



## QUESTIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER NOMINEE

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### COMMISSIONER OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Veterans' Affairs Commissioner is responsible for

1. administering the Veterans' Home;
2. operating a Veterans' Advocacy and Assistance Unit;
3. collecting and disseminating information on services and facilities available to help veterans;
4. helping veterans to prepare, present, and establish claims, privileges, rights, and other benefits accruing to them under federal, state, and local laws;
5. developing and preparing a long-range plan and mission statement for the Veterans' Home and the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit; and
6. reviewing veterans' appeals of denials of admission to various department programs and benefits ([CGS § 27-102I](#)).

### QUESTIONS

1. As the new veterans' affairs commissioner, what goals do you have for the department? What is your top priority?
  - a. What do you see as the department's greatest strength? What do you consider to be its biggest weakness?
2. With an estimated 7,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces returning to Connecticut in the next two years, how is the department preparing for their return?

- a. Does the department have enough resources to serve such a large influx of veterans?
  - b. What do you think is the greatest need of returning veterans and how can the department address them?
3. The Veterans' Affairs Committee passed several bills seeking to increase or give new tax breaks (including property and income tax) to veterans. What do you think of these proposals?
  - a. If the goal is to help the broadest array of veterans, is this the best approach?
  - b. Should the legislature focus more on services? If so, what services are appropriate?
4. The Veterans' Affairs Committee passed a bill to expand the pretrial diversionary program, based on the New London model, throughout the state.
  - a. How effective do you think this program has been? How will a statewide program affect veterans?
  - b. How else can the department help to keep veterans out of jail?
5. Last year, the Soldiers', Sailors' and Marines' Fund's administration was transferred to the American Legion.
  - a. How has that transition gone?
  - b. How would you rate the Legion's ability to administer the Fund?
6. Senator Blumenthal recently helped passed federal legislation to curb suicide rates among military veterans, including enhancing veterans outreach and attracting more psychiatrists into VA clinics and hospitals with tuition breaks. What more do you think can be done to prevent suicides among military veterans at both the federal and state levels? What can the department do without legislation?

7. What type of programs does the department have to help veterans obtain jobs?
8. Have economic woes hampered the department's abilities and, if so, how have you worked around these?

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