



VIRGINIA LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION VOTERS

2023 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 support 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, District #: _____

Party Affiliation: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Campaign Office Address: _____

Campaign Manager: _____

Manager's Email Address: _____

Manager's Phone Number: _____



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Land Conservation

Funding for Natural Resources: Article XI of the Constitution of Virginia declares that “it shall be 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.” To that end, Virginia has established strong voluntary conservation programs that protect hundreds of thousands of acres of open space, working lands and our most treasured natural and cultural resources. President Biden issued an Executive Order establishing a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and freshwater and 30 percent of U.S. ocean areas by 2030. Four out of five U.S. voters favor this plan. Yet Virginia is a long way from the goal of protecting 30% of our lands by 2030, with only about 15% of the Commonwealth currently protected. For many years, Virginia has spent only about 1% of available state revenues on natural resources, ranking near the bottom when compared to other states. There have also been attempts to weaken the Land Preservation Tax Credit – a key tool to preserve natural resources.

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| 1. <i>Will you support the establishment of a dedicated revenue source sufficient to increase the pace and scale of land conservation and provide recreational opportunities for all Virginians?</i> | YES | NO |
| 2. <i>Will you oppose attempts to weaken or defund the Land Preservation Tax Credit program?</i> | YES | NO |
| 3. <i>Will you support funding for our natural resources agencies, including dedicated funding for Virginia State Parks, to ensure they can properly manage the lands that they steward for the benefit of the public?</i> | YES | NO |
| 4. <i>Will you support increased funding for conservation of working farm and forest lands to match federal funds available through the Federal Farm Bill's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program ?</i> | YES | NO |

Outdoor Access for Underserved Communities: Existing programs do not provide enough assistance to cities and other areas that lack access to parks, green spaces, trails, and other outdoor amenities.

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| 5. <i>Will you support assistance for communities that currently lack outdoor access to the natural environment through resources such as parks, trails, and urban agriculture?</i> | YES | NO |
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Wildlife Corridors: Virginia's roads stretch over 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. Wildlife corridors protect public health, reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and make habitats and ecosystems more resilient on land and in water. Virginia took steps forward in 2020 and 2021, passing bills to study and prioritize wildlife corridors. Now, we must invest in the areas identified in the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan by creating a state funding mechanism that takes advantage of the federal dollars available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.



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6. *Do you support the establishment of a state funding mechanism and at least a \$5 million budget allocation to support, in part, implementation of corridors in areas identified by Virginia's Wildlife Corridor Action Plan and to take advantage of federal dollars available for wildlife crossings and habitat connectivity projects?* YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:

Land Use & Transportation

Clean Transportation Funding: Transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions in Virginia. We need a shift to a cleaner, better balanced, and more equitable transportation system with an emphasis on reducing vehicle miles traveled and electrifying the remaining miles. The federal Affordable Clean Energy Plan—consisting of investments from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the Infrastructure, Investments, and Jobs Act (IIJA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)—have made hundreds of billions of federal dollars available to states, localities, businesses and citizens to transition to cleaner transportation, energy, homes, businesses, and manufacturing processes..

7. *Will you support increasing the share of clean transportation funding to 50% by 2030 to expand mobility options for Virginia residents and reduce pollution, including taking advantage of funding flexibility and competitive grants under the federal Affordable Clean Energy Plan?* YES NO
8. *Electric school buses are eligible for \$40,000 per-vehicle federal rebates through the Inflation Reduction Act. Grant funding for school bus electrification is also available through the Infrastructure, Investments, and Jobs Act's Clean School Bus Program. Will you work with local school districts to electrify the Commonwealth's school bus fleets and commit to providing sufficient state programmatic support to secure these investments?* YES NO
9. *Will you prioritize carbon pollution reduction in transportation planning and funding by strengthening the review of climate change effects for major projects, requiring state and regional plans to cut carbon emissions and reduce vehicle miles traveled, and developing a plan to take advantage of carbon reduction funding under the Affordable Clean Energy Plan?* YES NO



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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 to preserve future rail corridors. The Commonwealth must continue to prioritize rail to reduce traffic congestion as well as carbon pollution. In 2020, the General Assembly created the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) to own, maintain, implement, and operate the Commonwealth's passenger rail network.

10. *Will you protect and expand rail funding and implement the VPRA's Transforming Rail in Virginia program to ensure state agencies and authorities are equipped to secure federal Affordable Clean Energy Plan funding where possible?* 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. Federal Affordable Clean Energy Plan funding for transportation electrification includes new- and used- electric vehicle (EV) tax credits for both personal, transit, and commercial fleet vehicles in addition to EV charging station incentives, and a battery production tax credit. Action by the Commonwealth to secure and provide flexible state-level funding is needed to build on this foundation. Funding of electric vehicle charging infrastructure needs were identified through the Virginia Energy plan as necessary to support Virginia's 2045 net-zero carbon target.

