

2006 Special Elections Candidate Questionnaire

DEADLINE: TBD – Contact VALCV

About this questionnaire: The Virginia League of Conservation Voters thanks you for taking time out of your busy campaign schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your responses on the questionnaire will be a factor in endorsement and campaign contribution considerations.

Introduction: As a member of the General Assembly you will consider numerous environmental issues which will be before you as legislation. Most of these issues are represented in the following questionnaire.

We ask that you circle a **YES** or **NO** to each question that calls for it. If you do not, the interpretation of your response will be left to a screening committee. There are no “trick” questions – all “yes” responses support our positions. If you need further clarification of any of the questions, please do not hesitate to call us for additional information. If your response supports our conservation position, we assume that you will support appropriate legislation. Please feel free to offer a written response using the space below the question or by attaching additional comments. If you would prefer to correspond via email, please provide us with your email address. Please complete this questionnaire and return it to:

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*VALCV utilizes completed questionnaires strictly for the purposes of endorsement. We do not share completed questionnaires with the news media.

Candidate's Name - Please print

Candidate's Signature

Party Affiliation: _____

Legislative District: _____

Home Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Office Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Campaign
Manager: _____ Phone: _____

Campaign Address: _____

Email: _____

1. Smarter Growth

In order to capture the benefits of growth while reducing subsidies for sprawling development and the adverse impacts of sprawl on natural areas and existing communities, an increasing number of states and localities have begun to direct funding for roads, water, sewer, and schools only to those areas where the infrastructure exists to serve new residents and businesses, or in specifically designated growth areas as determined by local government where infrastructure can be provided in an orderly manner.

If elected, would you support legislation to target state infrastructure funding to promote more efficient development? **YES** **NO**

Comments on Smarter Growth:

2. Land Use and Zoning

a. Many local governments are now facing fiscal strains for water, sewer, schools, roads and other public services for rapidly growing populations due to earlier mistakes that resulted in over-planning and over-zoning in their communities. The resulting growth is also adding to the demands for state funds.

Do you support state funding and technical assistance to local governments to help them conduct planning analyses and to develop realistic, affordable comprehensive plans and ordinances?
 YES **NO**

b. When local governments have gone to the General Assembly in recent years for more authority to manage their growth, members of the General Assembly have told them that local governments have adequate authority; they just don't have the political will to use it. Yet in the last decade, the General Assembly has passed bills that collectively undermine local land use authority, including expanding the vesting of proffered rezonings, site plans and subdivision plats, and curtailment of the special exception process. In the 2005 session the development community initiated legislation to limit a locality's ability to seek proffers.

Will you oppose all attempts to reduce local land use authority? **YES** **NO**

Will you support greater authority for localities to manage their growth? **YES** **NO**

Will you support legislation that will provide localities with additional tools to effectively manage their rate of growth? (Possibilities may include Adequate Public Facilities or impact fees.) **YES** **NO**

c. Many of Virginia's cities and towns have faced loss of jobs and population to the suburbs, leaving social and economic problems, but also a wealth of underutilized public infrastructure. Meanwhile, a significant portion of state spending for highways and for economic development incentives has been directed to the suburbs.

Would you support a comprehensive urban policy for the Commonwealth that would invest in our cities and towns including funding for brownfields cleanup, urban transit, school modernization, and economic development incentives for companies locating in downtown areas? **YES** **NO**

Comments on Land Use and Zoning:

3. Transportation

Virginia spends hundreds of millions of dollars on wasteful projects that damage the environment and harm public health. Foremost among these wasteful programs are inefficient highway projects that exacerbate sprawl, fail to reduce congestion, and are damaging to the environment and public health. While VDOT is spending over a billion dollars a year on new highway construction, existing roads are falling into disrepair. Moreover, VDOT has produced a wish-list of new projects totaling \$203 billion over 20 years, or nearly twice what we are spending today.

a. VDOT often does not study the growth impacts of new highways, yet these projects can significantly contribute to suburban sprawl by opening new areas to development and reduce the effectiveness of the new project by increasing the number of miles we drive.

