

Nick Gauthier Platform

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Issues & Policy Platform:

Budgeting & Revenue Generation

Budgets are moral documents.

-Summary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We must pass Moral, responsible, and economically sound budgets which are not balanced on the backs of our working families and are not balanced by shifting burdens onto our towns.

The principle of austerity and the push for evermore austerity budgeting are some of the most dangerous, destabilizing, and destructive forces in our body politic today. From an economic perspective, across the board cuts for everyone but those at the very top of the wealth and income ladder during a time of economic strife only further constricts economic growth and halts investment precisely at a time when increased investment is desperately needed. From a political perspective, austerity for the 99% of us deepens the pain and suffering on our middle class and working families so significantly that it gives rise to destructive extremists on the fringes of politics and society.

- **Eliminate corporate welfare and loopholes** by putting an immediate halt to the giveaway of hundreds of millions of our tax dollars every year which are thrown into the black hole of corporate welfare and subsidies to multibillion dollar corporations, like GE and Aetna, who take our tax dollars not for job creation, but instead to pay their moving costs as they leave our state for neighboring states – states which impose a much higher tax burden on their corporations and wealthiest residents.

We must establish a data collection and a rigorous review process to ensure that if in the future we do provide our tax dollars to corporations for job creation we can actually confirm that those promised jobs are created. A rigorous demand for results will also

provide us guidance on which, if any, corporate taxpayer subsidies give us a worthwhile return on our investment.

- In conjunction with the proposal from neighboring New York State, we will **close the carried interest loophole** which allows for income earned via capital gains to be taxed at about half the rate as income when earned via working an hourly or salaried job. Making this change, closing the carried interest loophole would generate an estimated [\\$500 million per year for the state of Connecticut](#).
- **Progressively increase our state's top marginal income tax rates**, including our top rate of 6.99%, to be commensurate with neighboring New York's top rate of 8.82% and the rate of 9.85% in the state of Minnesota, which recently faced a multibillion dollar yearly budget deficit and due to increasing their state's top marginal tax rates successfully closed their budget shortfall and brought their state's budget back into balance.

As of 2015 (prior to the massive Republican Trump tax cuts, over 80% of which benefit the wealthiest), the wealthiest in Connecticut pay 5.3% of their income in taxes compared to an average of 10.2% paid by most Connecticut residents, with the heaviest tax burden falling on the shoulders of our middle class, working class, and working poor families. This unfair tax structure cripples working families in our state. The wealthiest one percent currently do not contribute an equitable amount and need to pay their fair share, like the rest of us.

Fair Economic Principles & Policies

"No business which depends for its existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country. By living wages I mean more than a bare subsistence level--I mean the wages of decent living."

[-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#)

- **Strengthen paid family, medical, and parental leave** which is a basic right of all working people. No new parent should be forced to leave their newborn's side in the first critical months of life and before new mothers have had the proper time to recover from delivery and before new families have had time to bond and take care of their unique needs. No expectant family should be forced into work when not ready due to an impending birth, potentially putting the health of new mothers and the health of her baby at risk. No family should have to be torn away from taking care of a suffering family member in need.
- **Ensure just pandemic pay compensation and increase pay for nurses, home health aide workers, and those deemed 'essential employees' who bore and still bear the harshest burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- **Index future increases of our state’s \$15/hr minimum wage to inflation and growth in productivity** to ensure all share equitably in the immense wealth our state creates.
- **Strengthen pay equity laws for women workers.**
- **Pass pay equity laws for disabled workers.**
- **Ensure high quality affordable or free public childcare services with dramatically increased pay and benefits for childcare workers.**
- **Create equity in taxation via progressive tax reform** which relies less on local property taxes for balancing budgets and paying for necessary services, especially our public schools. Property tax rates which are levied based on flat mill rates are inherently regressive, asking those who can least afford to do so to contribute the most and those who can most afford to do so to contribute the least.
- **Make permanent Connecticut’s temporarily higher Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC),** which is aimed at serving poor and working families.
- **Reduce Connecticut’s sales tax rate.**
- **Modernize our [sales tax laws](#)** in order to include currently exempt luxury services, such as telemarketing services, escrow agent services, jewelry design services, interior design services, closet design consulting services, fur and clothing storage services, aircraft hangaring services, and limousine services. In addition, exclude services from our sales tax laws which have been specifically identified as taxable in statute and which are far more likely to be needed by and used by those who are in the middle class, working class, and by those who are poor, such as (coin operated) blood pressure testing, hair weaving or replacement services, buyers’ clubs services (buyers’ clubs allow for people to organize to pool members’ collective buying power, enabling them to make purchases at lower prices than are generally available, or to purchase goods that might be difficult to obtain independently. Some key examples of buyers’ clubs include medical purchases of rare and expensive medications for treating HIV or hepatitis C at a reduced cost for patients.), and debt counseling services to individuals.
- **Implement a workforce development strategy which dramatically improves pathways to higher paying jobs for Connecticut residents** through job training programs, school to career programs, expansion of paid internship and apprenticeship programs, and direct assistance to our small businesses in overcoming some of the upfront costs associated with hiring new employees from their local communities.

