

Name: Dottye Ricks

District: Washington 2 – Barre Town

1. Should the work of State government be performed by State employees?

Most definitely. Certain services should be available to all people and should be out of the realm of a profit motive. This is because those jobs are crucial to the well-being of all citizens such as in public health and safety, education, infrastructure, etc. and should not be held for ransom by the market. Those types of services can best be provided by government employed workers working for the greater good, at a fair wage, instead of those working for the profit of a few. Additionally, for the most part, the work of public employees is subject to greater scrutiny than those working for a for-profit entity, providing more accountable services.

2. As an elected official, how would you improve the overall safety of state employees?

First of all, I would want to talk with state workers and find out from them what they believe will best keep them safe. Their input is imperative and their solutions may differ widely from workplace to workplace. They know their situations better than anyone else and can help provide the best solutions.

Other solutions might include:

- Establishing risk factors – work site analysis and hazard identification
- Establishing risk management – hazard prevention and control
- Establishing violence prevention programs that are site specific
- Educating workers as to safe practices such as in construction, industrial hygiene, ergonomics, and violence prevention
- Educating populations being served as to behavior options and/or providing on-going training in behavior management for at-risk clients
- Providing closed parking accessed only by state workers
- Redesign of facilities for greater safety
- Increasing the number of workers in critical areas such as in social work
- Continued support of the State Plan OSHA coverage
- Requiring background checks on purchasing guns (safety for all of us)
- Banning assault weapons (safety for all of us)
- And for the long haul, work on issues of poverty, employment, and the opiate epidemic

3. What is your plan to make the health care system more fair and equitable for working Vermonters?

- Work on cost containment – costs cannot continue to consume more and more of individuals' income nor of the state budget.
- Reduce deductibles and monthly pays for ordinary Vermonters – funded by reducing payments to hospitals which in Vermont have seen an obscene increase in their profits tripling over the past ten years and by reducing health industry CEO compensation packages.
- Continue movement towards publicly funding health care.

- How we make health care of the masses more palatable and enticing to highly trained personnel who have spent thousands of dollars becoming such, is a highly complex issue. Perhaps public support for training of nurse practitioners and physician's assistants can both ease the shortage of health care providers and provide more accessible and affordable care for the many.

4. Will you support collective bargaining and vote against "Right to Work" legislation in any form?

As a former VTNEA member and former employee of VSEA, and a unionized worker all of my life, I firmly support collective bargaining and will work to ensure its continuation in Vermont. Right to Work legislation is based on divide-and-conquer tactics and is an attempt to undermine the work of unions by reducing fair fiscal support of union activities. It is legislation that I could and would NEVER support. On the contrary, I would work passionately to defeat any RTW legislation. Wages, health insurance, and pensions are all lower in RTW states and the RTW movement apparently was begun by businessmen intent on fighting unions. I have been a strong union supporter all of my life and will continue to be so as well as a strong advocate for workers' rights.

5. What do you see as the role of State employees and how would you support them in their role?

State employees' primary role is in providing services crucial to the well-being of the populace.

I would help them by:

- supporting increases in the number of state employees in critical areas such as social workers
- supporting fair and equitable contracts
- supporting strong pro-worker legislation
- supporting **enforcement** of pro-worker legislation
- supporting worker safety initiatives

6. What mechanisms would you put in place to avoid budget shortfalls?

I would look at new/additional forms of revenue which can include:

- Withdrawing tax breaks to large corporations and devoting those monies to areas of high need.
- Closing corporate loopholes that allow out of state companies to profit without paying state income taxes.
- Raising taxes paid by Vermonters making over \$200,000+ per year.
- Increasing inheritance taxes on the uber wealthy by lowering the estate limit.
- Creating new taxes on luxury items.
- Supporting green economy efforts.
- Supporting apprenticeship programs, internships, and training programs with an apprenticeship element.
- Supporting investment in training programs in which participants must remain in state for a certain number of years to "repay" the tax payers' investment in them.
- Increasing employment in general and yes I support government job creation.

I would also support the following:

- Budget scrutiny and reallocation of funds to areas of most need

- Current bond refinancing for lower interest rates
- Creation/use of a budget stabilization fund/other reserve funds or borrowing against them.

7. What approach would you take to make higher education more affordable for Vermonters?

- Work to improve the terms and accessibility of income-based repayment, including debt forgiveness when appropriate.
- Cut student loan interest rates to more reflect government rates.
- Work towards a system where tax payers pay into state college funds, so that students can attend state colleges at no or low costs.
- Work towards participation in any national incentives for state reinvestment in colleges.
- Work towards establishment of a state bank.
- Work in a national effort to tax Wall Street to pay for more and better college instruction.

