

vermont nea

THE UNION OF VERMONT EDUCATORS

Candidate Questionnaire - 2020

LT. GOVERNOR DAVID ZUCKERMAN

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on what's important to Vermont-NEA's 13,000 members and their families. In this brief survey, we outline key issues, followed by our position on them.

We ask you whether you agree or disagree with (or don't know about) our position on thirteen issues. The issues fall into two broad categories: education and labor/economic well-being. However, there are two board introductory questions that we believe are important overlays to all questions – resisting austerity and battling institutional racism. The specific education issues include: community schools; universal school meals; student and staff safety; paraeducators; school finance; and public Pre-K. The labor/economic issues include: recommitting to health care for all; right to strike; teachers' rights; retirement security; and good cause employment. **You must register your opinion on each issue to move forward in the survey.**

Again, thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will be available to the women and men of Vermont-NEA. Together with our communities, we strive to make our local public schools Vermont's most important resource.

Candidate Information

First Name: David

Office you are seeking: Governor
(e.g. House, Senate, Governor)

Last Name: Zuckerman

Legislative District: Vermont
(e.g. Chittenden Senate, Addison-1)

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Incumbent (circle one): Yes or **No**

Local School Visit

Would you be interested in visiting a school in your district and meeting with local educators?

- Yes
- No

Resisting Austerity – Building a Just Recovery

The COVID-19 Pandemic, horrific in its own right, did not cause grave economic destruction all by itself. Indeed, more than anything, it exposed the vast chasm of inequality – even greater for people of color and women – that is an ugly hallmark of nearly a half-century of neoliberalism and austerity. From our bloatedly expensive but shockingly ineffective healthcare system to decades of stagnant and too-low wages for working Americans, the suffering wrought by the worst pandemic in a century is laying bare an economy that works for the rich and for corporations and virtually no one else.

We are seeing massive lines – sometimes thousands long – of people seeking food. We are seeing an unprecedented number of workers – mostly low-wage workers, predominately people of color and women, who suffer in the best of times – lose their jobs, their health insurance, their security, and, for some, their homes. We are seeing small businesses go under while corporations with huge amounts of cash get even more from the government. We’re seeing wealthy families, predominately white, get the best care as they flee to their second- or third-homes. We’re even seeing a Wall Street giddy with anticipation of great corporate profits, even while the economy on Main Street is heading toward another Great Depression.

In other words, all of the supports for a decent, dignified life put in place by the New Deal in the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II are showing the effects of more than 40 years of chipping at those protections.

Vermont-NEA believes that we cannot – must not – reopen our economy, because to return to the way it was would be a cataclysmic failure. We must reimagine our economy, one where every American resident is afforded a living wage; accessible, universal, and affordable health care; access to a strong public education; functioning infrastructure including clean water, public transportation, maintained roads and airports, and affordable high-speed internet; and basic benefits like paid family and medical leave, free public college, and robust unemployment benefits.

On resisting austerity, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don’t Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on resisting austerity?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on resisting austerity?

I have and continue to strongly oppose austerity budgeting in a time when so many Vermonters are

struggling. It is bad economic policy, especially in times of extreme hardship. The role of government is to spend in bad economic times and build up resources in good economic times. I also strongly agree with the NEA's position on our path forward: we must pass a living \$15/hour minimum wage, ensure that all Vermonters have accessible, universal, and affordable health care, strengthen and ensure all have access to our strong public education, build functioning green and clean infrastructure including broadband, clean water, public transportation, and maintained roads and airports, and pass some of the basic benefits that our current governor has vetoed or inhibited including paid family and medical leave, free public college, and robust unemployment benefits.

My dedication to this is not new. I have been fighting for this reform through all of my public service. We need a fundamental shift in how we view our economy and our people. The health, well-being, safety and opportunity available for each community and family should be our primary focus.

Since Reaganomics, the focus has wrongly been on concentrating wealth in the hands of a few. We must reverse this and build on the incredible moment we are in. The direct action and uprising to support our Vermont State College System, public education, and to eradicate racism and discrimination are all creating opportunities for a seismic shift in how we approach policy across the board. I have been preparing for and building towards these reforms during my 22 years of public service on these issues.

