

2009 Voters Guide



The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

www.lwvgh.org



Elin Katz	Democrat
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Biographical Information:

Born in Slingerlands, New York, I have lived in West Hartford for thirteen years. I have been married to my husband Steve, a West Hartford native, for 15 years and we have two school-age children, twin boys Justin and Zachary. I hold a B.S. from Cornell University, a J.D. *cum laude* from Boston University School of Law, and an MA with honors from Trinity College. I am an attorney, a Visiting Lecturer at Trinity College, and a professional writing consultant. Most importantly, I am a parent.

Response to Questions

1. How would you address the state mandate for our West Hartford schools to be more racially balanced?

Don't mess with success. We have great neighborhood schools that reflect the communities which support them. I will promote diversity in our schools and compliance with applicable law, but without disrupting our neighborhood schools. Of course we must respond to the Department of Education's concerns, but I believe that conversation should focus on our continuing ability to meet the educational needs of a diverse and vibrant student body in each of our schools, not on arbitrary formulas concerning racial composition.

2. Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid? Explain.

No one can predict what comes next in this economy. We are fortunate that last year the Board of Education was able to preserve programs vital to our students' development without an increase in the budget. Realistically, no school system

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can maintain quality over the long term without some budget increases to address the rising cost of energy, supplies, staffing, and other essentials. In the short term, we don't know what challenges the next budget cycle will bring, but I will work with stakeholders to once again maintain school excellence while living within our means.

3. What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?

Students are entitled to a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment. The Board has programs to promote tolerance and respect for diversity, as well as a comprehensive anti-bullying policy. These generally work well. That said, any amount of bullying is too much. I seek to increase programs that promote student-to-student communication and peer conflict resolution, to increase tolerance and promote school safety.

4. If elected, what initiative would be your top priority?

My priorities:

- preserving reasonable class sizes
- maintaining West Hartford's excellent neighborhood schools
- providing essential programs and services that meet the needs of students of all abilities and backgrounds
- designing a budget that promote academic achievement in the schools while meeting the fiscal challenges of the current economy without overburdening taxpayers
- increasing dialogue and communication between the Board, parents, schools, and taxpayers
- re-examining school nutrition programs

The schools support our children, our home values, our community, and our future. Please support them – and me – on November 3.