8. What would you do to ensure the viability of the state college system?

1. Increase the number of students through reduced costs and more accessibility by doing the following:

- Encourage careful oversight of the budgeting process, eliminating waste and duplication of services,
- Encourage reallocation of college budgets yearly to areas of most need and demand,
- Support reallocation of state taxes for fiscal stability,
- Support free or low cost tuition to increase student numbers,
- Continue movement towards publicly funded health care,
- Participation in government incentive programs for state reinvestment in higher education,

2. Encourage marketing strategies for emphasizing school strengths and advantages.

3. I am deeply concerned about the move in education in Vermont to consolidate schools whether at the local or college level. I think more thought needs to be put into other options that support the uniqueness of schools/colleges providing a wide range of choice and maintaining local control.

9. Do you support a livable wage for Vermonters? If so, what do you think that amount should be?

I support a livable wage for all workers. Higher wages provide more taxes and more discretionary funds which increase state revenue. A livable wage in Washington County varies from a single person at \$11.68/hr to \$35.20/hr for an adult and three children. The current minimum wage is \$9.15/hr. I would push for a minimum wage of at least \$15/hr by 2020.

Increasing the minimum wage to a livable wage is one of many actions that can help working Vermonters. Others include:

- Increasing the earned income tax credit
- Eliminating benefit cliffs that leave working families with less money than they had when their earnings were lower

- Helping employers avoid layoffs with compensation programs
- Making high quality affordable day care available

10. Briefly state why the VSEA should endorse you, and describe the type of assistance that you would be seeking from a VSEA endorsement.

1. I believe I am the strongest candidate and advocate from Washington 2 for working people. I lobbied representatives on passing sick leave legislation and personally chastised legislators for delaying tactics in that passage. I lobbied via email, while out of the state, representatives to override Shumlin's attack on state workers' pay. As a VTNEA member I spoke out against legislation that harmed workers and spoke for legislation that helped. I believe in strengthening laws to prevent reclassification, wage theft, and unjust firings. I support gender equity in the workplace, livable wages, safe working environments, and alternative approaches to "austerity" methods for balancing the budget.
2. I have experience serving in the public sector – as a teacher, administrator, and school board member.
3. I have a passion for transparency and fairness in politics and for support of voter inclusion and rights.
4. I am a strong union supporter and workers' advocate. I was an active member of the VT NEA for many years and worked for the VSEA as a financial officer and recruiter. I have been a long time member and financial supporter of the VT Worker's Center. I served on the board of Barre's Old Labor Hall and helped realign its financial practices.
5. I am comfortable and experienced in standing up and speaking out for those issues I support. I participated in demonstrations and marches throughout my life as a college student, a teacher, and an activist and was a member of the national board of Military Families Speak Out. I have often spoken out in public forums, through letters to the editor, and to representatives on war, education, and workers' issues.
6. I am a strong supporter of diversity. As a teacher, I attended workshops on anti-bias trainings by such groups as the Anti-Defamation League. I have conducted workshops and trainings within Vermont school systems addressing discrimination and intolerance. For years I supported the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Children's Defense Fund.
7. I am a strong supporter of voting rights and economic equity. For over 20 years, as a member of the League of Women Voters I participated in voter registration and voting rights advocacy. I taught economics in public schools in Vermont and helped students recognize and address inequity in our system whether due to gender, race, or economic status.
8. No female has served Washington 2 as a representative in over 30 years. I want to give voice to the 53% of people in my district who are female and the 20% who are single female heads of households. While there were not questions on issues of gender equity in the workplace on this survey, I believe the VSEA would be a strong resource to help me articulate those concerns.
9. Finally, I believe that through my campaign, with a VSEA endorsement, I can more effectively further the issues and messages of state workers specifically and of workers in general. And if elected, I would continue to support those issues.

The type of assistance I would seek from a VSEA endorsement includes the following:

- Direction and information on the issues discussed above and others important to the VSEA and its members.

- Inclusion of my name on any election mailings or e-mailings that the VSEA sends to its constituents listing those candidates it endorses.
- A targeted email to Washington 2 VSEA workers prior to the general election encouraging them to support me as house representative.
- Inclusion at local VSEA meetings where Washington 2 voters might be in attendance to introduce myself, to talk about why they should support me, and to answer questions.
- Help in get-out-the-vote.

I want to thank the VSEA for the opportunity to respond to these questions. I found them to be challenging, insightful, and inspiring. I also want to thank you for your consideration of my candidacy for endorsement.