Battling Institutional Racism: Supporting Anti-Racism

The demonstrations that occurred all over America in the wake of George Floyd's murder at the hands of Minneapolis police officers has once again exposed a 400-year-old system that routinely discriminates against and endangers black Americans. The thousands of people coming out to protest have been met with, in many instances, a brutal response by militaristic police forces that do nothing but prove the point that black Americans, and all people of color, have been mistreated by their government for far too long. However, it is one thing to acknowledge the existence of institutional racism and systemic bias; it is quite another to be actively anti-racist. **Vermont-NEA believes that in order to eradicate institutional racism, we must actively advocate for policies that are anti-racist. We must adopt laws that permanently demilitarize our police forces. We must stop the imposition of racist policies in our courts, our prisons, our hospitals, our schools, our businesses, and our workplaces. And we must view all policy decisions through the lens of equity and the active elimination of racism.**

On institutional racism, do you

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Anything you want to add on institutional racism (required)?

First and foremost I will significantly expand funding for the office of Racial Equity so that one person does not have to tackle this alone. I also support Al Sharpton's definition of "Defunding the police" by re-allocating some of our law enforcement budgets, especially those that fund militarization of the police, to better meet community safety goals. These funds would be shifted into programs that would invest in economic opportunities for all, and fund core counselors for peaceful de-escalation, more social workers to help those who are struggling, more rehabilitation programs and addiction support services for those who have substance abuse disorders. Ultimately, we need to ensure those who arrive when called to crisis situations aren't automatically primed for use of force, and instead, are focused on the best outcome with the least intervention.

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others' deaths should never have happened. They represent widespread systemic failures and racism ingrained within our policing system and social construct throughout the country and right here in Vermont. Latinx and Vermonters of color are stopped by the police and incarcerated at far higher rates than white Vermonters. This must end. As governor, I will work with stakeholders throughout Vermont to implement policies to rectify the hundreds of years of systemic racism and discrimination that BIPOC communities have faced.

To do this, I will bring Latinx, African American, indigenous and disadvantaged voices to the table on legislation when making decisions that affect all Vermonters. We will also be looking to build a diverse and inclusive team in our administration in order to ensure that stakeholder voices will be elevated and included from the beginning of the conversations.

Last year, the Vermont legislature brought forward a bill in 2019 specifically addressing reparations here in Vermont. I strongly support this legislation. H.478 is an act relating to establishing a task force to study and consider a State apology and proposal for reparations for the institution of slavery. I will listen to stakeholders on this issue and if the task force found some monetary reparation should be made, I would support funding in the State's budget to go toward programs to support and lift those communities that had been harmed. These funds might be allocated to small business loans for BIPOC or educational grants for BIPOC or other programs that would help overcome the impact of past policy. Some of this funding could come from resources gained through a tax and regulate system for cannabis.

There are also other policies that help BIPOC communities at a higher rate like passing a \$15/hour minimum wage, building more affordable housing, and passing paid family leave.

Institutional racism is far more than criminal justice reform. It is also fundamentally about wealth inequality. Beginning far before the fact that "40 acres and a mule" was not distributed equally, to the Tulsa Massacre, the GI bill, to redlining, the war on drugs and today's biases in all of us, but particularly in lending and law enforcement, our communities of color across the country and right here in Vermont have been left behind at each and every step of economic growth.

