



League of Women Voters® of Montgomery County

2009 Voter's Guide

Introduction

The Voter's Guide is provided by the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County as part of the League's commitment to voter services and as a public service. The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization, and the inclusion of candidates' statements in this Guide does not represent an endorsement of any one candidate or position.

This guide is organized by office and by candidate. Candidates were sent a short survey (three to four questions) based on the office for which they are running. All candidates for each office were asked the same questions. Their responses are reprinted in this guide. If a candidate did not respond to the survey, their non-response is noted under their name.

Following each debate, the candidates will be sent a second survey which will include all of the questions, both asked and not asked, from their individual forums. Candidates will be invited to provide additional answers to the questions posed by the public. Candidates' answers to the second survey will be posted on the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County website at: www.lwvmcva.org.

Virginia House of Delegates, District 007

David A. "Dave" Nutter (R)

Biographical Statement: Dave Nutter is finishing his fourth term in the House of Delegates where he serves on the committees on Health, Welfare or Institutions; Militia & Police; and Science and Technology. He also serves on the Joint Commission on Health Care, the board of directors of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center; Explore Park; and board of directors for the Center for Rural Virginia. Dave Nutter has been recognized for his legislative accomplishments by several organizations. He was named Legislator of the Year in 2007 by the Career and Technical Educators Association and was named a champion of the Free Clinics of Virginia in 2004. Dave Nutter's re-election to the House of Delegate has been endorsed by the National Federation of Independent Businesses, Virginia Education Association, New River Valley Realtors, National Rifle Association, and the Farm Bureau. Dave Nutter is employed as an administrative faculty member at Virginia Tech where he works in the Office of Economic Development. Dave and his wife Jackie have been residents of Montgomery County for over 21 years. All three of their children have graduated from Montgomery County public schools and attend college in Virginia.

What do you see as the single most pressing issue facing Virginia and the residents of Montgomery County, the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, and the City of Radford, and what, specifically would you do to address or solve this issue? Providing economic opportunity for the citizens of the NRV is the most pressing issue confronting the region. Stimulating economic growth is a multi-faceted issue. First it starts with a comprehensive plan both at the state and regional level. The Governor is required to produce a state plan within six months. I am sponsoring legislation to require an update to the Governor's plan within two years of taking office. I have also participated in the development of the NRV Planning District Commission strategic plan that establishes a common goals. As a member of the board of the Center for Rural Virginia, we are working with both party gubernatorial candidates to establish a cabinet level officer as policy point on ways to enhance the economic vitality of rural Virginia. Workforce preparedness is another critical issue for the entire region. I serve on the study committee that looked at Virginia's workforce system and created the position of workforce czar on the Governor's staff. In the last 12 months important sections of those duties have gone out to the community colleges. I will be sponsoring legislation to strengthen that connection and continue to make it more responsive. I carried legislation that helped to create Virginia's new diploma in Career and Technical Education and sponsored budget amendment that added important new resources to CT education. Virginia has only about 25% of the people it needs to meet existing demand for plumbers, machinists and other skilled trades. Industry across the state is crying for a more skilled workforce. I have also carried legislation on behalf of the VCCS chancellor to support the career coaches program which helps young people identify career opportunities through the community college system. I was honored this summer by the president of New River Community College for my leadership and support for the Community Colleges and its mission. At the urging of the Va. Chamber of Commerce I have created the Tourism Caucus as tourism promotion is a critical link to industrial development. Also this year the GA increased the state's tourism fund by \$2.5 million for the first time in recent memory. At the urging of the local chambers of commerce I sponsored a study looking at establishing a regional tourism organization. The NRV chambers are holding an organizational meeting in the next couple of weeks to begin that discussion. Another critical issue affecting the region and state's workforce is substance abuse. I sponsored a workforce survey in the region and 75% of the respondents complained of applicant's inability to pass a drug test. Mandatory drug testing is increasingly common for industry today. In talking with officials from the Health Department, common estimates indicate that anywhere from 20% to 30% of the adult population has a substance abuse problem. Because of my leadership the Department of Substance Abuse came to me last year and asked that I sponsor legislation to look at the problem of prescription

