



VIRGINIA LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS

2021 Virginia General Assembly Candidate Questionnaire

The Virginia League of Conservation Voters thanks you for taking time from your schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will be a factor in endorsement and campaign contribution considerations.

As a member of the General Assembly, you will encounter numerous conservation issues across a broad array when making policy, regulatory, and appointment decisions. Many of these issues are represented in the following questionnaire, assembled with input from policy statements and positions from Virginia's conservation community.

Please circle YES or NO after each question. If you do not answer a question, the interpretation of your response will be left to a screening committee. There are no "trick" questions – all "yes" responses support our positions. If you need further clarification of any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information. If your response supports our conservation position, we assume that you will use the leadership and influence of your office to support appropriate legislation or administrative action. Feel free to offer a written response using the space below the question or by attaching additional comments. Upon submission of this questionnaire, Virginia LCV reserves the right to publicize candidate responses in an effort to educate voters. We will be making candidate endorsements on a rolling basis. Please return a completed questionnaire to Chris Leyen at cleyen@valcv.org.

Candidate's Name – Please Print: _____

Candidate's Signature: _____

Office Seeking: _____

Party Affiliation: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Campaign Office Address: _____

Campaign Manager: _____

Manager's Email Address: _____

Manager's Phone Number: _____

Land Conservation

Funding for Natural Resources: Virginia has strong voluntary conservation programs that have been responsible for the protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of open space, working lands and our most treasured natural and cultural resources. Yet Virginia is a long way from the goal of protecting 30% of our lands by 2030, with only about 15% of the Commonwealth protected. For many years, Virginia has only spent about one percent of available state revenues on natural resources, ranking near the bottom when compared to other states. In the last two years alone, unmet demand for Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Grants has exceeded \$100M. There have also been attempts to weaken the Land Preservation Tax Credit.

1. Will you support the establishment of a dedicated revenue source to increase the pace and scale of land conservation and provide recreational opportunities for all Virginians? YES NO

2. Will you oppose attempts to weaken or defund the Land Preservation Tax Credit program? YES NO

3. Will you support funding for natural resources agencies to properly manage the lands that they own for the benefit of the public? YES NO

Outdoor Access for Underserved Communities: Existing programs do not provide enough assistance to cities and other areas that are underserved by parks, trails, and river access. The 2020 Report of the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice outlined a number of recommendations to improve outdoor access for underserved communities.

4. Will you support assistance for communities that currently lack outdoor access to the natural environment through resources such as parks, trails, and urban agriculture? YES NO

Wildlife Corridors: Virginia's roads cover 70,105 miles, comprising the third-largest state-maintained highway system in the Country, cutting the Commonwealth's landscape into pieces and separating once-connected habitats. Providing wildlife corridors protect public health, reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and make habitats and ecosystems more resilient on land and in water.

5. Do you support requiring protection of wildlife corridors and the integration of Wildlife Corridor Action Plans into community, county, and state management plans? YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:

Land Use & Transportation

Clean Transportation Funding Models: Transportation represents the largest source of carbon emissions in Virginia. In order to change that, we need a shift to a cleaner, balanced, and more equitable transportation system with an emphasis on reducing vehicle miles travelled and electrifying the remaining miles.

6. Will you support shifting transportation funding from spending 80% on highways expansion to a model where at least half of the funding supports cleaner mobility options such as transit, rail, biking, walking, and local streets and where maintenance of existing roadways is prioritized over highway expansion? YES NO

7. Will you support the funding of clean transportation programs through participation of Virginia in the regional cap-and-invest Transportation and Climate Initiative and condition the Commonwealth's participation in the program on the presence of robust equity measures including the allocation of at least 50% of generated funds to underserved communities, and robust participation by an equity advisory body? YES NO

Promoting Rail Initiatives: Virginia has recently taken steps to expand Amtrak and VRE services, create a pathway for the separation of freight and passenger rail in Virginia, and preserve future rail corridors. The Commonwealth must continue to prioritize rail to reduce traffic congestion as well as carbon pollution.

8. Will you honor existing commitments to planned rail initiatives including the Virginia Statewide Rail Plan, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, the Commonwealth Rail Fund, and projects such as the expansion of Long Bridge? YES NO

Transportation Electrification: Accelerating transportation electrification can yield immediate clean air, climate, and cost saving benefits to all Virginians. These benefits are recognized by the public, automakers, and automobile dealers. Recent legislation established a Clean Cars Standard, identified infrastructure needs, and set up a framework for equitable EV rebates. Increased action and funding are needed to build on this foundation.

