

Service Employees International Union

CT STATE COUNCIL



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2010 STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

DUE: MONDAY, JUNE 14

PLEASE ALSO INCLUDE A SHORT BIO AND A HEADSHOT PHOTO OF CANDIDATE SEEKING OUR ENDORSEMENT.

Name George Jepsen

Address 527 Prospect Ave. West Hartford, CT 06105

Office Seeking Attorney General

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ABOUT YOU AND YOUR CAMPAIGN

- Why are you the best candidate and what are your qualifications for the office you are seeking?** I have been a hands-on lawyer for more than 26 years and served in the Connecticut General Assembly for 16 years. Connecticut's Carpenters Union Local 210 hired me right out of law school as staff counsel. As staff counsel, I fought for such things as job security, fair wages, and workplace safety. For nearly a decade, I personally represented injured workers, and helped negotiate contracts that provide better pensions and benefits for thousands of hardworking Connecticut workers and their families.
- What will be your top 3 priorities/actions if elected?** Job growth/retention, increased transparency and ensuring a more level playing field for CT's small businesses and working families.
- Why are you seeking our endorsement?** If elected I will work vigorously to protect your rights and the rights of every hard working citizen of the State of Connecticut. As a State Senator, I fought for workers' rights, for increases in the minimum wage, and against privatization of core government services. I would be honored to receive the support and endorsement of SEIU CT State Council.
- Do you support Connecticut's Citizen Election program? If you do will you fight to ensure it remains strong and vibrant?** I strongly support the program and am using it. The Clean Election system empowers candidates to run for office without having to court the

monied interests that for too long controlled our political system. It's vital that public financing remains intact and will use my office to advocate for the Citizen Election program.

WORKERS RIGHTS

5. As Attorney General would you support unions' rights to strike, picket, and to freely express their views on picket lines? How would you express/demonstrate support? **Will you publicly support the right of workers to organize a union and sign the attached statement of principles for public officials?** Yes.

6. You are running for statewide office. **How have you advocated for workers? What positions have you taken regarding workers rights, wages, and working conditions? Have you supported workers' struggles? Which ones?** As staff counsel for the Carpenters Local 210, I fought for such things as job security, fair wages, and workplace safety. For nearly a decade, I personally represented injured workers, and helped negotiate contracts that provided for better pensions and benefits for thousands of hardworking Connecticut workers and their families. As a state senator, I fought for workers' rights, for increases in the minimum wage, and against privatization of core government services.

7. **For several years there has been proposed legislation that would prohibit employers from calling mandatory meetings (captive audience) of employees to discuss non-business related issues such as politics, religion and union organizing. What is your position on such legislation?** I do not believe such "captive audience" meetings to discuss politics, religion or union organizing should be mandatory for employees. Captive audience meetings are a scare tactic used to bully employees from fighting for their rights in the workplace.

8. **Do you support the General Assembly's right to pass legislation that improves on Federal labor standards without fear of Federal preemption?** Yes. The Federal labor standards should be the floor not the ceiling.

PUBLIC SERVICES, NEGOTIATIONS & BINDING ARBITRATION

9. 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?** The most important things here is that the workers are part of the conversation from the beginning. Too often, adversarial roles are created towards unions before there is any attempt to engage them in dialogue.

10. **As the Attorney General, would you work to limit the use of "outside contractors" when state employees are already ready, willing and able to do the work? For example, would you limit the use of outside law firms when attorneys employed by the State can do the work just as well and at a much lower cost?** Yes. Furthermore, I believe there should be a cost benefit analysis for instances where certain services are outsourced.