Community Schools: Meeting the Needs of All Children

Vermont’s student population is changing. More and more children, especially in the early grades, are coming to school unprepared to learn because of adverse childhood experiences. These experiences can be related to physical and emotional trauma, the impacts of poverty and related economic uncertainties, or caretakers dealing with drug addiction. These traumas and challenges are even greater among our students of color due to our state and nations deep seated institutional racism. Whatever the cause, very young children are bringing those experiences – sometimes traumatic – with them to school. This affects not only their individual ability to learn but also that of their peers to learn and their teachers to teach. In order to meet the needs of not only all children, but that of struggling families, there should be efforts to expand essential social services to children and families in a school-based setting. Schools are already the center of many Vermont communities and it is logical to provide other essential services to students and families in this setting. This could include access to mental health services, dental care, health care and other state social services. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has also shown the complete role that schools already provide to support students and families to meet their basic needs. We should formalize this even more by helping families struggling with poverty (including homelessness, food insecurity, and lack of transportation), mental health services, health care, and other social supports. Known as a “Community Schools” model, there are over 5000 schools like this across the country and some schools in Vermont have already begun this work. **Vermont-NEA believes at a time when young students are coming to school unable to learn due to complex family circumstances, a pandemic and institutional racism, we should move toward providing essential support services for all students and families by adopting a community schools approach and adoption of a state mechanism for supporting this model.**

On community schools, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don’t Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation establishing community schools?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on community schools?

I agree with the NEA that there are unrealized opportunities in our school system. I fully believe in moving Vermont toward a “Community Schools” model. Teachers already provide many more services to our students than they are paid for or that are even acknowledged. My conversations with teachers throughout this pandemic has made this absolutely clear as well as the need for greater support staff and services that you have listed above to help families struggling with poverty (including homelessness, food insecurity, and lack of transportation), mental health services, health care, and other social supports.

For the past five years, I have advocated for stronger alignment between the Agency of Human Services, Vermont Department of Health, and the Agency of Education. I believe there is an opportunity to save money, reduce redundancy and provide a stronger continuum of care and improve outcomes for some of our most vulnerable Vermonters. This way, we can contribute to the work that many schools are doing in building complete community schools so that our kids start getting the services they need to thrive and exceed their potential from day one. These collaborations may result in funding streams being allocated differently in order to best meet the needs of students and their families. This would reduce the burden on working Vermonters who struggle to pay high property taxes, by shifting the costs to the more equitably raised general fund.

Universal School Meals – Feeding all Children

We know a child who arrives to school hungry is a child who is unprepared to learn. Vermont schools have been working to provide healthy, nutritious, often local, meals to children for years. This includes breakfast, lunch, and supper; however, there is still a stigma associated with getting a school meal. Nationally, studies show that by providing universal free school meals to all children removes the stigma associated with school meals while ensuring all children have the nutrition they need to learn. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic Vermont schools and educators – bus drivers, food services workers, para-educators and others – provided universal school meals to all students. **Vermont-NEA believes the state of Vermont should adopt a policy to provide free universal school meals to all Vermont public school children.**

On universal school meals, do you

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on universal school meals?

- **Yes**
- No

Anything you want to add on universal school meals?

It is appalling and unconscionable that some children in the past have been refused meals because their parents could not pay.

I have long been a proponent of ensuring that our students receive the right food and nutrition for learning (and playing and simply being children!) In the legislature, I led on GMO labeling, farm to school as well as farm to plate legislation. More recently, when I worked with other volunteers under the overpass in Burlington this spring handing out meals to families in need, I personally witnessed the devastating effect on families and kids.

I agree with the NEA that Vermont should adopt a policy to provide free universal school meals to all Vermont public school children. I also agree with the reasoning that it both provides nutritious meals as well as reducing stigma when all children have access to the meals.

As an organic farmer, I would want to also work with local food producers to make sure that much if not all of the food provided was from local farms. This is something I have worked on both inside and outside of Montpelier. I worked with the legislature to provide food to local schools through the farm to school program and, outside of Montpelier, I donate food from my farm to both schools and local food shelves. I know hungry kids can not learn. The money we invest in the farm to school program would enter the Vermont economy and support our farms rather than going out of state. Additionally, as we grow our local food supply, Vermont and Vermonters will be more resilient to future shocks.

Student and Staff Safety – Support for Training

With the changing student population, there are more students who exhibit challenging and at times violent behavior toward themselves, fellow students, and school staff. Students exhibiting these behaviors are often very young – including some in kindergarten and the early grades – and are coming to school from home circumstances marked by complex challenges related to poverty, drug addiction and other traumas. These adverse childhood experiences can result in dangerous and violent situations that make learning conditions for fellow students and working conditions for teachers and school support staff challenging and at times unsafe. Students exhibiting these behaviors need supports, which school staff and leaders are working to provide them; however, more training and capacity are needed to meet these safety and learning challenges. **Vermont-NEA believes the state of Vermont should invest in providing training to all school personnel on how to deal with these challenging student behaviors while also ensuring staff the time and capacity to properly implement these strategies.**

On student and staff safety, do you

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on student and staff safety?