Do you support requiring VDOT to study the land use impacts of new highways? **YES** **NO**

b. VDOT's wish-list of \$203 billion presumes unending increases in vehicle miles traveled and vehicle miles traveled per person. It might not even include all of the demands being generated by scattered development possible under local comprehensive plans. VDOT did not analyze the potential for alternate land use scenarios to reduce the growth in driving and reduce the need for new infrastructure.

Do you support requiring VDOT to work with local governments and regional commissions to study land use and demand reduction alternatives that could reduce the need for new highways and the long-term cost to the taxpayers? **YES** **NO**

Do you support studying the full range of demand reduction alternatives, including land use and community design solutions, before seeking funding increases for transportation? **YES** **NO**

c. Too often the major new projects being built today have been bypass highways and highway expansions that do not relieve the congestion drivers face today. The conservation community is concerned about a number of these proposed projects.

Please comment on any of the following projects for which you would support funding:

- i. *Western Transportation Corridor and the so-called techway bridge crossing in Northern Virginia*
- ii. *Widening the Capital Beltway to 12 lanes*
- iii. *Incorporating rail into the Woodrow Wilson Bridge*
- iv. *I-73 in Southside/Roanoke area*
- v. *Southeastern Expressway in Hampton Roads*
- vi. *Widening I-81*
- vii. *Route 29 Bypass of Charlottesville*
- viii. *Widening of I-66 in Northern Virginia*

d. The proposed truck lanes for I-81 could cost as much as \$13 billion, the second most costly highway project in our nation's history. Nearly all jurisdictions in the corridor have raised concerns about the project and its negative impact on the landscape, tourism, and the economy. Any federal funding earmarked to the project would count against Virginia's overall federal allocation reducing funding for other parts of Virginia. Yet, VDOT's past and planned expenditures for targeted improvements would address identified safety issues. The trucking industry opposes tolls to pay for the project and estimates significant truck traffic diversions to other Virginia highways.

Would you support lower cost targeted solutions to truck traffic on I-81, including rail upgrades?

YES NO

e. The focus on finding funding to build highways has led to a rapid increase in use of the Public Private Transportation Act (PPTA) of 1995 to promote highway expansion. It has been suggested that a Public Private project require a 15% private investment. Yet a recent report shows that the PPTA has failed to meet its objective of attracting private equity for transportation projects, that the costs and potential liability to taxpayers for these projects are significant, and that the Act can undercut sound transportation planning, limiting public input and consideration of alternatives, contributing to sprawl development, and shifting authority away from the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

If elected, would you support PPTA reform to address these shortcomings, while promoting timely and less costly transportation improvements? **YES NO**

f. The state transportation funding allocation formula in Virginia encourages localities to build highways instead of improving public transportation by requiring a much greater funding match for transit construction than highway construction, and a local match for transit maintenance but no match for highway maintenance. VDOT's budget allocates as little as 5% of total funds to public transit, yet access to transit is critical for relieving metropolitan congestion, air pollution, and providing access to jobs for all socioeconomic groups.

Would you level the playing field by requiring a local match for highway maintenance?

YES NO

If elected, would you support increased funding for public transportation, both construction and operations? **YES NO**

Would you support more funding for improving passenger and freight rail? **YES NO**

g. A number of policies would help to provide more choices in transportation, improve the functioning of existing highways at lower cost, and preserve the historic landscapes that contribute to our tourism and economic competitiveness.

Please indicate whether you would support the following policies:

- 1) *Requiring bicycle and pedestrian facilities for secondary and primary roads.* **YES NO**
- 2) *Requiring context sensitive design for the construction of roads.* **YES NO**
- 3) *Adoption of stronger access management policies to reduce the number of intersecting driveways and local roads being added to the state's primary highways, to preserve the flow of through traffic.* **YES NO**

Comments on Transportation issues:

4. Open Space

a. Virginia's open space and farmland is rapidly disappearing. According to the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia's rate of development is 11th highest nationally. Between 1992 and 2000, 54,000 acres of forestland were lost annually to development. The protection of these precious resources can be accomplished not only by buying land but also through the purchase of conservation easements and development rights from willing sellers. Yet Virginia lags far behind our neighbors in providing funding to protect open space, natural areas, and working farms. In the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia agreed to permanently protect 20% of the land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Pennsylvania has met their goal, Maryland has made significant gains, and Virginia has over 400,000 acres to go. Yet the most Virginia has ever allocated to land conservation in a single year is \$12.5 million. It is estimated that Virginia needs to spend nearly \$500 million just to protect the remaining acres in the Bay watershed in order to meet our commitment and the Bay watershed makes up only 60% of the state.