Labor and Working & Retired People's Rights

- **Defend and expand the right of working people to collectively bargain for our rights.**
- **Pass a legislative fix to the legally unsound decision of the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations, a decision which strips guaranteed collective bargaining rights of employees by misclassifying them as independent contractors**, especially those who work in the fields of construction, musical performance, and other fields with similar work schedules and wherein individual employees work for multiple employers.
- **End the power of the Governor to unilaterally appoint members of the Connecticut State Board of Labor Relations** by adding legislative oversight and confirmation authority over gubernatorial nominees to the board, as well as by adding greater public say and influence on the nomination and confirmation of those chosen to serve on the CSBLR.
- **Expand prevailing wage laws and eliminate Connecticut's prevailing wage threshold** to ensure that Connecticut workers are paid higher wages when working on public projects.
- **Protect and defend the use of Project Labor Agreements** across Connecticut.
- **Pass worker protections against the employer practice of "Captive Audience" meetings**, which some employers use to force their political and social agendas onto workers.
- **Implement a Low Wage Worker Fee on employers** to hold large employers accountable for paying workers poverty level wages, which unfairly enriches corporate profits without paying their workers a fair living wage. This low wage practice also creates a competitive disadvantage for our small businesses and for employers who do pay their employees a fair living wage. This practice by some large employers of paying workers poverty level wages for full-time work in effect forces taxpayers to subsidize corporate profits by having to cover the living, food, and healthcare expenses of working families who are unable to afford those necessities, even while working full-time.
- **Eliminate abusive, arbitrary on-call work scheduling practices**, by passing 'Fair Work Week' legislation especially in retail industry, service industry, and low-wage jobs to ensure consistent and regular work schedules with consistent pay periods for workers.

Public Education

“There shall always be free public elementary and secondary schools in the state. The general assembly shall implement this principle by appropriate legislation.” Conn. Const. art. VIII, § 1.

“No person shall be denied the equal protection of the law nor be subjected to segregation or discrimination in the exercise or enjoyment of his or her civil or political rights because of religion, race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex or physical or mental disability.” Conn. Const. art. I, § 20, as amended.

“The fund, called the SCHOOL FUND, shall remain a perpetual fund, the interest of which shall be inviolably appropriated to the support and encouragement of the public schools throughout the state, and for the equal benefit of all the people thereof. The value and amount of said fund shall be ascertained in such manner as the general assembly may prescribe, published, and recorded in the comptroller's office; and no law shall ever be made, authorizing such fund to be diverted to any other use than the encouragement and support of public schools, among the several school societies, as justice and equity shall require.” Conn. Const. art. VIII, § 4.

- **Pay public school teachers**, in accordance with the weight of their solemn responsibility, their value, and fundamental importance to the lives of our children, young people, and to the functioning of democratic society!
- **Fully fund high quality Pre-K** to ensure high quality public education for every child across our state, regardless of family income or ability to pay.
- **End the destructive Republican attacks on our public school teachers’** rights and end Republican attempts to carve out legislation which amounts to special and specific taxes targeting our public school teachers.
- Fully fund, **defend, and expand Connecticut’s Care 4 Kids** program to ensure equity and access to child care and early education services for all Connecticut children, parents, and families.
- **Fully fund Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grants** to our municipalities.
- Dramatically progressively **reform our state’s public education funding formula** with the aim of bolstering parity and equity across our public school districts that takes student need into account and progressively directs dollars to students. In addition, progressively reform how we fund public education away from the regressive system of a vast overreliance on local property taxes.