- **Yes**
- No

Anything you want to add on student and staff safety?

With the current economic downturn, and the challenges this will present to passing school budgets, the tendency for many will be to cut support staff who are the very people who deal with the issues and trauma that will arise because of the downturn. We must, again, resist the urge to start a downward spiral of budget cuts.

I fully support investing in and providing training to all school personnel on how to deal with challenging student behaviors while also ensuring staff the time and capacity to properly implement these strategies. We could also work with stakeholders to look at the position of SRO and rather than have a quasi-law enforcement person on school grounds. We could fund better trained individuals to help bring these challenged kids to a better place.

I also support policies that help our communities address the root of many of these issues outside of the school environment. As you mentioned above, many of these behaviors stem from home circumstances marked by complex challenges related to poverty, drug addiction and other traumas. The opioid epidemic in Vermont is harming our communities, our economy, and many of our students. A Zuckerman administration would treat all Vermonters with the dignity and respect they deserve. Harm-reduction services, from needle exchanges to access to overdose prevention medication, are crucial. We must make life-saving medication-assisted treatments such as methadone and buprenorphine free to any Vermonter who needs them. In addition, medication-assisted treatment should not be criminalized. We must focus

on addressing trauma, abuse, poverty, hopelessness, and a lack of alternatives for vulnerable Vermonters. These conditions can both cause and worsen substance use disorder. We also must hold the pharmaceutical companies accountable for their advertising and promotion of highly addictive and over-prescribed opioid drugs. These measures would not only help the individuals with substance abuse disorders, but their communities, and their children.

Other policies that would help build safer and less trauma-filled home environments for many of Vermont's children include raising the minimum wage, building affordable housing, passing universal healthcare and passing early child education. Additionally, the idea of blending AHS, Dept. of Health, and local school services would also address these specific issues. We need a better continuum of care.

Paraeducators – Essential Workers Essential to Student Success

Providing equal educational opportunities to all Vermont students is not only essential, it is constitutionally required. Students come to school with varying needs that must be met to help them learn and be successful. Going far beyond teaching our students reading, writing and arithmetic Vermont teachers include critical thinking, artistic expression and essential social skills often tailored to the individual student's ability and interests. What is often not acknowledged is that paraeducators are a critical component of making Vermont schools and our students thrive and learn. Paraeducators provide critical one-on-one support to students, while also supporting teachers' ability to deliver detailed direct instruction to a diverse spectrum of students. During the COVID-19 pandemic many paraeducators, bus drivers, and food service workers were on the front lines providing and delivering food to children and families. Whether it is in special education, general education or other school support functions, paraeducators are essential to ensure our schools meet all students' needs. **Vermont-NEA believes that any decisions about the use of paraeducators and other support staff in Vermont schools should be made at the local level, where school leaders, school boards, and teachers know best what essential education supports are needed to ensure all students succeed.**

On para-educators, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on para-educators?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on para-educators?

I support any and all ways that we can acknowledge the benefits of and support paraeducators and the critical service they provide to Vermont's students.

I support the Vermont NEA's position that local communities, where school leaders, school boards, and teachers know best what essential education supports are needed, should decide about the use of paraeducators and other support staff. A Zuckerman administration would support and encourage localities to invest in these critical workers and work with localities, when necessary, to support their needs and decisions.

Additionally, with a Zuckerman administration you would not hear the tired diatribe that we spend too much on our schools. Statistics clearly show that we are in the middle of the pack. In addition, considering we are one of the most rural states in the country, we get more than we pay for. Our test results, when compared with other rural areas in the country, tend to be much better. My

administration would see an advocate for all aspects of our public schools as I know they are the foundation of what creates great, well rounded citizens. I would add that tests do not reflect all that we create in our schools. We want our children to know the basics, but also to be raised as critical thinkers and problem solvers. That can not be taught when focused solely on testing.

