

VSEA Candidate Survey:

Name: Korrine Rodrigue

District: Rutland County

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

Yes. In most cases it makes more sense to utilize full and part-time state employees rather than having temporary positions contracted out through the private sector. By having state employees, we are protecting Vermonters by retaining job knowledge, being more efficient/productive, keeping taxpayer funds inside of our communities, helping our economy, and helping individuals to secure productive jobs. In some cases, we may need to use outside contractors for IT projects or software development etc. and I supportive of this if/when special knowledge or a particular expertise is needed that is not available.

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

As a public health researcher, I have worked for over twenty years to keep individuals and communities safe by establishing certain protocols and policies in the area of public safety. The safety of all individuals throughout the state of Vermont is a big priority for me. Every individual should feel safe and secure in their work place. Employees must have not only a physically safe working environment but also be free of any sort of bias, discrimination, or harassment. Training in the workplace is critically important to make sure that plans, policies, and appropriate protocols are in place. A validated and standardized risk assessment completed by agencies and individuals is a first step. When gaps are identified proper policies and protocols can be put in place with required yearly follow-ups with employees to assure that gaps are being addressed. It is important that employees feel that they have a voice and can report/document any gaps in their overall level of safety.

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

Health care is a big issue for many Vermonters. I hear all the time from residents that each year health care costs are getting more and more expensive. People across the board feel that they pay more for less services and coverage. People need access to affordable health care. It really starts in many cases with prevention and universal primary care. We all know that it makes more sense and it is more cost effective to prevent a problem than treat a problem. It is important that people have access to yearly and routine health screenings. Many communities across the United States are moving towards a community health model where more work is done inside the community by being proactive and addressing needs early on with health screenings, referrals, and linkages. I support the switch from the current fee-for-service model to capitated payments where we compensate health care providers for prevention and connected care, rather than being paid for more prescriptions, visits, and surgeries. We must be willing to do things differently and think outside the box with healthcare where we focus on prevention.

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

Our middle class has benefited greatly from collective bargaining and strong unions. Having appropriate working conditions, compensation, and benefits is necessary for all employees and having a strong union to advocate on the behalf of workers is very beneficial. Unions help to strike a balance between all parties and give people a voice. I support collective bargaining and would vote against right to work legislation.

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

State employees are the backbone of our state and are critical to all Vermonters. The majority of state employees are Vermonters who are concerned about our state, communities, and the overall well-being of our people. State employees provide public services for all residents that we all depend on daily basis and make our communities function efficiently. Many people often criticize many of our state employees saying they are overpaid and people often want to cut critical services and programs. I will advocate for our state employees and listen to their needs. Many of our state employees have a unique expertise on what is working well and what areas may need to be tweaked/changed for better efficiency. I believe in

listening and advocating for all state employees. They know better than anyone how government is working and what legislation, protocols, or policies may need to be put in place.

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

I am very concerned about the economy of Vermont. I hear every day that people cannot afford heating costs, property taxes, and many elderly residents cannot retire because they simply cannot afford to. We have had many friends leave the state because they were not able to secure a job in Rutland County. I am not in favor of cutting necessary and needed jobs, programs, and services in order to deal with revenue problems. I have spent a lot of time talking with experts in this area and across the board experts say that we need a vision for our economy with proper legislation in place. I am very concerned about the growing level of poverty in Rutland County and do feel that we need more of a tax base by becoming more of a business friendly state. There is a need to grow our economy and help Vermonters. There is a disconnect between having some available jobs and not having people to fill these jobs because of a lack of soft skills. We need programs and services to help residents become productive in the workforce and we need a wide variety of jobs to be available to Vermonters. If we can focus and fix the economy I believe many things will fall into place.

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

The cost of higher education is frightening and not sustainable. As a mother of three small children, I do not even know if college will be a possibility at this rate for all of our three children. Higher education is important and often necessary in order to individuals to obtain a job with a livable wage. Many colleges are offering more courses that are online to save costs and increase efficiency. In addition, colleges are also looking to reduce the length of time you are in college from potential 4 years to 3.5 years. I am supportive of these initiatives. I am also very supportive of programs that focus on early education, technical education, job training, and skill development. It does not make sense for many of our youth to have the level of college debt that they have. Also college is not for every individual. There must be other successful career paths. Plumbers, electricians, and many other professions are critical and needed services that the public relies on and that do not require a college degree but yet pay incredibly well. I do not think that college can be free by raising taxes. Vermonters cannot afford more taxes.

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

We need to continue to promote the state college system with marketing campaigns, increase enrollment, reduce tuition costs, and make sure that state colleges are directly linked with employers to understand current job needs. We want young people to stay in Vermont, it is more crucial than ever due to our aging population. State colleges are affordable and provide a great education. It is important that local employers have strong relationships with our state college systems to link graduating students with available jobs.

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

I feel very strongly that no individual should work 40 hours a week, be a productive member of our society, and live in poverty. We need more opportunities for people to obtain better paying jobs. We need to focus on our economy, create a vision, develop an appropriate marketing plan, and put legislation in place in order to improve the lives of our people. There is a huge disconnect between not having enough high paying jobs in the state, having jobs that cannot be filled by people residing here, and a big increase in the amount of our people who are living in poverty. Employers state that they have jobs but no one to fill these jobs and we see growing poverty at the same time. We need to support all people and help people to be employed with a salary that allows their basic needs to be met. No one who works 40 hours a week should worry about what they will choose that week, food or to heat their home. This is morally wrong. Many mothers and fathers are working two to three jobs just to try to make ends meet and they are still living in poverty. I do support increasing the minimum wage but we are a state built on small business. I am worried about how this would affect mom and pop shops that employ a few workers. We need to have a strategy in place that can increase the minimum wage but not drive mom and pop shops out of business at the same time.

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

I support the work of our state workers and respect them for all of the critical work that they do for the state of Vermont. As a sociologist and public health researcher, I know what struggles people are facing. I have worked with vulnerable populations and high risk populations my entire life and truly understand how many folks have

three strikes against them. Our employees need support, resources, training, and a livable wage. I am very concerned about many of the people in this state and what to bring a change to the residents of Rutland County and advocate on their behalf.