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August 31, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

Below please find my responses to VSEA Political Endorsement Questionnaire for the general election 2016. I welcome additional questions and/or follow up.

1. Yes, the work of State government should be performed by State employees. This creates employment and keeps resources in our communities and state. It also rewards hard-won skill sets and potentially offers expanded training opportunities for Vermonters while ensuring their collective bargaining rights. Further, it means that people who perform the work have a better sense of its impact and relevance upon their neighbors, communities, region, and state. That feedback is critical to evaluating or proposing changes.

2. If an elected official, I would improve the safety of state employees by adequately addressing the following key areas: (1) sufficient and regular training; (2) equipment and tools in good repair; (3) adequate supervision; (4) security protections and protocols where needed; and (5) compliance with federal and state safety standards. I also think it makes sense to meet with people who do the work to find out more the challenges inherent in the work and what kind of improvements might be needed. For example, I was recently told that police officers commonly wear waist belts weighing around 50 lbs. and this obviously has numerous implications.

3. I believe that health care is a basic human right. Without good health, Vermonters are limited in their pursuit of all other goals. With prevention as the cornerstone of sound healthcare, we need to work to provide primary care for every Vermonter. We must also continue to collaborate with federally qualified health centers (FQHC) to improve access. With a focus on these fundamentals, we will be better positioned to address and curb the use of costly emergency rooms services and meet the needs of those with chronic conditions.

Recognizing progress to date, we must continue finding ways to make Vermont Health Connect work better. We also need to continue reforming our system of payment and incentivize health outcomes in a way that seeks to decrease visits, prescriptions and procedures. Finally, health care reform must take into account how health care services are grappling with a wide range of other determining factors that impact health and requires an integrated approach with social services.

4. Yes, I support collective bargaining and would vote against “Right to Work” legislation because this approach risks being a “race to the bottom.”

5. I see the role of State Employees as conducting the business of the state and helping to make the state a good place to live, conduct business, and raise a family. I would support State Employees by seeking a better understanding of priorities, roles, and budgets and working with VSEA and other appropriate advocacy groups on issues of importance to their membership.

6. This is a broad question, but I think one important element is to avoid the practice of borrowing funds intended for one longer-term purpose and using them for another short-term and unrelated purpose. This is not a sustainable practice and threatens fiscal imperatives such as adequate retirement funding. Finding off-sets or ways to pay for proposals can also be useful. The practice of reserving “rainy day” funds can also be yet another mechanism for addressing unanticipated costs.

I support legislative consideration of a proposal put forward by Senator Pollina that could ease the cost of property taxes and more equitably balance payment by income. Currently, a lower percentage of income is typically paid by those with high incomes who instead tend to pay by property value. This represents a loss to the fund that is made up for by higher payments from those who pay by income. I am told that the Joint Fiscal Office and Tax Department are expected to release a study on this approach in December.

7. Given recent national and gubernatorial proposals on free college, I would like to explore whether there are viable options for making higher education in Vermont more affordable through any of these proposals. Existing options include (1) awarding credit for work-based learning to decrease the time and cost of degree completion; (2) pursuing online or low-residency education while working is less costly and is a way to access lifelong learning; and (3) taking advantage of flexible learning pathways such as dual enrollment and early college during high school also offer ways to decrease costs and connect young people with more opportunity. There must be more done to reduce student loan interest rates, which are much higher than those for mortgages or auto loans despite the value of a college degree to lifelong earning potential.

It is also clear that high rates of retirement within the trades translate to a need for greater participation for those entering the workforce, especially for women. I have recently learned about an employer-based apprenticeship model that delivers a highly desirable credential with much reduced debt. Workforce certifications – in areas ranging from cosmetology to auto mechanics – can also offer greater economic opportunity at a reduced cost.

8. Viability of the state college system requires sufficient public investment. It also requires a continuing alignment of degree programs to better meet the needs of state employers who say that they have unfilled jobs; the appointment of a former state Secretary for the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to head Vermont Technical College seems like an appropriate way to proceed on that front. There has been recent discussion about unifying Lyndon State and Johnson State under one administration to create one larger, stronger college with two campuses. I also believe that the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) has been forced to reduce some its highly regarded outreach programming to secondary school students in Vermont and fear that has had a negative impact on the state college system enrollment. Declining demographics in the entire Northeast also

make it critical to reach out to new audiences, including the new focus on international student recruitment that was perhaps partly behind the renaming of Castleton State College to Castleton University.

9. Yes, I do support a livable wage. I believe the first step is gradually raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2020. The related topic of closing the wage gap between men and women also needs our attention and action, especially when the poverty rate for women has stayed consistently higher than that of men.

10. Having already won a 5-way Democratic primary with 40 percent of the vote, I am prepared to pursue the general election with even greater energy. If elected, I would put to work three decades of hard won advocacy experience that I've gained while working in the non-profit sector, Vermont statehouse, and in the U.S. House and Senate. My background has centered on equity, environmental justice, and economic security and I believe the legislative process offers a powerful way to positively impact people's lives.

From the VSEA, I am seeking an endorsement to signal recognition that I am a candidate who cares about state employees and is prepared to work on their behalf.