School Finance: Eliminate the Property Tax, Fair Taxes for VT Kids

Together with our communities, Vermont-NEA members are leading the charge in making our already great public schools even better, equipping our students with the tools they need to live happy, productive and fulfilling lives, no matter what paths they choose to pursue. The state's constitutional obligation is to ensure access to a substantially equal amount of funding for each student, regardless of community. A related purpose of the original Act 60 was to enable low wealth communities to level up. It was a striking success, but that leveling up fed a public misperception that, coupled with our state's decline in school-aged children, we are spending "too much" on education. The state is paying no more on schoolchildren now as a percentage of the state's economy than it has for decades dating back to well before the enactment of Act 60. Moreover, we know that two-thirds of Vermont homeowners pay their education property taxes based upon their income and their family's ability to pay, but the wealthiest one-third of Vermonters do not. We believe the next step for Vermont schools is to ensure all residential homeowners pay their fair share and support all children's education based upon their ability to pay – this includes the wealthiest. By eliminating the residential homestead property tax and moving it to an income tax for all Vermonters, and not just for lower and middle income as we do now, we can ensure that everyone pays their fair share. **Vermont-NEA believes we should eliminate the education property tax for residential homesteads to move it to an income tax for all, so that all Vermonters – including the wealthiest – pay their fair share for our children's public education.**

On school finance, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on school finance?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on school finance?

I have advocated for a fair and progressive taxation system in Vermont many times in the past and believe there are many who can and should be paying more. Senator Anthony Pollina has been the champion of legislation to move to income based funding for education and I have supported his efforts every step of the way. Having served on the Ways and Means committee in the House and on the Education committee in the Senate, I am well versed in the funding formula for education. To reform it for the better, one has to understand it. And it is complicated! Thankfully, the passage of Acts 60 and 68 moved us towards the goal in ways that no other state has even come close to doing. But we need to finish the job. A good public education system is the foundation of a good economy. People will stay here or move here for our schools. Well rounded kids, learning and living to their best potential, are the future of our economy as both employees and future entrepreneurs.

When the regressive Trump tax cuts first went into effect, I began aggressively talking about using a portion of the the refund to Vermont's wealthiest to fund infrastructure investments that will be the building blocks for a strong Vermont economy such as: investing in renewable energy projects across the state, building affordable housing, investing in broadband and significantly increased funding for weatherizing for our aging housing stock to reduce energy use across the state. Our kids are ready for these jobs because of the education that they have received in our public schools.

Eliminating the education property tax for residential homesteads and moving to an income tax for all, so that all Vermonters – including the wealthiest – pay their fair share for our children's public education is directly in line with my mentality and approach to our tax system in Vermont. I have believed that everyone should pay their fair share since I entered Vermont politics in 1994 and continue to believe that to this day.

Expanding Pre-K: Public Investment in our Future

In the 1980's, Vermont was a leader in requiring all school districts to offer kindergarten to our state's youngest children. Over the past several decades, research has proven that early learning is essential to child brain development and the earlier that children gain access to these high-quality educational opportunities the better prepared they are to learn as they grow and develop. Recognizing the importance of prekindergarten education (pre-K), the Legislature in 2014 passed Act 166, which provides families up to 10 hours of public money, through a voucher, to use toward qualified Pre-K programs. While an important step in acknowledging the needs of our youngest children, Act 166's funding mechanism – vouchers – has, perversely, made it harder for our state's most vulnerable children: those in poverty and with special needs. Nationally, we also know that children of color disproportionately lack access to high-quality pre-k. Since Act 166 only provides funding for 10 hours, families unable to pay for the additional portion of the privately provided childcare can't access this public benefit. We already know that children who come from families on the margins are at a disadvantage when they enter public schools. Additionally, Act 166 incorrectly presumes that vouchers for privately provided high quality pre-K ensure its availability, and that just is not so. As the state looks appropriately to expand public Pre-K, it is essential that policy decisions don't disadvantage children with special needs or those from poorer families. Vermont's local public schools meet the needs of all students and families, while ensuring high-quality education is provided equitably across the state. Many public schools already provide public Pre-K for all children in their community, and all others should follow their lead. **Vermont-NEA believes that high quality universal Pre-K is essential to the development of our children, especially those in less advantaged households, and that any additional state investment in Pre-K should ensure equity for all children by having local public school districts provide this early education directly.**

On public funded and provided Pre-K, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on public funded and provided Pre-K?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on public funded and provided Pre-K?