- **Fund, identify, and provide special education services** so that students who need high quality special education services receive them equitably.
- Support and provide funding needed to ensure full implementation of Connecticut's [Menstrual Equity Act](#) at schools across our state to guarantee equal educational opportunity to women, girls, non-binary, and transgender people.
- **Strengthen the CT DREAM Act** which provides institutional aid to all Connecticut resident students. These are funds to which all Connecticut residents contribute, but from which some are barred from being able to take advantage.
- Catch up to our fellow neighboring states and western democracies and invest in our people by instituting a system of **statewide tuition-free and debt-free public colleges and universities**. We must invest in our people in order to grow our state economy by alleviating the burden of Connecticut residents, who graduate and begin their careers with an [average debt of \\$32,326](#).

Health care

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman.”
[-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

- **Increase pay and ensure safe staffing ratios and fair scheduling for nurses, home health aide workers, and those deemed ‘essential employees’** who bore and still bear the harshest brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Build on the Sustinet health care reform legislation to achieve high quality public universal health care in Connecticut.**
- **Ensure equal treatment under the law for LGBTQ+ people** and adopt non-discriminatory, and all-gender inclusive language in all relevant aspects of health care regulation. Ensure that health care services needed by Queer, non-binary, and transgender people are required to be covered by health plans. Expanding the coverage of such health care needs will reduce the costs to LGBTQ+ patients seeking treatment.
- Support and provide funding needed to ensure [full implementation of Connecticut's Menstrual Equity Act](#) at required sites across our state.
- **Strengthen paid family, medical, and parental leave** which is a basic right of all working people. No new parent should be forced to leave their newborn's side in the first critical months of life and before new mothers have had the proper time to recover from

delivery and before new families have had time to bond and take care of their unique needs. No expectant family should be forced into work when not ready due to an impending birth, potentially putting the health of the mother and the health of her baby at risk. No family should have to be torn away from taking care of a suffering family member in need.

- **Strengthen health care protections for Connecticut residents upholding the basic guarantees and basic health insurance rights as established by the individual mandate of the Affordable Care Act.**
- **Fully fund, guarantee, and make no change reducing the number of Connecticut residents who are eligible for Medicaid payments, including those to their Medicare Savings Program.** Ensure that these payments continue for all of our elderly and disabled residents who are in *need*. We will protect our seniors and disabled neighbors by not allowing for the trick of backdoor cuts via draconian changes in program eligibility to continue unabated.
- **Lower outrageously high prescription drug prices** via legislation which enacts price maximums, price controls, and price transparency to address price gouging of medications.

LGBTQ+ Rights

- **Ensure equal treatment under the law for LGBTQ+ people** and adopt non-discriminatory, and all-gender inclusive language in all relevant aspects of state statutes. Ensure that public services and regulations protect equal treatment under the law for Queer, non-binary, and transgender people.

Women's Rights & Protecting Reproductive and Abortion Health care

Banning legal abortion doesn't mean there will be less abortions, it only means that there will be [less safe abortion](#).

- **I will fight to protect women's health care and reproductive rights** against the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States overturning the Roe and Casey precedents and from the ongoing extremist right-wing assaults spreading across our country!
- **I fully support:**
 - **H.B. 5414 (2022): An Act Concerning Protections For Persons Receiving And Providing Reproductive Health Care Services In The State** which provides

protections for persons receiving and providing reproductive health care services in our state.

- o **H.B. 5272 (2022): An Act Concerning Menstrual Products** which requires the provision of free menstrual products in various settings, including schools, universities, colleges, and homeless and emergency shelters. Now passed, I will ensure the full implementation of this legislation.

Addressing the Public Health Crisis of Opiate and Drug Addiction

“The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection.”

-Journalist Johann Hari

- **Significantly increase funding for and availability of addiction treatment.**
- **Learn from the successful drug addiction treatment models from around the world,** such as those from [Portugal](#) and [Switzerland](#), **and decriminalize drugs** so that those desperately in need of treatment and their families can come out of the shadows, reconnect with society, and seek and receive treatment successfully without fear of repercussion and criminal prosecution.