11. *Will you protect and advance Virginia's Clean Car Standards, which take effect in 2024?* YES NO
12. *Will you support improved access to charging infrastructure by utilizing newly available federal funding allocations and competitive grants, while ensuring meaningful stakeholder input, especially from historically underserved communities?* 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 resilience requires increased investment in transit. More than \$11.5 million in federal funding through the IJJA has already begun to support these goals in the greater Richmond area and Suffolk.

13. *Will you support increasing transit funding to meet the needs identified in DRPT's 2022 Transit Modernization and Equity Study, including increased bus route frequency and improved quality of rider experience through infrastructure such as covered stops, benches, sidewalks, and pedestrian crosswalks?* YES NO
14. *Will you support funding for the Transit Ridership Incentive Program of at least \$10 million per year, the continued expansion of fare-free transit service along local and regional bus routes, and the removal of the 2024 sunset clause on Virginia's zero-fare program?* YES NO



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Sustainable Development: Affordable housing and smart growth policies 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 gasses and other air pollutants.

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| 15. <i>Will you support efforts to put Virginia on a path to a 20% reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled by 2050 by rewarding jurisdictions that pursue infill development in cities, towns, transit station areas and older suburbs as opposed to greenfield development and set specific goals for VDOT and DRPT?</i> | YES | NO |
| 16. <i>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?</i> | 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 environmental impacts on disadvantaged communities.

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| 17. <i>Will you support strengthening the "fix it first" requirements in the Virginia Code and allocate funding to ensure that road funding first covers maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure?</i> | YES | NO |
| 18. <i>Will you support the inclusion of climate impact assessments regarding transportation projects' effects on greenhouse gas emissions and impacts on carbon sinks in state-funded and VDOT-managed projects?</i> | YES | NO |
| 19. <i>Will you defend SMART SCALE and oppose efforts to fund specific projects outside of its prioritization process? Will you oppose giving undue additional weight to congestion mitigation and economic development, thus weakening or eliminating environmental quality and land use in project scoring?</i> | YES | NO |

Comments on any of the above questions:



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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, including fully funding Virginia's agriculture cost-share needs for the upcoming biennium, there is still much to be done. To meet our Bay goals by 2025, 75% of the remaining nitrogen pollution reductions must come from the agricultural sector. In 2023, the deadline was extended to 2028 to incorporate accountability metrics, require full funding of cost-share needs through the 2028 deadline, and reflect supply-chain, funding, and workforce shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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| 20. Will you support a bay restoration budget that enables Virginia to meet its Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) commitment by no later than the 2028 deadline? | YES | NO |
| 21. Will you support the maintenance of full funding (at least \$256 million) for the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS), as estimated by the Agricultural Needs Assessment after accounting for impacts related to inflation? This funding includes providing sufficient and stable funding for technical assistance by Soil and Water Conservation Districts to ensure adequate staff capacity and training. | YES | NO |
| 22. 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 |
| 23. Will you support Virginia's continued participation in a strong Chesapeake Bay Agreement among Bay states that recognizes the threats that toxics and climate change pose to the quality and sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay? | YES | NO |
| 24. State funding has been a crucial component in removing sewage waste that overflows from antiquated Combined Sewer Systems into the James and Potomac rivers. Will you support continued investment by the Commonwealth in developing and constructing projects to eliminate overflows in the cities of Richmond and Lynchburg? | YES | NO |

Toxics: Emerging contaminants include "forever chemicals" known as PFAS, which stands for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances. PFAS are found in nonstick materials used in cookware, raincoats, cosmetics, and firefighting foam. These toxins 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. Proposed EPA PFAS regulations are expected by the end of 2023.

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| 25. Will you support state regulation of emerging contaminants such as PFAS in Virginia waters and banning products containing contaminants of concern? | YES | NO |
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Plastics: studies have shown that the Chesapeake Bay, its 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.

Will you support strategies to reduce consumption of single-use plastics?

YES NO

Uranium & Gold Mining: More than 30 years ago, Virginia adopted a 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 have become 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, creating a high risk of contaminating local ground and surface waters or becoming airborne. Because state law doesn't require miners to set aside sufficient funds for reclamation, low-income communities, communities of color, and everyone in the Commonwealth are forced to pick up the bill to clean up the sites. A study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) in partnership with Virginia Energy, the Department of Environmental Quality, and Virginia Department of Health found that "Virginia's regulatory framework lacks an adequate financial assurance system, which poses a fiscal and environmental risk to the commonwealth. Additionally, Virginia lacks opportunities for a diverse public to participate in permitting processes and a modern system for review of environmental impacts from potential gold mining projects...these and other portions of Virginia's regulatory framework fell short in comparison to other states, the federal government, and modern best practices."

26. Will you support a moratorium on the practice of large-scale commercial gold mining that lasts, at a minimum, until sufficient safeguards are promulgated to address issues identified in the NASEM report?

