

2009 Voters Guide



The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford
www.lwvgh.org



Ellen Burchill Brassil	Republican
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Biographical Information:

- Elected to School Board in 1997, re-elected 2001
- All four children graduated Duffy, Sedgwick, and soon Conard
- Life-long town resident
- Librarian, Sacred Heart University
- Supports local control, neighborhood schools

Response to Questions

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

The state has rejected voluntary measures and is bearing down on West Hartford to heed a statute that would move children to schools beyond their neighborhoods based solely on race. This must stop. West Hartford is a shining example of a wonderfully diverse model school district. When the issue erupted back in 1994, the democrats responded with the controversial “K-2/3-5” plan. That scheme (overturned following a citizen uprising) would have completely dismantled our neighborhood school system. The board back then voted to redistrict every child by placing them on buses for half of their elementary school years even though that plan lacked educational benefit and would have spent money moving children around rather than addressing authentic educational needs.

The democrats’ record on this issue would treat children differently based on the color of their skin. Recent, startling correspondence between the State and our district has surfaced and refers to “too many” minority students at Charter Oak

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and Smith, and “too many” white students at Bugbee, Duffy, and Morley. Those letters include specific statements on how our board and administration plan to comply with this offensive statute, even though plans were submitted without public debate or a board vote.

During my years on the board, I consistently supported local control, neighborhood schools, and student achievement. Sadly, the current board leadership has concerned itself with social re-engineering, sleep patterns, and what should be allowed in school vending machines.

It’s time to put education first, reaffirm our commitment to neighborhood schools and do what is right for children. Challenging this oppressive statute would be a good start.

- 2. Can West Hartford maintain a quality school system without a budget increase next year assuming no increase from state aid? Explain.**
Yes, especially through effective instructional strategies, our outstanding teachers and curriculum.
- 3. What can be done to promote respect for differences and to decrease bullying in the schools?**
Bullying scars children for life and must never be tolerated in our schools. We must be vigilant and responsive in instances of abuse and bullying and support awareness.
- 4. If elected, what initiative would be your top priority?**
The state racial imbalance law distracts us from addressing the educational needs of our schoolchildren. Latest standardized test data shows that we have fallen behind in most all performance outcomes when compared with school districts like us. In order to identify and implement effective educational programs and strategies with a proven track record of success, we first must challenge the archaic racial imbalance law that lacks educational merit, threatens our neighborhood school model, would divert resources to construction and transportation costs, and is harmful to all children, including those most in need of our support.