According to [Portuguese drug policy officials](#), “before decriminalization, addicts were afraid to seek treatment because they feared they would be denounced to the police and arrested, now they know they will be treated as patients with a problem and not stigmatized as criminals.”

Furthermore, take the funds currently funneled into demonstrably unsuccessful criminal prosecutions and instead use those funds to establish robust systems of successful treatment.

Justice System Reform

- **Strengthen the decarceration, reconciliatory, and social justice components of Connecticut’s legal and regulated cannabis laws** to ensure that those individuals and communities most negatively impacted by America’s ‘war on drugs’ are justly compensated for hardships unjustly imposed upon them as well as are first in line to benefit from Connecticut’s newly legal budding marijuana industry.
- **End the use of monetary bail** in our justice system, which only punishes based on one’s access to funds, and thus criminalizes poverty, rather than dispenses justice based on the criminal severity of one’s behavior.

- **Severely curtail the use of solitary confinement**, the overuse of which can rise to the level of torture.

Firearm Policy

- **Ban bump stocks** which allow for semi-automatic rifles to produce the fire rate of full-automatic rifles
- **Ban ‘Ghost Guns’** which are untraceable, unregistered, unregulated firearms that allow for their sale to and possession by individuals who would otherwise be legally barred from owning and possessing firearms

Environmental Policies, Climate Solutions, and Jobs

- **Advance the SECT offshore wind program** spearheaded by [Connecticut Roundtable on Climate & Jobs](#), which seeks to establish the New London port specifically and South Eastern Connecticut overall as a manufacturing and shipping hub for sustainable energy infrastructure projects up and down the East Coast for the foreseeable future, leading to the creation of thousands of high-paying union jobs for our district and region.
- **End the fund raiding of our state’s [highly successful environmentally friendly](#) and sustainable energy infrastructure initiatives. Instead of sweeping away these funds, which are derived from surcharges on utility bills, restore full funding to these responsible and necessary investments.**

These successful initiatives include:

1. The **Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund** which aids thousands of our families in saving money through energy efficiency
 2. The **Connecticut Green Bank**, which is upheld as a national model for clean energy finance, creates green, sustainable jobs in South Eastern Connecticut, and leverages eight to ten dollars for every one public dollar invested
 3. and **Connecticut’s Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative**.
- **Levy carbon and methane taxes** in order to accurately reflect the destructive greenhouse effect, pollutive impact on our breathable air and potable water, and devastating cost to our ecosystem of the extraction and burning of these fossil fuels by the fossil fuel industry.
 - In agreement with municipal ordinances, **permanently ban fracking** in our state.

- **Invest in upgrading the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency of Waterford's and Montville's public properties.**
- **Maintain and preserve our district's and region's natural habitats as undeveloped and open for public exploration, including the entirety of the [Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve](#).**

Fair & Clean Elections/Citizens' Election Program/Money in Politics/Wolf-PAC Amendment Resolution

"If money equals speech, then speech is no longer free."

[-Nick Gauthier](#)

- **Aggressively defend and expand the democratizing effects of Connecticut Citizens' Election Program.** Our state's electoral public financing system was established as a direct result of the shameful criminal corruption engaged in by our state's two-time convicted felon Republican governor. As part of previous draconian budget proposals, Connecticut Republicans have sought to dismantle Connecticut's shining example clean elections program, a program which makes up [0.0001% of the budget](#) and is paid for by the sale of abandoned properties.

As over [90 percent](#) of Americans know to be true, and has been borne out by [statistical analysis](#); elected officials almost exclusively listen to and act on behalf of deep-pocketed donors and in opposition to vast majorities of regular voters. Therefore, the Republican effort to end our clean elections public financing system, if successful, will only serve to allow for the explosion of private financing of elections in Connecticut. As being among the over 90 percent of us in agreement with observable reality; I know that elections paid for by private donors will only return us to a criminally corrupt state government more beholden to private interests. I also know that defending and strengthening our CEP public financing system will produce elected leaders in Connecticut who are of, by, and for the public interest.

