



QUESTIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NOMINEE

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner is responsible for implementing the state's energy and environmental policies; coordinating the management of water, land, and air resources; protecting plants and all types of wildlife, including the preservation of endangered species; providing for pollution abatement, controlling pests, and regulating pesticide use; regulating waste disposal; developing a comprehensive energy plan for the state; transitioning the state to cleaner, more diverse and sustainable energy sources; and creating opportunities for energy conservation and cost reduction.

DEEP's energy goals are to: (1) reduce utility rates and decrease ratepayer costs, (2) ensure the reliability and safety of the state's energy supply, (3) increase the use of clean energy, and (4) create jobs and develop the state's energy-related economy. Its environmental goals are to: (1) conserve, improve, and protect the state's natural resources and environment and (2) preserve the natural environment while fostering sustainable development ([CGS §§ 22a-2d](#) and [§ 22a-5](#)).

QUESTIONS FOR THE NOMINEE

General Questions

1. Having served as the DEEP commissioner for the past year, what aspects of the job have you found most rewarding? What aspects were the most surprising or difficult? What lessons will you take forward over the next four years?

2. Last month, reports surfaced about the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's (PURA) complaints that various conflicts of interest were created by having PURA organizationally within DEEP. Do you agree with the PURA commissioners' assessment? How important do you believe it is for PURA to have independence from DEEP's influence? Have there been times when you felt that PURA's decisions were at odds with DEEP's energy policies and goals? In the time since you've been the DEEP commissioner, are you aware of any instances where DEEP sought to influence PURA decisions or deliberations by exercising DEEP's control over PURA's personnel decisions?
3. Looking ahead to four years from now, what do you think your most significant achievement as the DEEP commissioner will be?

Energy Issues

1. DEEP's energy-related goals include reducing utility rates, ensuring reliability, increasing clean energy use, and creating jobs in the state's energy-related economy. Have there been times when you felt that these goals conflicted with each other? How do you prioritize them?
2. Electricity prices have significantly increased over the past year, primarily due to New England's reliance on natural gas to generate electricity and the region's limited natural gas transmission capacity. What steps have you taken to address these issues over the past year and what additional steps will you be taking in the future? How active will you be in working with the other New England states to craft a regional response? To what extent can Connecticut address the issue on its own?
3. Last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed regulations with stricter carbon pollution standards for power plants. If enacted, how do you think the new regulations will impact Connecticut's power generation fleet? Will DEEP be taking any steps to help the state's power generators prepare for the new standards? How do you expect the new standards to impact electric rates?
4. DEEP's 2013 Comprehensive Energy Strategy made a strong commitment to expanding the use of natural gas as a heating source throughout the state. Given the current limits of the interstate gas transmission pipelines and their impact on increasing electricity prices, are there any elements of the strategy that should be amended? Are the strategy's goals still reachable and cost effective?
5. [PA 11-80](#) established the Office of Energy Efficient Businesses within DEEP to help connect state businesses with programs and incentives that promote energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. How successful has the office been in fulfilling its goals over the past year? Do you feel that the state does enough to help with the energy issues of private-sector businesses? What additional steps could DEEP take to help the state's businesses reduce their energy costs?

Environment Issues

1. During the 2014 session, the legislature passed [PA 14-94](#) which established the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) as a successor authority to the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority. The act also requires the DEEP commissioner to consult with MIRA about proposals to redevelop the Connecticut Solid Waste Management System Project (MIRA's waste facilities, including its trash-to-energy and recycling facilities). Have you begun consulting with MIRA on the project's redevelopment? Do you envision a shift away from trash-to-energy? If so, what other methods of solid waste management should be considered for the project.
2. Access to water is an issue for communities in several parts of the state because it requires balancing recreational, ecological, and business needs. In 2014, the legislature passed a law ([PA 14-163](#)) requiring the state's Water Planning Council to prepare a state water plan by July 1, 2017. What do you believe will be the most challenging aspect of preparing the plan?
3. How successful is the state's bottle redemption law (bottle bill) at reducing waste? Are there ways in which the state could improve its bottle redemption system?
4. During previous legislative sessions, the legislature passed product stewardship laws to manage such things as architectural paint and discarded mattresses. Specifically, the paint stewardship program has been operating since July 2013. Has DEEP received any feedback about the program from consumers, retailers, or manufacturers? What are the costs and benefits of managing waste through the product stewardship model?
5. The majority of fee revenue from state parks goes to the state's General Fund. Does the revenue generated from the state parks and forests exceed the expenses needed to operate them? If so, by how much? How can the state guaranty its parks and forests are adequately funded? Should all funds raised by the parks be dedicated to their operation?
6. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Connecticut is the only state without public land open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use. Each year, ATV operators seek to have DEEP set aside state land for the operation of their vehicles, as the law requires. During the 2013 session, the legislature passed a law requiring DEEP to implement the proposals for ATV use on state property contained in its November 2002 publication, but the governor vetoed the act. Is DEEP actively engaged with ATV users to find state lands suitable for their use? Under what circumstances would DEEP consider opening up state lands to ATV use?

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