

## People's Alliance PAC 2008 Questionnaire for NC Lt. Governor Candidates

PLEASE NOTE: After candidate interviews have taken place, these responses will be placed on the People's Alliance website <http://www.durhampa.org/>

**Candidate's Name: Dan Besse**

1. There is a series of bills adopted by one house or the other, which have "crossed over" to be considered in the upcoming "short session" of the General Assembly. In each case, we would like to know if you would support this bill and reasons for your position.

a. Environment/Clean Government: What is your position on the proposed "experimental" beach hardening measures being pushed by the residents of Figure 8 Island?

I strongly oppose this proposal. I was involved last summer in efforts by coastal advocates to stop that bill in the House, after it was passed by the state Senate.

As I said then, that bill runs directly counter to all our state's efforts to protect our beaches and barrier islands from more hard structures (seawalls, groins, riprap, etc.) on the oceanfront.

The bill's reference to "pilot projects" is a facade, and not even a new one. While I chaired the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission (1985-1990), similar requests were made and denied time and again. The intent is plainly nothing more than the protection of private oceanfront structures.

Our barrier islands are full of shifting inlets near ill-sited private beach mansions. This misnamed "pilot project" would "study" the well-documented impacts of devices which we rejected in our state years ago--because we know well the damage they do. Its approval would set up a scurry by others to get a "protective" groin of their very own.

This would be a disaster for our coast.

b. Collective Bargaining for Government Workers (H 1583) - This bill would repeal NCGS 95-98, which prevents any government agency—state, county, or local—from negotiating with an organized group representing its employees.

I support H 1583 and the right of public employees to be represented by unions and enter into collective bargaining. Public employees should not be denied this basic right of economic democracy. As a Winston-Salem City Council Member, I have been proud to work with the representatives of employee groups like the Professional Firefighters Association (IFFA Local 682) in supporting better compensation and strong working conditions.

c. Establish Paid Sick Days H 1711 – This bill would require employers to allow employees to earn up to 7 sick days a year that may be taken by employees to care for themselves, sick children, spouses, and parents.

Yes. This should bolster both family health and workplace productivity.

d. Pesticides Bill H1818 Agricultural Family Protection Act - This bill would require farm operators to maintain more complete records about the application of pesticides. It also prohibits

discrimination or retaliation against any employee who issues a complaint or files a claim regarding the application of pesticides and allows for confidential complaints.

Yes. It would also require release of the information to health care providers, and assist in ensuring timely and informed treatment for problems potentially related to pesticide exposure.

2. Energy: The structure of utility rates can be a powerful force in discouraging waste, encouraging appropriate investment and keeping necessities affordable for everyone. In light of the controversies over Cliffside, what, if any, changes would you like to see in the structure of electric and natural gas rates? What other ways would you use your office to move NC to a more sustainable future?

A number of rate structure tools should be implemented as incentives for energy efficiency by consumers and businesses, as well as sound planning by utilities. These include the following:

- "Reverse metering" to allow customers to re-sell power from small renewable generation facilities back into the grid.
- "Peak load pricing" to encourage shifting optional and time-flexible usage to times when demand is lower, reducing peak power demand as well as gas and coal burned.
- Customer incentives for use of energy audits and implementation of efficiency measures.
- Restoration of meaningful restrictions on the use of "construction work in the progress" (CWIP), the financing mechanism which utilities use to shift the risk of new generating plant construction from investors to ratepayers. (Restrictions on CWIP were repealed last year by SB 3, over the objection of myself and other clean energy advocates.)
- Utility power purchase rates which provide a higher incentive for the cleanest generation alternatives (e.g., solar photovoltaic, wind).

Other tools for environmental sustainability which can be promoted by the Lieutenant Governor as legislation or administrative measures include:

- New and expanded tax credits for energy-efficient construction, solar energy systems (passive, thermal, and photovoltaic), and clean vehicle purchases.
- Use of life-cycle energy cost evaluation and planning in construction by state and local governments.
- State and local government vehicle purchasing policies which emphasize fuel-efficiency and emissions reductions.
- Give the State Energy Office a more comprehensive mandate for state energy policy and planning.
- Adopt a set of water use planning and efficiency measures. (See attached.)
- Strengthen and implement state and local government waste reduction and recycling requirements.
- Reform transportation policies and funding to promote a more balanced mix of options including public transit (bus and rail), pedestrian, and biking. Our transportation and land use plans and policies must be carefully coordinated. Transit-oriented development, walkable community development, and center-city revitalization must be encouraged.

3. Growth and Infrastructure: North Carolina has some huge gaps in funding for the infrastructure: \$65B for transportation, \$30B for water and sewer, and so on. At the same time, we seem to be constantly "stretching a threadbare blanket" to cover services such as mental health. How would your leadership help us get adequate and stable financing for state government?

At the state level, tax rates must be gauged to generate the revenues needed to meet urgent public service needs. Progressive taxation options (e.g., upper-end income tax rates) are to be preferred over regressive taxation options (e.g., increases in sales tax).

At the local level, counties and municipalities need more flexibility in revenue-raising measures (e.g., local-option development impact fees) in lieu of excessive reliance on the general property tax.

I will use the "bully pulpit" of the Lieutenant Governor's office as a voice for progressive and flexible revenue policies.

4. Foreclosure Crisis: In 2007, the NC General Assembly passed a number of consumer-protection bills related to borrowing. What additional measures in this area, if any, would you take as a leader in NC?

Counseling assistance, as well as financial aid to laid-off workers while they seek new jobs or training, should be expanded statewide. Expand the "homestead exemption" for seniors. Review the impacts from the 2007 legislation and consider further amendments based on proposals under consideration in other states and at the federal level.

5. North Carolina Housing Trust: what is your position on increased funding of the NC Housing Trust Fund to \$50 million?

The present funding level for the N.C. Housing Trust Fund is not adequate to provide the needed support for affordable housing programs, and should be increased. The proposed \$50 million annual investment would be reasonable.

6. The State of North Carolina has already passed a Defense of Marriage Act. What is your position on DOMA? Do you support addition legislation (e.g. constitutional amendment) in support of/or opposed to same-sex marriage? Would you support legislative support of civil union protections for citizens in same-sex relationships?

DOMA was no more than a political tool to distract voters. The proposed constitutional amendment is more of the same, and worse, in that it could even interfere with private companies which choose to provide domestic partner benefits. I support civil unions as an achievable solution.

7. Do you support continued funding of the state abortion fund?

Yes. Further, unreasonable restrictions on the use of the fund need to be removed. At present, access is so limited that it is essentially unusable.