

New Jersey Citizen Action 2011 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Valerie Vainieri Huttle

Office Sought & District: Re-election to the General Assembly, District 37

Party Affiliation: Democratic Party

Contact: Andrea Katz

Phone: 201-893-5310

Email: abkatz18@gmail.com

Election Reform

1. Yes, I have been a longtime supporter of voluntary public financing (clean elections) for New Jersey's legislative races. To that end, I participated in a clean elections pilot program when I ran for re-election to the Assembly in 2007.

I also believe in reforming campaign contributions, practices, and procedures in order to make sure the clean process is as transparent as possible. Therefore, I am the prime Assembly sponsor of A924, which would ban certain contributions by redevelopers and their consultants from the onset of the redevelopment process to the completion of the redevelopment agreement, and A935, which prohibits a person from simultaneously being the chairman, treasurer, deputy treasurer, or other officer of more than two political committees, continuing political committees, political party committees, candidate committees, joint candidates committees, or legislative leadership committees.

2. Yes, I support banning the practice of "wheeling," which would prohibit the transfer of political action committee (PAC) funds from one PAC to another.

Work and Family

3. I opposed and voted against A4133, which made various changes to pension and health care benefits for public employees.

4. Yes, I support collective bargaining rights of public employees, wherein contributions are negotiated rather than imposed by legislation.

5. Yes, I support legislation to guarantee a minimum number of earned paid sick days for all NJ workers.

6. Yes, I support upholding New Jersey's law on family leave insurance.

7. Yes, I support increasing the minimum wage for all NJ workers and indexing it to increases in the cost of living.

Good Government

8. While I support reforming and streamlining New Jersey's civil service system, I oppose allowing towns and municipalities to opt-out.

Quality, Affordable Health Care

9. I am a prime sponsor of S2899 in the Assembly, which would restore State funds for family planning services and would reinstate Medicaid coverage for such services. I have also sponsored several bills to restore the funding for family planning by increasing federal dollars available to New Jersey: A3019 Makes FY 2011 supplemental appropriation of \$7,453,000 for Women's Health and Family Planning Services, reduces FY 2011 appropriation for State Employees' Prescription Drug Program by \$7,453,000, and requires filing of application for expansion of Medicaid coverage for family planning services; A3273 Amends Fiscal Year 2011 annual appropriations act to require filing of application for expansion of Medicaid coverage for family planning services.

10. Yes, supported and voted for A3636, which seeks to establish a Medicaid Accountable Care Organization (ACO) demonstration project within the Department of Human Services.

11. Yes, I support and voted for A1930, the "NJ Health Benefit Exchange Act", which seeks to establish a new consumer-friendly marketplace where individuals and small businesses can shop for health insurance.

12. I opposed and called on Governor Christie to reconsider to his proposal to apply for a federal Medicaid Waiver that would allow the state to cut parent eligibility for NJ FamilyCare from 133% to 25% of the Federal Poverty Line. I am pleased that heeded my call and removed that provision from the Waiver application.

13. Yes, I support restoring access for all legal immigrant parents to NJ FamilyCare.

Community Reinvestment, Fair Housing

14. I believe that New Jersey landlord-tenant law must be balanced so that tenants and landlords are on fair playing field. Any legislation reflecting the New Jersey Law Commission's recommendations must receive a comprehensive and careful review by the Legislature. I look forward to participating in that review process and discussing this issue further with Citizen Action.

15. Yes, I support the concept of Linked Deposit legislation and I look forward to discussing this further with Citizen Action.

16. Yes, I support restoring funds to the Mortgage Assistance Fund.

17. Unfortunately, many New Jersey families who have lost their homes due to foreclosure were hurt further by Governor Christie's funding cuts to Medicaid,

FamilyCare, and non-profit organizations. The first step in helping these families regain their financial footing is to rebuild New Jersey's safety net. The Legislature and the Christie Administration must also work with banks and other lenders to create a set of reasonable policies that will allow residents who have foreclosed on their homes or declared bankruptcy to become renters and new home owners again.

Budget and Fair Taxes

18. I opposed Governor Christie's line item vetoes to the FY 2012 budget.

19. Yes, I support reinstating the state Earned Income Tax Credit to 25% of the federal level in FY2013.

20. I support temporarily increasing the tax rate for individuals earning \$1 million or more per year.

21. Yes, I support adjusting New Jersey's income tax to more closely reflect ability to pay.

Fair and Affordable Utility Rates

22. New Jersey has an obligation to protect consumers, and it must also regulate utility providers in a way that encourages competition in order to keep prices at reasonable levels. The state has a history of active ratepayer protection and a strong Consumer Fraud Act. I believe that the Legislature must ensure that those protections are maintained.

I am pleased that the Senate has not voted on A3766 yet, as much work remains to be done to improve safeguards for ratepayers, especially those with low and fixed incomes. If those changes are not made when the bill returns to the Assembly for a concurrence vote, I will not vote for it. I look forward to working with Citizen Action to ensure that necessary changes are made to this legislation.

23. Yes, I support full funding for New Jersey's Universal Service Fund, which sets electricity and gas rates for NJ's low income families based on income and energy usage.

24. I oppose Governor Christie's decision to take \$158 million of ratepayer money from NJ's Clean Energy Fund, which is designated to finance energy efficiency improvements in business, homes and creating jobs, to plug nonrelated shortfalls in the FY2011 budget.

25. I oppose A1188, which would ban formula based utility rates for all utilities including electric companies and water and sewerage authorities.

Quality Public Education

26. I oppose private school vouchers.

27. Yes, I support giving local communities the ability to decide if a new charter school should be able to open and draw students and resources from their district.

28. Yes, I support increasing the financial and educational transparency and accountability of all charter schools. To that end, I introduced A4089, which provides that charter schools will be subject to monitoring under the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum.

29. I oppose allowing for-profit entities to manage public schools.

30. I believe that improving New Jersey's statewide education system must be priority for the Legislature. All students in our state deserve a quality education that will allow them to participate in programs of higher education and to succeed in the job market. I do not support private school vouchers and at this time, I do not support the Opportunity Scholarship Act.

31. Yes, I support providing in-state tuition to students to all students who live in New Jersey and have graduated from New Jersey high schools. In the 2008-2009 legislative session, I was a primary sponsor of A194, which would have allowed undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education.

32. Yes, I support providing access to universal early childhood education and adequately funding the program.

33. Yes, I support the School Funding Reform Act of 2008.

34. Yes, I support fully funding the School Funding Reform Act's formula for education aid. I am pleased that the New Jersey Supreme Court found Governor Chris Christie's FY 2011 education budget cuts to be insufficient and ordered the governor to adequately fund our state's education system.

Auto Insurance

35. I believe car insurance rates should be based on a driver's driving record, rather than on education and occupation, as this often leads to discriminatory practices against poorer ratepayers.

Civil Rights

36. Yes, I support legislation that establishes marriage equality, granting same-sex relationships equal status under New Jersey law.

Consumer Protections

37. Yes, I support the rights of people injured by medical negligence to be treated fairly by the court system.

38. Yes, I support preserving the ability of New Jersey auto accident victims to receive medical care from doctors and medical professional of their choosing.

39. Yes, I believe a strong justice system is important for injured consumers.

40. I oppose weakening New Jersey's Consumer Fraud Act.