I agree with the NEA that that high quality universal Pre-K is essential to the development of our children and that it should be universal and implemented in a way that ensures equity.

I support both universal afterschool and pre-K education. These programs keep our youth safe, and working families need reliable childcare options. In addition to providing these critical services for Vermont families I also believe that we must work to destigmatize parental childcare and uplift the women and men who provide this vital service to our society.

On a more personal note: my mother was on the school committee when I was growing up. At the time I did not understand all that she fought for, but I have been proud to come to understand that she spearheaded two early child education initiatives in our schools system in the 70s and 80s. One was to establish a preschool program at our high school so that there could be multi-age learning in one facility. The second initiative was an after school program for kids at the elementary schools focused on providing kids whose mothers worked an educational opportunity. This was important both to support women going into the workforce as well as the kids. The value of public education and the opportunities that schools can bring for people across the economic and situational circumstances is deeply ingrained in me and has been since my early years. That will be reflected in a Zuckerman Administration. I firmly believe that education and our public schools have the greatest potential to be the equalizer for our kids born into more difficult economic, systemic or socially disadvantaged situations.

Recommitting to Health Care for ALL – A path forward

Vermont-NEA has been and remains a leading advocate of health care reform, including Medicare for All, while supporting incremental reforms along the way. Affordable health care is still out of reach for many Vermonters and only getting more expensive. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of employer-sponsored health insurance when tens of thousands of Vermonters lost their jobs. It has also exposed the racial injustices of our disfunction health care system as people of color, specifically black folks, are twice as likely to die from COVID-19. And obviously, the pandemic makes painfully clear the importance of access to healthcare at a price Vermonters can afford. Additionally, the health insurance that school employees receive has been a major subject of debate in Montpelier over the past several years. While this debate was happening, educators and their families, who make up the largest private health insurance pool in the state with nearly 40,000 lives, moved to high deductible plans. The transition was problematic to say the least. What both the debate in Montpelier and the experiences of educators moving to these new plans has reinforced is that we must do something about the cost of health care for all Vermonters. Healthcare costs are growing faster than the rest of the economy and eating up more and more costs for both workers and employers. For example, education spending as a percentage of Vermont state GDP has remained steady at approximately 5% for over twenty years, while health care costs have grown from 10% to nearly 20% during the same period. Whether it is the cost of public education, running a small business or state government, health care costs are having a significant negative impact on our economy. Though the pressures are great to do something quickly, we must not fall into the trap of cost shifting who pays and put more economic stress on working people. Instead, we need to reform our health care system, including the creation of a prescription drug affordability board, direct regulation of medical pricing, and an expansion of primary care such as the extension of Dr. Dynasaur for all Vermonters under the age of 26. **Vermont-NEA believes the state should recommit to health care for all, reemerge as a leader in the nation and implement innovative policies that begin to control the soaring health care costs, while expanding affordable accessible coverage, and stop the move towards shifting the ever-increasing costs of health care onto working Vermonters.**

On health reform, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on health care reform?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on health care reform?

I have long supported single payer healthcare in VT. I stood with Bernie on this issue and I continue to stand with the NEA and Vermont healthcare workers calling for this reform.

We must recommit to our goal of universal healthcare. The coronavirus pandemic has revealed to many the vast injustices of our current economic and healthcare systems. It is no surprise (for many of us) that communities that struggled to have access to quality healthcare are suffering most during this pandemic. We must take this broader public realization and support for expanded healthcare and translate it into policies that move our healthcare system to one where everyone has access to affordable and quality care and it is not tied to employment.