Would you support funding for open space protection? **YES** **NO**

b. One means of funding open space protection is through a dedicated source of revenue. Five states on the eastern seaboard have a dedicated source of revenue to fund open space acquisition for parks, farm land and forest preservation. Many such programs around the country (e.g. NC, MD) are funded through the transfer tax on the sale of real property. \$50 or \$120 million a year can sound like a lot of money, until you consider that 1 mile of a 4 lane highway costs between \$40 and \$56 million.

Would you support committing \$100 million of the existing recordation tax (proceeds of which now go to the state's general fund) to a fund for open space preservation? **YES** **NO**

c. Virginia has a land preservation tax credit that is serving as a significant incentive for landowners to donate conservation easements to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and private land trusts.

Do you support continuing the tax credit program? **YES** **NO**

Comments on Open Space:

5. Farmland Preservation

The Virginia Agricultural Vitality Program was initiated by the General Assembly in 2000 to begin to address the issues of farmland loss, intergenerational business transfer and economic viability.

a. *Now that all of the elements of the program are in place, would you support funding for this vital program?* **YES** **NO**

Virginia returned matching funds for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements to the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program in 2004. Ten localities have adopted PDR programs and numerous others are developing programs to purchase development rights from rural lands. States provide an average of 60% of the funding for these programs.

b. *Do you support funding this program in Virginia?* **YES** **NO**

Comments on Farmland Preservation:

6. Solid Waste

a. The cost of cleaning up Virginia's abandoned and leaking landfills is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Many of these landfills were and are owned and operated by Virginia counties and cities. One way to generate revenues to cover these clean up costs is to impose a per ton fee on all waste disposed of in Virginia. In order for such a waste disposal fee to be constitutional, it must be charged on waste generated in state as well as out of state waste. This means that local governments will likely be opponents of such a fee.

Would you support imposing a fee on every ton of garbage to cover the costs of comprehensive solid waste planning, waste reduction efforts, and landfill closing and cleanup costs? **YES** **NO**

b. *H.R. 274 and H.R. 70 are two effective interstate waste bills currently before Congress which were initiated by the VA delegation - will you actively support these bills introduced by Virginia's Congressional delegation to reduce and limit trash imports?* **YES** **NO**

Would you support limiting imports to 20% of a landfill's capacity? **YES** **NO**

c. During the 2001 and 2004 General Assembly session, legislation was enacted that weakened environmental siting standards for specific landfills in the Commonwealth. In 2005, the General Assembly passed legislation that reduced the 5 mile buffer zone between a landfill and a public water supply to as close as 1 mile under certain conditions. The legislation also increased the amount of wetlands that could be impacted by an expanding landfill. The legislation would also allow additional exemptions for specific landfills.

Will you oppose any efforts to further weaken siting standards for landfills? **YES** **NO**

Comments on Solid Waste:

7. Water Resources, Rivers, Chesapeake Bay

a. Currently in Virginia, our entire portion of the Chesapeake Bay and the tidal parts of its major rivers are listed as "dirty waters" due to excess nitrogen pollution. Virginia is facing a legal mandate to clean up the Bay and its rivers by 2010 and if we fail the federal government will take action. This past General Assembly session the legislature chose to fund this clean up with a down payment of \$50 million towards sewage treatment plant upgrades.

Would you support a new revenue stream to increase funds in your budget to clean up our streams, rivers and bay? **YES** **NO**

Would you support dedicated long-term funding in the state's budget to clean up our streams, rivers and bay? **YES** **NO**

b. Of the 88 species of non-indigenous mollusks introduced in the US, 43% have had harmful effects, 53% have had neutral or unknown effects, and 3% have shown both benefits and harmful effects. Of those intentionally introduced (ten), half have had harmful economic or ecological effects.