YES NO

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

YES NO

Comments on any of the above questions:



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Climate Change & Energy

Just Transition to Clean Energy: The 2020 and 2021 General Assembly sessions yielded landmark victories for clean energy through the passage of the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA), approving our state's membership in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and Advanced Clean Cars standards. Work is needed now to defend and build on this progress in a way that benefits all Virginians as we ensure a just transition to a clean energy future. The federal Affordable Clean Energy Plan—consisting of investments from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the Infrastructure, Investments, and Jobs Act (IIJA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)—has made hundreds of billions of federal dollars available to states, localities, businesses, and citizens to transition to cleaner transportation, energy, homes, businesses, and manufacturing processes.

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| 28. <i>Will you support Virginia's commitment to clean energy transformation and work to fully implement the VCEA?</i> | YES | NO |
| 29. <i>Will you support Virginia's participation in our regional emissions reduction program, RGGI (The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative)?</i> | YES | NO |
| 30. <i>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?</i> | YES | NO |
| 31. <i>Will you support policies that encourage greater adoption of distributed electricity generation to build community-scale solar on the roofs of houses, barns, condos, warehouses, and parking lots?</i> | YES | NO |
| 32. <i>Will you support the continued development of policies to avoid prime farm soils and intact forested areas and the mitigation of impacts on natural resources and communities from utility scale solar and related energy infrastructure projects?</i> | YES | NO |
| 33. <i>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?</i> | YES | NO |
| 34. <i>Will you support a study on the impact of data centers on employment, local communities, air quality, water quality, and the electric grid to provide necessary data to help Virginia legislators, agencies, and localities develop best practices for protecting the environment and making a just transition to clean energy?</i> | YES | NO |



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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.

35. *Do you agree flooding is a risk to both inland and coastal localities and that Virginia should help localities understand their flood risks through watershed-level comprehensive planning? 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
36. *Will you support maintaining Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and continue to allocate 45% of revenues generated from RGGI to the CFPF, as well as ensuring the continued prioritization of natural solutions utilizing native vegetation to address climate change impacts on inland and coastal resiliency?* YES NO

Just Oversight over the Clean Energy Transition: The Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC), a three member panel appointed by the General Assembly and charged with overseeing utility regulation, currently has two vacancies. In order to pass climate and energy laws that work for the people, the majority of the SCC must stand up for the interests of Virginians and Virginia's environment, not with the interests of fossil fuel industries.

37. *Will you commit to supporting the appointment of a pro-citizen, pro-climate State Corporation Commission majority so that Virginia can make a timely clean energy transition that is just, reliable, and affordable?* YES NO



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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, even though it is also the policy of the Commonwealth "to promote environmental justice and ensure that it is carried out."

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| 38. <i>Will you support efforts to require increased public outreach efforts to disproportionately affected or underserved communities, and to consider the cumulative impacts of multiple risk factors during the permitting of transportation, energy and development projects?</i> | YES | NO |
| 39. <i>Will you support the continuation of the Virginia Environmental Justice Council and ensure that it maintains the integrity and independence necessary to effectively carry out its mission to ensure that state resources, research, and technical assistance promote environmental justice in the Commonwealth?</i> | YES | NO |
| 40. <i>Will you support efforts to require appropriate agencies within the Departments of Natural and Historic Resources, Transportation, Commerce and Trade, and Health and Human Resources to develop and implement an official environmental justice policy?</i> | YES | NO |



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Good Government

Virginia LCV is dedicated to an equitable and just Virginia, where all communities enjoy clean air and water, open space, a liveable climate, and a democracy that works for all Virginians. The freedom, fairness, and transparency of our democratic institutions and the ability of citizens to participate in them is fundamental to the effectiveness of community-led advocacy for strong environmental policy.

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. Because of Jim-Crow-era changes to the Virginia constitution, approximately 250,000 Virginia citizens don't have access to the ballot due to past felony offenses for which they have already served the time of their incarceration. They are banned from voting for the rest of their lives unless they specifically and individually petition the state through a burdensome process and receive the Governor's approval.

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| <i>41. Will you oppose efforts to restrict voter access by limiting either the time, place, or manner by which an eligible citizen may register or cast their vote, or to impose additional legal or practical obstacles to registration or ballot casting?</i> | YES NO |
| <i>42. Will you support a constitutional amendment that establishes a fundamental right to vote and restores the full rights of citizenship to individuals convicted of a felony and have completed the time of their incarceration.</i> | YES NO |

Money in Politics: Over the years, Dominion Energy has been a top political donor to campaigns across the state. It uses the resulting political influence to shape how the state regulates monopoly electric utilities and the State's energy and environmental policy to benefit their corporate bottom line.

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| <i>43. Will you refuse to accept campaign contributions from monopoly electric utilities and their political action committees?</i> | YES NO |
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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 pursue 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 legislative work?

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



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