11. Front line workers are often afraid to report on the misdeeds of their supervisors or department heads or even co-workers due to fear of retaliation. **How would you encourage state employees to come forward and protect them from retaliation?** In addition the current whistleblower statute excludes employee protection for state contracts that are less \$5 million. **Would you support legislation that would remove that threshold for state employees and employees of that state contractor?** Yes. Whistleblower protections should be guaranteed for contracts less than \$5 million. Such protections not only protect employees from doing the right thing but helps acts as a disinfectant for potential corruption and or gross negligence.
12. The State of Connecticut has negotiated collective bargaining agreements with SEBAC. Occasionally the legislature wants to make changes to contracts before expiration – for example revoking state employee pensions due to misconduct. **How would you advise the legislature to deal with collective bargaining agreements in such a case? What would you do if the legislature enacted a law that violated a standing contract?** The Attorney General is obligated by statute (3-125) to provide legal advice to the legislature. Obviously, if the legislature wants to breach a contract, the Attorney General should advise the legislature of the consequences (legal and otherwise) of breaching a contract and advice against such a breach. If however the legislature enacted a law, it is the statutory obligation of the Attorney General to defend the law and have the courts determine the legality of the law.
13. Attorney General Blumenthal agreed to inform a state employee’s collective bargaining agent, prior to not representing or indemnifying a state employee, so that the Union could argue for representation and indemnification. **Would you continue that policy?** Yes.
14. **What is your position on public sector binding arbitration laws? Do you believe that binding arbitration as currently practiced in Connecticut is fair to unions? What public position would you take if the legislature moved to weaken binding arbitration and make it more slanted towards management?** I would oppose any attempt to weaken current binding arbitration laws.
15. Connecticut has taken an important step in implementing a standard wage rate that sets a baseline for many service workers in the state. Security workers, who are often at the lowest rungs of the wage ladder, should benefit from the same wage standards applied to service workers in other sectors. A close look at the current law indicates that the state wage does indeed cover security, though it is not being applied. **Do you support clarification of the law so security guards are compensated appropriately, and will you work to make that happen?** Yes.

Will you support measures that call for greater public disclosure of companies’ security officer training and staff retention practices?

Yes No

Will you support measures to improve training and wage standards by security officer contractors in publicly owned and leased buildings?

Yes No

PRIVATIZATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

16. The legislature passed a law (clean contracting) that requires review of all major privatization efforts. However, the Governor has moved ahead with plans to privatize dozens of group homes for the disabled without any review. **As Attorney General, how would you move to require the Governor to implement the privatization review?** If elected Attorney General this fall, I fully expect to be elected with a Democratic Governor, and thus I would expect that the newly-elected Governor would follow the clean contracting law. To the extent the current efforts remain and are in violation of the law, I would move to enforce the law.
17. Corporations and non-profits are often the recipients of public dollars. **Do you support restrictions on the use of public money by private corporations? Do you believe that the legislature has the right to expect a certain level of standards (wages, benefits and number of jobs created for example) and accountability (conduct during unionization efforts for example) when public money is accepted?** Absolutely. There needs to be far more analysis, transparency, and clearly defined objectives for handing public money to private corporations. We need to know we're investing tax dollars for good reason and that it is in the public interest.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

18. The Attorney General is often asked to interpret legislative intent and to act when laws and programs are not implemented. For example, the General Assembly has several times instructed the Executive Branch to maintain and fund programs which were subsequently allowed to collapse due to insufficient funding. **What would you do to require the Governor to respect legislative intent and to implement the will of the legislature?** If elected Attorney General this fall, I fully expect to be elected with a Democratic Governor, and thus I would expect that the newly-elected Governor would follow the intent of the General Assembly.

HEALTH CARE & HEALTH INSURANCE

19. **Do you believe Connecticut should have a universal health care system?** Sustinet with its bi-partisan taskforce was passed in 2009 and tasked with developing specific recommendations to move Connecticut towards universal and sustainable health care. **How likely are you to support its recommendations? Do you support the concept of pooling, allowing municipalities, non-profits and small businesses the opportunity to join the State employees' health plan?** Our current health care system is broken and it's important that the state of CT enact the components of Sustinet as it will help CT leverage federal health care dollars. Pooling should not be controversial. The benefits reaped through economy scale purchasing is needed at a time when health care costs over the last few years have increased 5 times faster than workers' wages.
20. The Constitutional officers have a state wide platform to take positions on issues of importance. **Would you support paid sick day legislation that allows workers in larger workplaces (50 or more employees) to earn up to a maximum of 5 paid sick days to be used during any 1 year period?** Yes. Parents who are living paycheck to paycheck should be put in the situation of losing a days pay because their child is sick. It is also not in the public interest to have sick employees regularly going to work because of the lack of sick day coverage. I see this as a basic worker right that should be afforded to employees.

Signature *George Jepsen* (electronic signature) _____

Date June 14, 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 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 community.

- 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): George Jepsen _____

Signed: *George Jepsen* (electronic signature) _____

Office Held/Sought: Attorney General _____

Date: Monday June 14, 2010 _____