

Service Employees International Union

Questionnaire



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PAC Name Lamont for Governor

Treasurer Name Elvira Albert

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ABOUT YOU

1. Why are you the best candidate and what are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?

I am running for Governor because I have spent my life creating good paying jobs with good benefits that allow young workers to buy a home, raise a family and retire with dignity. I am also uniquely qualified in that I am an educator, public policy advocate and someone who clearly isn't afraid to stand up to the political establishment and take on the status quo. The next governor will have to make some very difficult decisions, and it will take someone with a track record of brining people together toward a common goal, the courage to end political gamesmanship, and a fresh take on how to get CT back on track.

2. What will be your top 3 priorities/actions if elected?

1. Job creation and sound economic development strategies (smart growth).
2. Transportation and infrastructural upgrades.
3. Balancing the budget and putting CT on a path to grow and prosper.

3. Why are you seeking our endorsement?

I have a deep appreciation for SEIU because you represent hard-working men and women who would otherwise not be earning enough to get by. SEIU and its affiliates fight for people who often have no voice; you provide protection and instill a sense of pride in the members you represent. Moreover, 4 years ago you and your members stood up with me to challenge the status quo; that showed courage. I never waived in my appreciation for your support and I would be honored to have it again.

TAXES & STATE BUDGET

- 4. Connecticut's state budget spending cap limits what additional funding can be provided for public services. The rules determining the spending cap are more restrictive than most states. The Spending cap is also poorly defined – what counts as spending for example. Would you advocate making any changes to the State-spending cap? What changes?**

Government must be able to respond in a time of crisis and, as a business owner, I am very skeptical of caps. I believe that the programs and services government invests in should match our values, and while I would support exemptions of federal funds from the cap as it is presently constructed, I think that sentiment has been forgotten.

5. **The State of Connecticut faces a massive budget deficit starting in FY 2012. As Governor what will be your approach towards balancing the budget? What are your ideas for tax reform – including corporate, personal, and property? What is your position on “cutting” state government? Other than maximizing Federal funds and grants to CT, where do you expect to find sufficient revenues to balance the budget?**

First, I will put forth an honest budget. It is impossible to identify where we want to go when disingenuous and misleading numbers are being proposed. As governor, I will dispense with the political gamesmanship and add transparency and honesty to the budget process – the people of Connecticut deserve no less.

Second, we are leaving hundreds of millions of dollars of federal money on the table. From “Race to the Top” money to TIGER transportation grants, we are being shut out because of administrative lapses and lack of oversight. President Obama is giving states a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but CT is sitting on the sidelines. As governor I will get CT back in the game. This money would help us make the necessary upgrades in transportation, health care and energy efficiency that our state needs.

Third, as governor, some initiatives that I will pursue are (1) implementing “VoIP” phone service, which will save the state an estimated \$11 million a year; (2) eliminating Medicaid fraud, which accounts for a loss of about \$50 million a year; and (3) instituting across the board “bulk purchasing”, which will save up to \$100 million a year. We will also consolidate “back office” functions – legal, communications, public relations, quality management, etc. – for small state agencies. Doing this will save about \$25 million a year.

Fourth, we must demonstrate to Connecticut taxpayers that their tax dollars are being spent efficiently and wisely. Then, after we have proven that no more can be cut without affecting services, we can consider additional revenue enhancers, including the income tax. I am under no illusion that closing a \$3.5 billion budget deficit can be achieved without new revenue – the bottom two quintiles pay a disproportionate share of their income in state and local taxes, and we can no longer afford to balance the budget on the backs of the vulnerable.

Lastly, it will take shared sacrifice and a leader willing to make the necessary choices – not the politically easy ones – to get us on a path that builds the economy, meets our key commitments, and makes vital investments in our future. As governor, I want SEIU by my side, helping grow our state and protecting the most vulnerable.

SERVICES AND JOBS

6. **What is your position on the privatization of public services currently performed by state and municipal workers (for instance: programs for mental illness, group home care for people with developmental disabilities, information technology etc.)? Should privatization contracts be required to provide comparable wages and benefits; including affordable comprehensive health benefits? If the state provides much of the funding for a privatized service should the employer be required to stay neutral in any organizing efforts?**

Right now Connecticut does not have a process that allows for a fair comparison. As Governor, one of my first actions will be to fill the vacant seats on the State Contracting Standards Board. This would formalize the contracting process, assuring us a fair and equitable comparison on the grounds of product, cost and quality. Only then can we truly consider what merits, if any, exist when considering privatization of public services. After all, privatization of a service to someone who doesn't pay a decent wage or provide benefits doesn't help the state or the taxpayers.