drug abuse. That study is now ongoing and I am serving on two study committees looking at problems and costs of substance abuse and we are identifying resources to begin the process of helping address this issue. In 2006 Pulaski County had the highest mortality rate in Virginia for prescription drug abuse deaths. The NRV as a whole also critical problem and statistics indicate the problem is moving eastward so no community is spared. I have long been recognized on both sides of the isle as a champion in the General Assembly for higher education. I have fought for additional resources at both the operational level and for the research mission. I have sponsored legislation to establish a more sustainable funding source for research. I have been a public spokesman for the two statewide bond campaigns in 1992 and in 2002 and the bond package in 2008 and 2009. Through my work I am helping to establish a nanotechnology park in Pulaski County that will work with Virginia Tech. This year I helped sponsor and shepherd legislation establishing tax credits to support the biomedical industry. The Roanoke and NRV has the opportunity to be center for a major biomedical industry cluster. I am sponsoring legislation in January to help moving the planning along for this important new industry segment. I have also been an advocate for the Return to Roots program that is reaching out to Southwest Virginia residents who have moved away and encourage them to return home.

What would you do to help adopt a non-partisan approach to redistricting? While I do not serve on the Privilege and Elections Committee, I would support legislation that approximates the Iowa model. Such legislation would have to offer a balanced approach that would include equal representation between the two major parties and those without any party affiliation or record and would have to mandate a process whereby information regarding existing office holders would be excluded. And such legislation would be fully in keeping with the spirit and letter of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its reauthorizations.

What should be done to solve our transportation problems in Virginia? First I believe that it is critical to do an outside audit of the Virginia Department of Transportation. The agency's cost accounting system is way off track and too many projects have to be reengineered after completion costing taxpayers millions of dollars. The bond package as part of the 2007 transportation bill is still alive and the General Assembly should be able to move forward on issuing bonds for transportation.

Peggy H. Frank (D)

Biographical Statement: Peggy Frank has served the people of the New River Valley for over 18 years as a prosecutor in both Montgomery and Pulaski Counties, where she currently works. Her deep commitment to service is reflected in her roles as a prosecutor, mother, and Scout leader. A Virginia native, Peggy Frank worked her way through college as a single-mother, earning a degree in Business Administration from East Carolina University and a law degree from Campbell University School of Law. As a prosecutor, Peggy Frank has obtained convictions in murder, sexual assault, domestic violence, drug, burglary, theft, and juvenile cases. In the case *Martinez Maynard Price v. Commonwealth* she became the first prosecutor in Virginia to secure a murder conviction using evidence of the battered child syndrome, setting a precedent for other prosecutors to follow. In addition to her work as a prosecutor, Peggy Frank served 13 years as a Girl Scout Leader. Other community activities have included serving as an Assistant Cub Scoutmaster, Kindergarten soccer coach, and volunteering at the Montgomery County Christmas

Store. Peggy Frank is a member of the Montgomery County, Radford, and Pulaski County Chambers of Commerce. She is a former Secretary of the Montgomery-Radford Bar Association, a member of the Montgomery-Radford and Pulaski Bar Associations, and previously served on the New River Community Sentencing Board. Peggy Frank and her family have lived in the New River Valley for over 23 years. Her husband, Marshall, is President of the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad. They have three children, their oldest son is a Deputy Sheriff, their youngest son attends Virginia Tech, and their daughter attends Radford University.

What do you see as the single most pressing issue facing Virginia and the residents of Montgomery County, the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, and the City of Radford, and what, specifically would you do to address or solve this issue? Creating jobs and rebuilding our economy is the most important issue facing the New River Valley. Our area has suffered through over 1,000 announced layoffs since January of this year and the unemployment rate in the region is approaching 9%. As a prosecutor I have fought hard to protect New River Valley families, as your Delegate I will fight equally as hard in Richmond to create and protect our jobs. My jobs plan starts with creating more partnerships between our colleges and local businesses. We also need to expand incentive programs, such as the Governor's Opportunity Fund, which allow our region to compete against Northern Virginia and other states for new jobs. Additionally, we need to ensure that we have the infrastructure and technology, such as broadband Internet access, to successfully attract new, high paying jobs.

What would you do to help adopt a non-partisan approach to redistricting? Virginia needs redistricting reform, the current partisan process does nothing except protect incumbents and strengthen the majority party in the legislature. I am open to both nonpartisan and bipartisan approaches to redistricting. To earn my support, a redistricting plan must remove the process from the hands of the General Assembly and utilize a citizen commission to draw new district lines. Additionally, the commission should be prohibited from using historical voting results or the addresses of current and potential candidates as factors in drawing district lines. Districts should be drawn to maximize geographic compactness, and whenever possible should avoid splitting towns, cities, counties, and communities of interest. A plan meeting these criteria has passed the Senate of Virginia but was defeated in the House of Delegates.