- **Restore the CEP's democratic \$100 contribution limit cap.**
- **Eliminate the corrupting influence of money in our politics by becoming the 6th state to pass the Wolf-PAC Resolution for the Free and Fair Elections Amendment to the U.S. Constitution** to overturn U.S. Supreme Court precedent and Congressional and statehouse corruption allowing for functionally unlimited sums of money to infect our politics, corrupt our politicians, and destroy our democracy.

Money's corrupting influence in our politics is the one issue which infects and affects all others, halting progress on issues with overwhelming majority support among all Americans on every issue ranging from common sense gun reform, to environmental protection, to raising our wages, to fair, equitable taxation, to infrastructure investment, to investment in public education, to our ability to afford necessary, life-sustaining medication, and even our right and ability to have a member of our family see a doctor when we are sick or injured. The only solution is to guarantee the elimination of money in our politics, then, with Connecticut's model of public financing leading the path forward, we can establish a nationwide system of public financing of all elections.

Connecticut Electoral Reform/Open Primaries & Caucuses

A democracy that lessens the number of its citizens who can legitimately expect full electoral participation and has as its hallmark an unequal opportunity to have one's voice reasonably represented hastens its own demise.

- Implement **open primaries and caucuses** in Connecticut with a primary day-of party preference declaration option for voters. The Democratic Party must be the party of increasing democratic participation. As they currently stand, our state's party primary and caucus systems are undemocratically closed in at least two major ways.
 1. All Connecticut taxpayers pay for our state government to administer and oversee party primaries, however, a plurality of voters are barred from voting in those same primaries for which they pay taxes in order to administer. This exclusion of voters from such an important part of the election process is blatantly undemocratic.
 2. Having a three-month beforehand hard cutoff date for party registration in order to vote in a party primary or caucus serves absolutely no purpose other than to disenfranchise and undemocratically eliminate the chance to vote from otherwise eligible voters.

- Support **no-excuse absentee voting** to give Connecticut voters the guaranteed option to vote by mail or secure ballot drop box.

- Implement a system of **automatic voter registration**, similar to Oregon's opt-out voter registration system (as opposed to opt-in).

- Implement a system of **statewide ranked-choice/instant-runoff voting**, similar to Maine's ranked-choice voting, so that voters are free to vote for the candidates and policies they want rather than against what they do not want.

- **Make Election Day a state holiday** so all can participate fully and fairly in our democracy.

- **Increase democratic engagement by lowering the voting age to 16 years.**

Fair Businesses

- **Pass legislation allowing for the establishment of Benefit Limited Liability**

Companies to exist and operate in the same vein as Benefit Corporations, which is a business structure that empowers corporations' leadership to balance public benefits against shareholder profits. The establishment of Benefit LLCs will allow entrepreneurs establishing new business ventures the same opportunity as already established corporations who seek to take advantage of the Benefit Corporation framework in order to uphold the public's interests along with creating profit.

As described by Murtha/Cullina, while standard corporations must focus primarily on maximizing financial returns to investors, the directors and officers of benefit corporations must also consider and prioritize the impacts of their corporate decision making on several additional stakeholders including the employees and clients of the corporation, the community in which the benefit corporation is located, the local and global environment, and the ability of the corporation to accomplish its general public benefit purpose and any specific public benefit purpose.

In return, benefit corporations receive greater statutory protection to pursue sustainable business goals and to maintain their beneficial purpose over time (prior to the enactment of benefit corporation legislation, this protection was only available in Connecticut to standard corporations with shares listed on a national stock exchange) and are provided with the means to differentiate their business and transparently report on their performance in pursuing a positive impact on society and the environment.

Infrastructure

- **Significantly invest in Connecticut's lacking public transportation** to ensure all have equal access to transportation, which is especially necessary for basic needs, such as timely transport to and from employment opportunities and to and from the grocery store.
- **Establish a Connecticut Infrastructure Bank**
- **Establish a statewide publicly owned gigabit Internet broadband network** (<http://www.osc.ct.gov/gig/>) to operate as a public utility under the principles of net neutrality, which guarantee a free, open, and equal Internet to all. Based on results in other localities, if Connecticut establishes our own fiber optic network capable of delivering gigabit-per-second broadband to Connecticut residents and businesses we will experience explosive economic growth and will enable people across our state to engage in entrepreneurship.