7. **Smart growth seems to be on everyone's agenda. What is your position on the regionalization of services? Would you oppose regionalization if it meant reducing pay and benefits, of the workers involved to the least common denominator? What role do you envision for the unions that represent affected municipal and school board workers?**

I support regionalization efforts that maintain services and reduce costs. I have spent my life helping organizations run more efficiently without cutting pay and benefits and I did it by bringing out the best in people, empowering them and making them a part of the decision-making process.

8. The State and many municipalities are making moves to become more energy efficient. **Will you ensure that “green jobs”, such as constructing green buildings and making existing buildings more energy efficient and environmentally safe, are good jobs that pay a living wage with benefits? How?**

Yes. Right now there is a significant amount of money coming out of Washington that would allow us to train the next generation of green technology installers. I will fight for that money.

9. **Would you support standards that would link economic development assistance to companies that create good jobs, pay fair wages, provide decent benefits and comply with environmental, labor and other laws?** Development Assistance is defined as abatements, loans, grants, contracts, etc.

Yes.

HEALTH CARE, HEALTH INSURANCE AND PENSIONS

10. **Do you believe Connecticut should have a universal health care system? If so, what measures would you advocate to move the state in that direction? Would you sign the “pooling” bill passed by the General Assembly?**

As co-chairman of Barack Obama’s presidential steering committee in Connecticut for both the primary and general elections, I believe what we achieved on March 21st was historic. As governor, I will make sure that CT is ready to take full advantage of federal health care reform.

As a longtime advocate for universal health coverage, I support the reforms articulated in the Institute of Medicine’s Principals of Health Care Reform, the “pooling bill” and I will build on the President’s reforms by implementing Sustinet. Sustinet will slow the growth of health care costs by increasing the system’s efficiency – promoting prevention, expanding electronic health records, and consolidating purchasing under a commissioner who sees Connecticut as the more than \$6 billion healthcare company we have become. Sustinet will also make health coverage more affordable for our citizens, increase the options available, and improve the quality of care.

11. **How would you address the unfunded liability in the state employees’ pension system?**

As former chairman of the State Investment Advisory Council, I worked cooperatively with labor representatives to manage the then \$20 billion fund. I strongly believe that we cannot break faith with retirees; we have a responsibility to meet our obligations and I will make this a focus on my administration.

CONTRACTS, NEGOTIATIONS, AND ORGANIZING

12. Collective bargaining is intended to be a process through which workers and employers can come together and, on equal footing, reach agreement on wages, hours, and working conditions. Because public employees are not permitted to strike, binding arbitration is intended to expedite settlement through a neutral third party. **A. What changes, if any, would you make to the current laws regarding collective bargaining process and binding arbitration? B. Will you oppose measures that would eliminate or reduce the effectiveness of binding arbitration by further tilting the process in favor of municipalities?**

- A. None.
B. Yes.

I appreciate how binding arbitration and collective bargaining provide a fair way to deal with labor issues. It serves our state and municipalities well.

13. **Will you oppose efforts to cut benefits that were negotiated in the 20-year health care and pension agreement for active and retired employees? Will you oppose efforts by the General Assembly to unilaterally legislate changes in the agreement? What is your position on the state employee health insurance plan spending money on wellness and disease management programs?**

Yes, I oppose cutting benefits and any efforts by the legislature to unilaterally change any and all labor agreements. I believe that it is a worthwhile effort to increase access to preventative treatments, including wellness and disease management programs. In order for productivity to remain high, and the delivery of services remain consistent, we need to make sure that our state employees are healthy and understand the importance of healthy behavior.

14. Janitors in CT provide a vital function in the public sector yet their jobs are dependent upon outside contractors. When a contractor is changed, workers who may have cleaned a building for years can be fired without notice by the new contractor. **Would you support legislation that would allow janitors to remain on the job for 60 days after a contractor is replaced by another? Will you actively support “Justice for Janitors” campaigns aimed at protecting jobs that are at risk and creating good jobs for those without a union?**

Yes.