We know health care costs are crippling businesses, families and municipalities. We know the only way to reduce costs is to create a unified system with everyone in one pool and this is our goal. While we are building toward universal healthcare, we will also adjust insurance company reimbursement rates so that our rural and independent healthcare providers are not paid less than urban and institutional providers and expand Federally Qualified Health Centers.

I have met with business leaders who have started creating their own free primary care clinics for their workers. They have told me that they are already seeing a return on their investment in both financial savings and fewer employee sick days. By making primary care free and accessible, health issues are addressed earlier, generally resulting in less expensive and less invasive options. We can take this model and replicate it across the state. A successful universal primary care system is an important first step to a comprehensive universal healthcare system.

Finally, we must also address the role that housing and food plays in our healthcare system. Safe and reliable housing, and healthy fresh food are both the best prophylactic measures that we can take to improve Vermonters health and will also save money. We must invest to make sure that all Vermonters have the building blocks to be healthy and happy citizens.

Right to Strike

Vermont teachers and school support staff have had the right to collectively bargain for 50 years. Vermont's average teacher pay is in the middle of the pack nationally and \$2,000 below the national average. In the 1980's, Vermont's teachers were the lowest paid in the nation. As a result of collective bargaining Vermont educators are now paid a decent wage, a key reason why our school system is among the top five in the country. One part of collective bargaining for teachers and school support staff is that if at the end of a long process an agreement cannot be reached, educators may choose to withhold their labor by striking and

school boards may choose to impose working conditions on employees. Both of these options are used as a last resort and are decisions not made lightly by union members or school boards. In fact, over the past 50 years of educator collective bargain there have been over 5,000 contracts negotiated and fewer than 30 strikes or impositions, ever. **While strikes are exceedingly rare, Vermont-NEA believes that the right to strike for school employees is fundamental and has been and will remain a last, but sometimes necessary, resort to reach a fair contract settlement.**

On the right to strike, do you

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Anything you want to add on the right to strike?

Throughout my two decades of public service. I have been a strong ally for workers rights and unions. I know that when unions are strong, all of Vermont's workers are strong. And that includes the right to strike.

Through all my public service as a legislator and as Lt. Governor I have consistently stood with Vermont unions in their negotiations and have marched in solidarity in their strikes. In 2016, I supported the Vermont State Employees' Association and its state contract demands for a small raise in the two upcoming years and stood with the CWA (and gave them sweet potatoes from my farm for their thanksgiving dinners as the strike was going on during that time of year). In 2017, I stood with the Vermont-NEA Teachers Union in their protest against Governor Scott's proposal - that they called "union busting" - to negotiate their healthcare contracts at the state level . In 2018, I supported UVM nurses who were calling for fair negotiations in a labor dispute with management during a negotiation process. I have consistently stood in solidarity with unions across the state. In prior years I was on the line in Colchester and Richmond supporting our teachers.

As a legislator, I made sure to support legislation favorable to workers and to unions. In 2007, I supported a bill that would do away with the need to hold a secret ballot in order to unionize and allow for unions to be recognized automatically if at least 50 percent of workers signed representation cards. In 2005, I voted against legislation to limit the agency fees unions can take from the paychecks of teachers who have chosen not to join the union. Union work benefits everyone in the workplace and even in the surrounding community. Allowing some to take advantage of those benefits while contributing much less undercuts the power and influence of unions. And therefore the power of all workers.

Teachers Rights and Pursuing Professional Growth

Teacher's number one priority is their students. Everyday teachers enter their classroom prepared as professionals, often with graduate degrees, to facilitate their students' academic and social emotional learning. As professionals with advanced degrees, one would expect that if a teacher wants to change employment for personal or professional reasons she could do so between academic years without issue. However, unlike other professionals, teachers must obtain permission to interview before applying for a new teaching position in another school district. Even if she is granted permission to interview, a teacher must be granted permission of their current Superintendent to leave. This is unique and limits the personal and professional growth opportunities for Vermont teachers. **Vermont-NEA believes the state should adopt a policy that affords teachers the same professional opportunity and respect when pursuing a new teaching position.**

On teachers rights and professional growth, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on teachers right and professional growth?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on teachers right and professional growth?

