

Questions for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner 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 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) 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 § 16a-14](#), [CGS § 22a-2d](#), and [CGS § 22a-5](#)).

Questions for the Nominee

General Questions

1. Connecticut's public utility commission (PURA) is located within DEEP in a way that is unusual when compared to other states. You have led both agencies and were part of the administration that combined them. What are the merits of keeping this structure? Are there any benefits to separating them? Similarly, what are the pros and cons of keeping the state's energy policy-making and environmental protection functions housed together in one department?
2. How has DEEP been affected by the greater-than-usual number of state employee retirements that occurred in 2022? (For example, are there any divisions in the agency that were hit harder than others? Has the agency been able to maintain service levels or have some services had to be curtailed?)
3. What are the greatest challenges, aside from staffing, that you anticipate the department will face over the next five years?

Energy-Related Questions

1. DEEP's energy-related goals include reducing utility rates, ensuring reliability, increasing clean energy use, and developing the state's energy-related economy. Over the course of your previous term as commissioner, how did you balance meeting these goals? How will you prioritize them going forward? How much progress has the state made in meeting them?
2. The recent increase in standard service electric rates has drawn significant attention. To what extent were these increases foreseeable over the past several years and what has DEEP done to try to avoid and ameliorate them? How much of the state's vulnerability to this kind of price volatility can be attributed to the state's own policies? How much is due to regional, national, or global factors?
3. Roughly ten years ago, the legislature authorized DEEP to conduct energy procurements for large-scale hydroelectric power and natural gas transmission. However, progress on these initiatives has largely stalled due to resistance in neighboring states. If they had proceeded as planned, how would they have impacted current electricity prices? What has DEEP done to increase cooperation and coordination with our neighboring states and what additional steps will you take? What can the state do on its own to help control electric generation rates? Are you in favor of procuring a long-term contract for liquified natural gas (LNG)? If not, what are our near-term options to reduce volatility and price spikes that affect the cost of fuel in the winter?

4. Connecticut's electric utilities entered into contracts to purchase energy from the Millstone Power Station at the direction of the DEEP commissioner, as authorized under [PA 17-3](#), June Special Session. What happens when that ten-year contract ends? How has the Millstone deal affected electric rates over the past few years?
5. In 2020, DEEP issued an "Electric Vehicle Roadmap" as a comprehensive strategy for achieving widespread deployment of electric vehicles in the state. That same year, the state also entered into a memorandum of understanding with several other states to work toward ensuring that 30% of all new medium- and heavy-duty vehicle sales will be zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) by 2030. What is the status of these two initiatives? Is the state's electric system affordable and reliable enough to handle large-scale electrification of the state's transportation sector?

Environment-Related Questions

1. Connecticut's government has had a focus on energy policy over the past several years. Some people have suggested that environmental protection has taken on a lesser role as a result. How do you respond to this?
2. In a November 2020 department [press release](#), you described the state's solid waste management situation as "a silent crisis, a quiet crisis." What are the greatest contributors to the state's solid waste crisis and what steps should the state take to manage it? What efforts has the department taken to make the public aware of proper ways to dispose of waste and to recycle?
3. What does DEEP recommend as being the best methods of (1) managing the state's growing and geographically expanding black bear population and (2) decreasing interactions and conflicts between the bears and humans?
4. What effect have the state's "Passport to the Parks" program and the COVID-19 pandemic have had on state park and forest attendance, with respect to both day visitors and overnight campers? To the extent that there has been an attendance increase, what challenges has the department faced in managing the increased volume of visitors, particularly in terms of public health and safety, and how has it addressed these challenges?
5. Which aquatic and terrestrial invasive species pose the greatest threat to the state's environment? Does the state have sufficient resources to combat the damage they cause?
6. What is DEEP's policy with respect to the harvesting of trees on state forest land? How does the department factor climate change mitigation and resilience into its forest management practices?