9. Will you support sufficient funding for rebates on new and used electric vehicles through the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program Fund through 2026? YES NO

10. Will you support the funding of electric vehicle charging infrastructure needs as identified through the Virginia Energy Plan needed to support Virginia's 2045 net-zero carbon target? YES NO

11. Will you support the electrification of Virginia state and local government supported light-, medium-, and heavy-duty fleet vehicles? YES NO

Equitable Access to Transit: Transit is essential for improving access to jobs, education, healthcare, and services for all Virginians and reducing vehicle trips, greenhouse gas emissions, and other air pollutants. Strengthening environmental justice, economic competitiveness, and climate change resiliency requires increased investment in transit.

12. Do you support implementation of transit necessities such as benches and shelters, bus electrification, GPS tracking, integrated payments, and mechanisms for more rider input and decision-making in transit systems? YES NO

13. Will you support funding for the Transit Ridership Incentive Program and the continued expansion of fare-free transit service along local and regional bus routes? YES NO

Sustainable Development: Affordable housing and smart growth promote economic development and efficient land use, reduce traffic congestion, make public transit a viable option for more people, and reduce transportation emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants.

14. Will you support efforts to put Virginia on a path to 25% reduction in Vehicle Miles Travelled by 2030 by rewarding jurisdictions for infill development in cities, towns, transit station areas and older suburbs as opposed to greenfield development? YES NO

15. Will you support efforts to increase transit-accessible low-income housing stock, integrate affordable housing as a component of the Commonwealth's land use and transportation planning efforts, and provide opportunities to rehabilitate these properties with energy efficiency and clean energy? YES NO

Robust Oversight: To equitably allocate transportation funds and achieve Virginia's emission reduction targets, transportation programs must be transparent and accurately factor in climate and local environmental impacts.

16. Will you support the environmental review of transportation projects funded by regional bodies & localities? YES NO

17. Will you support the inclusion of climate impact assessments regarding transportation projects' effect on greenhouse gas emissions and to impacts on carbon sinks in state-funded and VDOT-managed projects? YES NO

18. Will you oppose giving greater weight to congestion mitigation and economic development, weakening, or eliminating environmental quality and land use in project scoring, and exempting any project from SMART SCALE? YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:

Water Quality

Chesapeake Bay: The Chesapeake Bay is one of the Commonwealth's most cherished resources both culturally and economically. Although we have made great strides toward reaching our goals for cleaning up the Bay, and we have seen consistent funding to assist with best management practices in recent years, there is still much to be done.

19. Will you support a bay restoration budget that enables Virginia to meet its Total Maximum Daily Load commitment by no later than the 2025 deadline? YES NO

20. Will you support a continuing appropriation of \$100M for the Virginia Agriculture Cost Share program to assist farmers who adopt agricultural best management practices (BMPs)? YES NO

21. Will you support appropriations of at least \$80M per year for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to invest in pollution reduction projects and help localities meet their local pollution reduction goals? YES NO

22. Will you support Virginia's continued participation in a strong Chesapeake Bay Agreement among Bay states that recognizes the threats toxics and climate change pose to the quality and sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay? YES NO

Flooding & Resiliency: Communities throughout Virginia are facing unprecedented challenges from rising seas, recurrent flooding, and increased precipitation and storm intensity. Virginia has begun taking much-needed steps to address our communities' growing vulnerability to flood events, but more work is needed.

23. Do you agree flooding is a risk to both inland and coastal localities and that Virginia has a role in helping localities understand their flood risks through watershed-level comprehensive planning, and will you support future risk planning, prioritizing nature-based solutions, and bringing communities together across watersheds to identify and solve flood risks and identify those most at risk in rural and urban communities? YES NO

24. Will you support the prioritization of natural solutions utilizing native vegetation to address climate change impacts on inland and coastal resiliency? YES NO

Toxics: Emerging contaminants include "forever chemicals" known as PFAS. PFAS are found in nonstick materials, from cookware, raincoats, cosmetics, and firefighting foam. These toxics leach into our soil and contaminate our water. Once they enter the human body, these toxic substances build up, and can't be broken down. They have been linked to cancer, infertility, and other health impacts.

25. Will you support regulating the presence of emerging contaminants such as PFAS in Virginia waters and banning products containing contaminants of concern? YES NO

Plastics: studies have shown that the Chesapeake Bay, tributary rivers and streams, and its shoreline have a significantly high concentration of plastic pollution. Plastic litter has wide-ranging destructive impacts on human health, wildlife, water infrastructure, and agricultural land.

