



## VERMONT LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION CONSERVATION VOTERS

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### **Vermont League of Conservation Voters Endorsement Policy**

Vermont League of Conservation Voters (VT LCV) is working in the public interest to recruit, elect and support environmentally responsible individuals to public office in Vermont. We are a nonpartisan political action committee. Candidates are evaluated for endorsement based on their environmental record, their commitment to environmental issues and campaign viability.

The VT LCV Endorsement Policy is open to review by members of VT LCV, the public and candidates and we encourage its distribution. It is our hope that through the open dissemination of these policies, the members of VT LCV and candidates seeking endorsement will better understand how decisions are made.

While we cannot hope to achieve consensus in every situation, we do strive to provide consistency in our endorsements while staying current and adapting to changing factors. It is our goal that through thorough discussion and a review of a broad spectrum of information, we will endorse the most environmentally responsible and electable candidate.

We also endeavor to engage in an endorsement process that is fair, consistent, efficient and timely. It is hoped that these Endorsement Policies will contribute to achieving these objectives.

In addition, we recognize that the Endorsement Process is an educational opportunity for members or VT LCV and for candidates. The Endorsement Process can be the beginning of a long and rewarding relationship. It is an occasion to introduce candidates to current environmental issues and to sources of further information on these issues.

It is VT LCV's intention to elect the best environmental candidate. Therefore, once a candidate is endorsed, the real work begins. It is our expectation that these policies will serve to streamline the decision-making so that we can concentrate on the work of electing.

### **Factors to be considered in an Endorsement**

VT LCV's goal is to endorse the most environmentally responsible and electable candidate. Endorsement decisions will be based on the following factors:

#### **Candidate Background:**

This can include, but is not limited to, the candidate's:

- resume
- voting record
- demonstrated leadership or participation on environmental issues
- experience as an elected official
- recruitment by VT LCV

- stated environmental positions (which can be validated)
- longevity and level of commitment to environmental quality
- substantive support for candidate's views within the community

**Political Climate:**

This can include, but is not limited to:

- candidate's campaign viability
  - financial position
  - written campaign plan
  - VT LCV's ability to affect the outcome
  - recognition of endorsements by other organizations
- consideration of the opposition
- geographic region
- consideration of the political ramifications to VT LCV from endorsing or not endorsing a candidate
  - consideration of the balance of the environmental sympathies on the body to which the candidate is seeking election

The verbal interview is used to assess the above factors, as well as other information which is provided by the candidate (such as past reports or a current brochure) or obtained by the interview team. The interview may be waived only when a candidate is clearly not viable or when a candidate is clearly eligible for an Early Endorsement (see Early Endorsements below.) A written questionnaire may also be used. All questionnaires or interviews will be equally applied to each candidate for that race who seeks a VT LCV endorsement.

A brief statement of the basis for a VT LCV endorsement will be issued from the recommending body to the State Board with each endorsement recommendation. The procedures are described in the VT LCV Endorsement Process under Article VIII of the By-laws.

**Verbal Interview:** Will be conducted by the VT LCV board of directors for statewide candidates

**Questionnaire:** Candidates at all levels will be asked to return candidate questionnaires in order to be considered for the VT LCV endorsement.

**Early Endorsements**

An Early Endorsement may be given prior to the filing deadline in order to recognize a candidate who has demonstrated a strong and consistent environmental ethic. Because an Early Endorsement expedites the whole process, this is a tool that is advantageous to VT LCV. Because an Early Endorsement gives due recognition to a candidate, this is a tool to reward and assist an extraordinarily good environmental candidate.

Early Endorsements will be based on the following factors:

- Extraordinary demonstrated leadership or participation in environmental issues,
- Strong campaign viability,
- Recruitment by VT LCV,
- Strong environmental attitudes in a challenging political setting, and
- Where an early endorsement will make an important difference in the race.

An Early Endorsement is never automatic and does not preclude a dual endorsement at a later time. An interview is not mandatory for an early endorsement.

## **Multiple Endorsements**

It is the intention of VT LCV to provide clear direction through its endorsements. Therefore, we are reluctant to give multiple endorsements. But there are situations where multiple endorsements must be examined and the following guidelines will apply. While these guidelines provide some advantage to an incumbent, it is felt that both a good record and experience in office are positives when considering an endorsement.

When there is an endorsed incumbent, another endorsement will only be given for a compelling reason. The challenger(s) must demonstrate a very strong environmental commitment, campaign viability and a history of participation on environmental issues.

When the candidates are challengers, multiple endorsements will only be given for a compelling reason where the candidates have demonstrated a comparable environmental commitment and have sufficiently viable campaigns.

### **Voting required to ratify an endorsement**

There is a strong desire on the part of the Board of Directors for a clear consensus for each endorsement. In addition, it is felt that Board members who are present to hear the endorsement discussion should be the ones making the decision.

Endorsements require the consent of 2/3 of the voting members present or 2/3 of a quorum, whichever is greater. For purposes of endorsements, a quorum is defined as 2/3 of the entire board.

### **Board Polling:**

In order to expedite decision-making, reduce staff workload and reduce delay in contacting Board members throughout the telephone poll process:

During the election season, the Executive Director will set up a pre-scheduled weekly meeting/conference call with the Board of Directors to facilitate telephone polling. Endorsements by telephone poll require 2/3 of voting members present or 2/3 of a quorum, whichever is greater. For purposes of endorsements, a quorum is defined as 2/3 of the entire board.

### **In What Races will VT LCV endorse candidates?**

There is no discreet answer to this question. As VT LCV has grown, we have added new electoral arenas to our strategic plan. It is understood that special questions may arise that cause us to consider races not described in the annual Strategic Plan. Discretionary judgement of whether to participate in these races will be based on the following considerations:

- How much environmental impact does this race have?
- How much environmental impact does this office have?
- Is it a training ground for other offices?
- Is there substantive local interest or specific reasons for involvement in this race?
- Can VT LCV clearly make an impact on the results?

### **Litmus Tests**

VT LCV does not ordinarily use a specific issue as a litmus test when considering a candidate for endorsement. If there is a compelling reason to use a litmus test, then it must be consistently applied to each candidate.