What should be done to solve our transportation problems in Virginia? Our Commonwealth is in the midst of a transportation crisis which affects all corners of the state, whether it is congestion in Northern Virginia, excessive truck traffic on I-81, or maintenance problems right here in the New River Valley. Our first priority has to be making sure that we use current funds for transportation wisely; maintaining our existing infrastructure has to take precedence over building new projects. Right now we must focus on creating jobs and getting our economy back on track, which will then increase the available sources of funding to further address our transportation crisis.

Virginia

House of Delegates, District 012

James M. Shuler (D)

Biographical Statement: Jim has served the northern portion of Montgomery County in the General Assembly since 1993. His diverse district also includes the eastern portion of Giles County, all of Craig, Allegheny, and Bath Counties, including the City of Covington. He is a native Virginian, a graduate of Virginia Tech, and received his doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Georgia in 1970, graduating cum laude. Jim and his wife Margaret settled in the New River Valley in 1974 where he founded Companion Animal Clinic and he remained owner until his retirement from practice in 1999. While a veterinarian, Jim had numerous civic leadership roles both locally and statewide and has continued his effective advocacy for the NRV since his retirement. He has served as a member of the Blacksburg Town Council, the Virginia State of Board Health, President of the Kiwanis Club, chairman of the Blacksburg Baptist Church Board of Deacons, and is a past board member of the Community Foundation of the New River Valley. Currently, he is vice-chair of a local bank and holding company. Shuler's Legislative Agenda has included equitable, sustainable, quality transportation funding, non-partisan redistricting, verifiable voting systems, support for Mental Health Services, increased funding for law enforcement, increased funding for teachers, including k-12, community colleges, Radford University, and Virginia Tech. Jim Shuler will continue building bridges with other legislators and effectively address individual constituent needs while ensuring positive progress for all Virginians through his work in the General Assembly.

What do you see as the single most pressing issue facing Virginia and the residents of Montgomery County, the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, and the City of Radford, and what, specifically would you do to address or solve this issue? The biggest issue is funding, or lack of, for education. Throughout my sixteen years in the General Assembly, I have strongly and successfully advocated for funding support for our universities, including Virginia Tech and Radford University, the two major economic engines in the New River Valley. Educational funding reductions negatively impact both the local and statewide economy limiting the educational scope in the creation of jobs, service, and research. I have, and will continue, to strongly oppose robbing the general fund, which is the primary state support for education, for other state responsibilities such as transportation, the second largest pressing issue. The effects of the recession have, and will continue for at least another year, severely reduced state revenue support for education, I have supported the use of Federal Stimulus Funds which will alleviate some reductions through 2010, at which time hopefully the economy will be rebounding. I support the Governor's 2010 budget proposal not to reduce state aid for k-12 education that would further negatively impact local funding support.

What would you do to help adopt a non-partisan approach to redistricting? For three years, I sponsored legislation to create a non-partisan approach to redistricting. Recently, bills sponsored by Sen. Deeds have passed the Senate of Virginia with broad bipartisan support. However, historically the ruling majority in the House of Delegates has given scant consideration to these bills, either killing them in sub- or full committee, never allowing such bills to come to the floor for a full vote of the House of Delegates.

I will continue to be an advocate of non-partisan redistricting; however, passage of such likely will not occur until the ruling majority encompasses such bills and votes for their support.

What should be done to solve our transportation problems in Virginia? The Commonwealth Transportation Trust Fund is a wholly separate budget whose operating funds for construction and maintenance are derived from fees and taxes associated with the purchase, licensing, operation, including fuel, of all motor vehicles. By law highway maintenance takes precedence over construction. The trust fund is rapidly being depleted and major needed construction projects have either been deferred or canceled as funds have been shifted to maintenance. To solve this major problem I believe that it should be funded by those who use the highways, ports, and mass transit through user fees, the original intent of the Transportation Trust Fund. I will continue to strongly oppose robbing the General Fund which is the primary source for Education, Health, and Public Safety.

Paul M. Cornett (I)

Mr. Cornett provided no information for the Voter's Guide.