

VSEA Candidate Survey:

Name: Susan M. Buckholz

District: Windsor 4-1

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

Yes. Frankly, it would be difficult to imagine many of the jobs done by State employees being done by private corporations or individuals. For these purposes, I also include county employees, who provide many important services in our state.

For instance, I work regularly in the Windham Family and Criminal Divisions in Brattleboro. The thought that the dedicated members of the Windham Sheriff's Department will no longer provide us with protection and service, as they have done for so long, is frankly unimaginable and disquieting. I know that the Deputies in the Courthouse are well trained, experienced and capable of handling all of the difficult and sometimes dangerous situations that arise. I have no such knowledge of any private contractors who will replace them and thus have to feel less secure in that Courthouse if the Deputies are gone.

State and county government is organized to do the business of the people. We should let them get on with that business!

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

In any way that I can. I am not meaning to avoid the question but have to be honest that, being new to this arena, I would expect to consult with the representatives of State workers to determine what would be most useful to the employees themselves.

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

I have long been a supporter of single payer health care. I will work to move us in that direction at every opportunity. It is not just a catchy slogan to say that health care is a human right; we need to catch up with the rest of the world on this point. I will support initiatives to move us in that direction.

And, extending Dr. Dynosaur through age 26 could make it more viable for our young people to stay in Vermont as they launch into adulthood, making life better for all of us here!

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

This is another area where I have no doubts about either issue: collective bargaining is essential for workers to protect themselves and their families, and "right to work" is anathema to their ability to maintain those protections. In short, Yes and Yes.

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

The roles of state employees are multi-layered and, in all of those layers, integral to the proper functioning of our state. Any service or function that applies to all citizens is at least arguably a function that should be performed by state employees, with proper oversight and support.

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

I am not sure that, in these turbulent financial times, we will be able to avoid budget shortfalls, or even necessarily predict them with any accuracy. Constant monitoring of key financial factors is essential if we are to make any sort of useful predictions.

That being said, anything that we do to strengthen the economy – living wage, small business supports, promotion of our tourism industry – will help us to avoid the miscalculations that have stymied us of late.

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

I have learned that 35.2% of Vermonters over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. Many Vermonters are unable to attend college or career training programs because the costs are just too high. If they do attend these programs, they too often emerge from the programs with a crippling student debt load, whether or not they were able to finish a degree program.

Vermont must expand opportunities for students of all ages to attend colleges, universities and technical training programs so that two-thirds of residents aged 25 or over have a college degree or technical certification. Accomplishing this goal will require a lot of collaboration across the aisle in Montpelier and a range of options for students, which can include

- ensuring that all students have the information they need to take advantage of existing supports so that they get the best “deal” currently available,**
- providing supports for parents of young children while they attend school to improve their families’ lives**

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

Again, I am learning as I go in this new venture as state representative! I am open and willing to work with the administration of that system to determine the most pressing needs and address them in the legislative process.

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

Absolutely. When I read about a \$15.00 minimum wage, I know that would be a great leap forward but I will still be worried about families trying to have a reasonable life, not overrun by worry, with that level of wages. That still puts most families on the knife edge of one (medical/transportation/legal) disaster away from financial mayhem.

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 would be honored to be endorsed by the VSEA and will work to support and further the goals of the association if I am elected. I wholeheartedly endorse the work that its members do and am grateful for those who make the choice to do so.

At this point, I am running unopposed in my first race for state representative. The support that would be most useful to me is education on the issues that are important to the VSEA. I thank you in advance for your consideration and any help that you can offer in that regard.