Teachers are some of, if not the most, important professionals in our state. Their work educates, shapes, and uplifts our future Vermonters. The fact our state does not give them the same respect and freedom to change employment for personal or professional reasons as folks in other professions across the state is disheartening and disrespectful. We should be uplifting teachers, not placing power in superintendents' hands to control their professional paths.

I strongly agree with the NEA that the state should adopt a policy that affords teachers the same professional opportunity and respect when pursuing a new teaching position as other professionals in the state.

Retirement Security

In 2010 and 2014, Vermont-NEA reached historic agreements with the State protecting the fiscal security of the State Teachers' Retirement System, saving taxpayers more than \$1 billion over the course of the next several decades (Vermont-NEA and the State reached quieter agreements protecting the Municipal Employees' Retirement System.) Vermont's teachers are paying more and working longer for their retirement benefits. During the prior two decades, the State annually and routinely underfunded the Teachers' Retirement System by millions, sometimes tens of millions, of dollars. The State has met its full funding commitment to this system for each of the past 11 years. **Vermont-NEA believes the State must continue to meet its annual funding commitment to the State Teachers' Retirement System. Moreover, Vermont-NEA believes, as was the case recent years, any budget surplus should be earmarked to make-up for the state's past underfunding of the State Teachers' Retirement System in order to reduce the interest costs paid by the state, thereby saving taxpayers millions of dollars.**

On retirement security for teachers, do you

- **Agree**
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Anything you want to add on retirement security for teachers?

I fully agree with the Vermont-NEA that the State must continue to meet its annual funding commitment to the State Teachers' Retirement System. In 2017, When Gov. Scott held up and then vetoed the budget rather than put additional money into the retirement system, I stood with teachers and the allied environmentalists (from the blue green alliance that I was honored to help foster) protesting his actions.

As governor, I will also commit that additional funding of the Teacher Retirement System will be a top priority whenever there is a budget surplus in order to reduce the interest costs paid by the state, thereby saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

Making Vermont attractive to workers: "Good cause," not "at will"

Vermont is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. It should be an equally wonderful place to work. For many Vermonters such as unionized school employees, they enjoy protections from many forms of arbitrary or discriminatory treatment by employers and, if unionized employees are mistreated by an employer, they have a way to present their perspective and have a neutral decision-maker decide who is right. Non-unionized employees, however, do not enjoy such a benefit. Their employer may treat non-unionized employees as "at will" employees, which means an employee may be terminated, at any time, for any reason not prohibited by law, or for no reason at all. "At will" employment makes job-taking risky and job retention fortuitous. It makes employees insecure because their employment is not protected. Vermont needs to attract more people of working and family-rearing age. Doing so is a state imperative. Providing job security that distinguishes Vermont from other states will make Vermont comparatively more attractive to employees. **Vermont-NEA believes the state should enact legislation that employers may only fire employees only if they have a good faith reason related to the employer's business and not trivial, arbitrary, or capricious reasons.**

On good cause employment, do you

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you wish to sponsor legislation on good cause employment?

- Yes
- No

Anything you want to add on good cause employment?

Throughout my career, I have prioritized the needs of the most vulnerable Vermonters. This issue is no different. Unions and unionization provide key protections not only to their members, but studies have shown that when unions are strong, all workers reap benefits. I want to applaud the NEA for the way that they continue to reach beyond their immediate membership to improve working conditions for all Vermonters.

A Zuckerman administration would work closely with the NEA and other unions and allies on legislation guaranteeing that, as you put it above, employers may only fire employees only if they have a good faith reason related to the employer's business and not trivial, arbitrary, or capricious reasons.

As a small business owner, I have had a wide range of employees. It has always been my and my spouse's goal to work with employees in difficult situations to try to improve the workplace environment as well as the employees ability to perform the job. While this does not always succeed, we believe that is the first course of action and that a policy such as that promoted by the VT NEA and others to set a standard for termination is appropriate. It will benefit both the employees and the employers.