15. Currently employers can require employees to attend meetings about politics, religion and union organizing. If an employee chooses not to attend he or she can be disciplined or fired. **Would you support legislation allowing workers to opt out of any “captive audience” meetings?**

Yes.

16. **What is your position on workers’ right to form a union? What role, if any, do you think the chief elected official should play in local organizing efforts? Will you publicly support the right of workers to organize a union and sign the attached statement of principles for public officials?**

I fully support honest, fair elections and the right of workers to form and join a union.

17. During an economic recession the State is asking workers to do more with less. **How would you work with the front line workers and unions to save the state money and to preserve jobs?**

As a small businessman I have had to reinvent my business many times over. I have learned that some of the best suggestions about cost-savings and efficiency have come from my front-line employees. Only by listening to the people on the ground will we get out of the fiscal mess that we’re in and get CT back on solid fiscal ground. As governor, I will make an effort to visit every agency, speak with employees and management, actively seek out efficiency reforms, and work cooperatively with our state employees to implement them.

PUBLIC SERVICES

18. Home care and consumer-driven services are becoming the preferred method of caring for the elderly and people with developmental disabilities and childcare. But wages, benefits, and training standards in home care and childcare are far lower than in other health care industries. **Will you support a process that will help home care and childcare workers form a union, get recognition, and engage in collective bargaining?**

Yes.

19. The State has chosen to rely on private providers to deliver ongoing public services, such as nursing home care, non-profit group homes/day programs for people with developmental disabilities, mental health treatment, etc. But every year, extensive time and money must be spent lobbying the Legislature just for a basic cost-of-living funding increase. **Will you support legislation instituting an automatic cost-of-living increase for these employees?**

I support the right of people to organize and I think this is a far better solution to this problem. Not only would it satisfy wage concerns, but it would also allow hard-working men and women the right to good benefits. I support SEIU in their efforts to represent people who are often abused and disrespected.

20. The number of public employees has declined during the current economic crisis. Public money that supports nursing homes and group homes has also been flat or declined. There are now short staffing situations in many departments, agencies, nursing and group homes. At the same time managerial positions have not decreased at the same rate. **How would you address the short staffing situation?**

One of the major problems facing our state is the shortage of licensed nurses and other medical personnel. One of the proposals that I have put forth is a loan repayment program for students at state colleges and universities who study high-demand fields, like medicine, and stay in the state after graduation. Our parents and grandparents, who have given so much to our state and country, deserve quality care in their golden years, and we must do everything to ensure that those providing essential services have the necessary training and skills, and my proposal does just that.

I have also called for an across the board review of state managerial positions and the unnecessary bureaucracy they create. As governor I will make sure that our front-line employees have access and open communications with upper management to ensure that their needs are met.

21. CEUI represents more than 1,500 Department of Transportation highway maintainers. Over the years, several have been killed while performing their duties in highway work zones. Dozens more have been injured. **Will you support legislation to protect highway workers by providing adequate funds to conduct state police work zone traffic enforcement within selected DOT work areas?**

Yes, though I do have concerns about potential overtime payments.


EDUCATION

22. **Will you support additional funding to improve the full-time/part-time staff ratio at Connecticut Community Colleges?**

As a professor at CCSU and former volunteer teacher at Harding High in Bridgeport, I am a strong believer in the community college system. It will no doubt serve as a generator of future economic growth and I will make sure that the 12 community colleges have the funding they need.

23. Each year many long time Connecticut students who do not have documentation graduate from high schools around the state. Unfortunately, their immigration status prevents them from qualifying for in-state tuition and as a result many of them are unable to afford higher education. **Would you support state legislation that allows undocumented immigrant students, who meet certain eligibility requirements, to pay in-state tuition?**

Yes. When I was volunteering at Harding High dozens of students had to decline college acceptance because they couldn't afford it. It broke my heart and, as governor, I will do everything in my power to make sure that any student who excels academically - and gets into college - can go.

Signature  _____

Date April 2, 2010 _____

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS
The Freedom to Form a Union

As an elected official or candidate for office, I am committed to making our state and 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 together in a union belongs exclusively to employees, not their employers. I believe that employers who use tactics that 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 society.

- I fully support the principle that all workers are entitled 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 organizing rallies, 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 voluntarily recognize a union when a majority of their employees choose to form one, and to bargain in good faith and reach an agreement.

Name (print): Ned Lamont

Signed: 

Office Held/Sought: Governor

Date: April 2, 2010