The maximum weekly benefit for workers injured on the job has recently been increased. What is your position on this issue? _____

9) Empire Zones. Currently there is a program in New York State called Empire Zones that give large tax breaks to companies that locate in areas of high poverty and unemployment. It has been proposed to change this so companies would no longer be able to receive tax breaks if they fail to pay a living wage or consistently violate worker safety, overtime or environmental protection laws. Would you support or oppose this change and why?

10) Economic Development Do you support, as a condition of receiving economic development assistance, requiring companies to make commitments to provide good jobs (jobs that pay a living wage, provide benefits, etc) and commitments to stay in the community for a certain period of time? _____

Do you agree that the creation of community and regional economic development strategies must include input from labor and community interests? Please explain why or why not. _____

Would you support requirements that contractors providing services offer priority employment to workers displaced by changes in contractors? _____

11) Industrial Development Agencies Industrial Development Agencies are an economic development scheme that should promote job creation and business retention in our communities. When abused, however, IDAs waste taxpayer dollars and do not provide a good return on our public investment, while placing local property taxpayers at risk for questionable business ventures.

What is your position on legislation that would establish reforms to ensure that our IDAs are supporting responsible businesses that will deliver on their promises to taxpayers to provide good jobs and services to New Yorkers including prevailing rate and wage standards for construction & permanent jobs created by subsidized projects and recovery on capital from failed business ventures? _____

12) State & Local Budgets. Given the extent of the fiscal difficulties in New York, how would you preserve services and relieve the burden on local governments? _____

13) State Revenue New York State's unfair and inflexible tax policy is directly related to our high property tax burden and has shifted the responsibility of paying for vital services from the state to local property taxpayers. The state continually shortchanges health care,

education, higher education, road and bridge repair, infrastructure improvements and many other important programs. We need to focus on shifting the burden from the property tax (regressive) to the income tax (progressive). This can be done by increasing the top marginal income tax (PIT) rates on the wealthiest wage earners. The state's PIT top tax rate of 6.85% is paid by single individuals earning over \$20,000 per year and for families earning over \$40,000 per year. It is unfair that a family making \$45,000 pays the same tax rate as a family making \$4.5 million.

The New York State AFL-CIO and its affiliates are supporting a proposal to create a more flexible income tax structure in New York to ensure there is adequate revenue to pay for the services that New York's working families rely on. The plan, which has been developed by the Fiscal Policy Institute, gradually increases the rate on New York's wealthiest wage earners, who make over \$200,000 a year.

What is your position on a new tax restructuring plan to shift the burden from New York property taxes to a gradual increased rate for New York State's top income over \$200,000 a year? _____

14) Improved Temporary Disability and Family Leave New York's temporary disability insurance (TDI) program is currently capped at a woeful \$170 per week and has not been increased for almost two decades. The New York State AFL-CIO is proposing to phase in an increase of the TDI program to eventually reach 50% of the average weekly wage with an annual index to automatically account for A.W.W. increases. Also, it is time to include a new family leave benefit in the TDI program.

The pressure of work responsibility and family responsibility frequently presents conflicts for workers. There is a proposal currently being considered in the state legislature that would provide all employees in New York State with a number of leave-related benefits. This would include paid family leave for events such as childbirth, caring for critically ill children, adoption, paternity, and spousal or elder care. It also would include short-term disability absences for school visits and medical procedures such as breast cancer and prostate cancer screenings. These benefits would be provided under the state Disability Insurance law, for up to twelve weeks leave.

Would you favor an immediate increase in New York's temporary disability insurance (TDI) benefits, coupled with the introduction of an indexed benefit? _____

Would you vote for a paid family leave plan modeled on disability insurance for all workers so that they might take care of critical family illness and other family matters such as child birth or adoption? _____

15) Procurement and Health Care The state and its political subdivisions spend billions of dollars on procurement of goods, services and on capital construction. Would you favor legislation that would give a bidding preference to employers who provide paid health insurance benefits? _____

16) Pensions Recent news reports have discussed the cancellation or elimination of employee pension plans. Such plans are often held to be too costly to be maintained. Do you favor switching to 401K style worker directed investment plans, or a New Tier V for public workers? _____

17) Affordable Housing Affordable housing for middle class working families is a continuing problem. Do you favor employer subsidies for housing, governmental initiatives for construction of middle income affordable housing, creation of affordable housing trusts funded through segregation of mortgage recording taxes or surcharges on real property taxes? _____

*Payment of prevailing wages in the construction of such projects? _____

18) Other issues. Please give your position on the following:

A) Privatization of Social Security _____

B) Universal Healthcare _____

C) The Right to Strike _____

D) Taylor Law Reform _____

E) Apprenticeship Training _____

F) **Unemployment Benefits** Would you support raising the maximum benefit for unemployment and indexing it to the state Average Weekly Wage (eg 2/3 of the average weekly wage)? _____

(G) **Labor Appointments** Would you or have you, as an elected official, appointed representatives of organized labor to boards and commissions to ensure working people have a full voice in public policy decisions and will you seek the input from this Central Labor Council in making choices for members of these boards and commissions? _____

Please list any labor appointments you have made in the past _____

19) What are your top three legislative priorities?

20) Why do you want the Westchester/Putnam Central Labor Body's endorsement?

21) Why should we endorse you? _____

22) What else would you like our members to know about you? _____

Signature

Date