Would you oppose the introduction of reproductive non-native oysters into the Chesapeake Bay?
YES NO

Comments on Water Resources, Rivers, Chesapeake Bay:

8. Air Quality

Significant portions of Virginia are currently designated or are proposed to be designated by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as having unhealthy air ("non-attainment areas") because of excess ozone (smog) and particulate matter pollution. Such pollution has significant adverse effects on the health of Virginians, as well as on our forests and agriculture. Virginia is responsible for much of its own pollution problem. The two main contributors to this dilemma are the electric utility industry (from grandfathered coal-fired power plants) and mobile sources (cars and trucks). A focus on reductions from these two sectors could bring the significant reductions needed to attain the health-based standards for ozone and particulates in many of our counties.

a. In Virginia, we have fifteen coal-fired plants responsible for significant nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and mercury emissions generated in the State. Delegate Jack Reid (R-Henrico) introduced legislation in the 2005 session that would require coal-fired power plants to considerably reduce their sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and mercury emissions.

Would you support similar multipollutant legislation? **YES NO**

b. VDOT consistently approves new projects without taking into account the possible increases to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs) per capita and the potential pollution generated from any increase. In order to ensure that new projects will not result in an increase to pollution, VDOT should consider increases to VMTs on all individual transportation projects and when involved in regional and statewide transportation planning. The goal would be the reduction of per capita Vehicle Miles Traveled.

Would you support legislation that requires VDOT to develop state and regional plans to demonstrate reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and air emissions from mobile sources? **YES NO**

Would you support legislation that requires VMTs to be taken into account before approval of individual transportation projects? **YES NO**

Comments on Air Quality:

9. Energy

In 2010 Virginia will fully deregulate the electric utilities industry and allow open competition. Cleaner sources of energy such as wind and solar power have not gained a foothold in Virginia. At the same time, there have been a number of coal and natural gas power plant proposals. The 2005 General Assembly passed legislation encouraging the development of offshore natural gas drilling in the Commonwealth which could have negative impacts on our coastal resources, fishing, and tourism industries.

a. *Offshore natural gas and oil drilling off of the East Coast has been under a moratorium since 1982. Would you oppose efforts to open Virginia's coast to offshore natural gas or oil exploration and drilling?*

YES NO

b. *Would you support legislation that promotes responsible incentives for renewable energy production in Virginia?*

YES NO

Comments on Energy:

10. Scenic and Historic Preservation

a. Tourism is Virginia's third largest industry; visitors come from all over the world to experience the overwhelming beauty of our scenic assets. Unfortunately, inappropriately placed billboards and excessively tall telecommunications towers threaten to ruin the scenic qualities of Virginia's rural and urban landscapes.

Would you promote Virginia's scenic assets as a genuine source of revenue for the Commonwealth and treat them with the consideration and respect typically afforded other major Virginia revenue-producers?

YES NO

b. The Department of Historic Resources had zero budget growth in the 1990's yet the workload has increased due to new federal laws to interpret and the implementation of the Virginia Historic Preservation Tax Credits which are a tool for urban revitalization.

If elected, will you be a strong voice for strengthening Virginia's commitment to preservation of Virginia's historic resources and oppose any efforts to reduce funding in this area?

YES NO

Comments on Scenic and Historic Preservation:

11. Funding

a. Virginia is ranked 50th in the nation in per capital spending on Natural Resources. For over four years now, this funding has remained below 1984 levels. Moreover, Virginia spends less than a penny, .99 percent, out of every general fund dollar to maintain operations of our state parks, to restore our impaired waters, to monitor our air for pollutants that severely affect our citizens' respiratory health, and to preserve critical natural areas. Not only has inadequate funding made new initiatives difficult to achieve, but it has made enforcement of current laws and regulations impossible.

If elected, will you make it a goal to expand state funding for Natural Resources?

YES NO

Comments on Funding:

12. Personal Commitment:

a. *If elected to the House of Delegates, what three environmental issues will be a priority for you?*

1.

2.

3.

b. *What leadership initiatives will you undertake to advance the issues you listed in 12a?*

c. *What examples of environmental leadership can you cite from your past? Include legislative examples or organizational work.*

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