26. Will you support strategies to reduce consumption of single-use plastics? YES NO

Uranium & Gold Mining: Virginia has in place a more than 30-year-old moratorium on the mining and milling of uranium. Modern gold mining and onsite processing presents similarly toxic risks. According to the US EPA's Toxics Release Inventory, metal mining is the nation's #1 toxic polluter and multiple recent gold mines on the East Coast are federal Superfund sites. Chemicals like cyanide are used to extract minute pieces of gold from rock and 99 percent of the earth excavated becomes waste containing harmful contaminants like mercury, arsenic and lead that are stored on site in mounds or holding ponds, at risk of contaminating local ground and surface waters or becoming airborne. Insufficient funds are required to be set aside for reclamation, leaving low-income communities, communities of color and the Commonwealth at risk of picking up the bill to clean up the sites. A study is being conducted by the Department of Minerals, Mines and Energy, Department of Environmental Quality and Virginia Department of Health to examine the public health and environmental impacts of large-scale commercial gold mining.

27. *Should the study regarding large-scale industrial gold mining identify a substantial risk to Virginia's communities be identified regarding public health, environmental degradation, or long-term financial exposure, will you support a moratorium on the practice?*

YES NO

28. *Will you support the continuing moratorium on uranium mining in Virginia?*

YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:

Climate Change & Energy

Just Transition to Clean Energy: The last few General Assembly sessions yielded landmark victories for clean energy through the passage of the Virginia Clean Economy Act, the Solar Freedom Act, and grid modernization legislation. Work is needed now to build on this progress in a way that benefits all Virginians as we ensure a just transition to a clean energy future.

29. Will you support enactment of the Commonwealth Clean Energy Policy which requires reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the Commonwealth's economy sufficient to reach net-zero emission by 2045 in all sectors, including electric power, transportation, industrial, agricultural, building, and infrastructure sectors? YES NO

30. Will you support the establishment of a state Just Energy Transition advisory board charged with identifying impacted communities and working with stakeholders to develop state and local policy related to economic transition, quality of life, public services, long-term health care, and environmental remediation? YES NO

31. Will you support the study of the effects of power plant closures in order to quantify the needs in impacted communities that provides data specific to individual communities where carbon-emitting power plants are located, including impacts on tax revenue, employment loss, and infrastructure? YES NO

32. Will you support the provision of workforce training and reemployment services to workers and communities with historically fossil-fuel reliant economies that will allow those workers to remain in their communities while they are trained for new employment and will ensure post-training employment opportunities in those communities? YES NO

33. Would you support policies that encourage greater adoption of distributed generation, such as rooftop or community solar, in our built environment? YES NO

Protecting Frontline Communities

While it is the Commonwealth's policy to "protect its atmosphere, lands, and waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction, for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth," oftentimes, environmental impacts disproportionately affect lower-income neighborhoods and/or communities of color. Last year, it became the policy of the Commonwealth "to promote environmental justice and ensure that it is carried out."

34. *Will you support efforts to require increased public outreach efforts to impacted and underserved communities, and to consider cumulative impacts of multiple risk factors during the permitting of transportation, energy and development projects?*

YES NO

35. *Will you support efforts to codify the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group to maximize state resources, research, and technical assistance to further environmental justice in the Commonwealth?*

YES NO

36. *Will you support efforts to develop specific environmental justice policies among executive agencies to require them when applicable to meaningfully consider environmental justice and any cumulative impacts in the administration of their basic law and to identify the environmental justice communities with which they engage?*

YES NO

Good Government

While much of Virginia LCV's work is dedicated to ensuring strong environmental policy that protects clean air, clean water, and open space for all Virginians, we are equally dedicated to ensuring a healthy democracy in the commonwealth.

Ballot Access: Virginia has taken crucial steps to greatly expand ballot accessibility, flexibility, and increased representation among eligible voters. However, recent efforts to limit voting access have arisen nationwide in response to debunked and unsubstantiated claims of voting fraud.

37. Will you oppose efforts to restrict voter access by limiting either the time, place, or manner by which a registered voter may cast their vote, or any efforts to impose additional hurdles to the ballot casting or registration process?

YES NO

Polluter Money in Politics: Over the years, Dominion Energy has been a top political donor to campaigns across the state, leveraging its political capital to influence how the state regulates monopoly electric utilities and how lawmakers vote on energy and environmental policy that impacts their bottom line.

38. Will you refuse to accept campaign contributions from monopoly electric utilities and their political action committees?

YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:

Personal Commitment

If elected, what three conservation issues will be your top priorities?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What leadership initiatives will you undertake to advance the issues you listed above?

What examples of environmental leadership can you cite from your past? Please include legislative, business or organizational examples of your work.

If elected, how will you specifically involve the conservation community in your work?

Thank you again for your participation in Virginia LCV's endorsement process.

Virginia League of Conservation Voters
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