

# 2009 Voters Guide



**The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford**  
[www.lwvgh.org](http://www.lwvgh.org)



Rob Sisk

Republican

## **Biographical Information:**

Energy industry executive with 32 years experience in strategic planning, business development and union and non-union organizational management including 17 years with entrepreneur Roger Penske. Degrees from Rice University (Mechanical Engineering) and Université Paris Sorbonne (French). Married 29 years to Aude (Courcelle). Three children and one grandchild. Additional information on these answers is available at [www.siskforwesthartford.com](http://www.siskforwesthartford.com).

## **Response to Questions**

### **1. Which West Hartford services can be reduced and still be viable (assume no increase in state aid)?**

Particularly as one gets further away from the classroom, patrol car or firehouse, all services are candidates for reduction. However, once we regain control over the runaway costs of employee/retiree benefits, (which are 259% of what they were in 2001, are increasing at over 10% per year and are siphoning off funds which otherwise would be providing services), there will be no need to reduce or eliminate services. Even in this election year, when the Council uncharacteristically restrained overall budget growth, the cost of benefits soaked up an additional \$2,500,000 that otherwise could have provided services to the community.

### **2. West Hartford and Bloomfield partner to operate the Health Department. What additional regional cooperative efforts could ease our economic situation?**

As MDC clearly demonstrates, not all regional cooperative efforts work in favor of West Hartford. Each must be judged on its individual merits and on any future limitations it might impose on our ability to independently address the serious challenges we face.

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### 3. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities of our changing demographics?

Our community is unique in that we have almost 50% more “Over 65’s” and over 100% more “18-24’s” than peer communities. These low and fixed income demographics represent 30% of our adult population, are the most economically vulnerable and have been seriously hurt by the >50% increase in property taxes since 2001. Adding to their burden are the indirect taxes recently enacted (leaf pick-up, user fees) In 2008, I presented a five-year Town budget forecast and discussed the very real concern over Tiebout Sorting - a vicious cycle in which high taxes cause non-school households to relocate, to be replaced by school households, increasing demand for services without a corresponding increase in revenue, resulting in yet higher taxes (for more information visit [www.siskforwesthartford.com](http://www.siskforwesthartford.com)). In order to preserve the unique demographic make-up, and improve the affordability, of West Hartford, we must protect these most vulnerable residents by controlling spending at sustainable levels.

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

The next two years will be critical as we again face revaluation, the next round of collective-bargaining negotiations and the threat of mandated “gerrymandering” of our schools. Regaining control of the budget is clearly the highest priority. If we are to disarm the impending benefits time-bomb, we must replace the programs we offer to future employees with ones that are sustainable. Meanwhile, every employee and department should be objectively evaluated for performance, cost-competitiveness and accountability and we must fight to protect the integrity of both the property tax system and our schools from the divisive meddling of state bureaucrats.

### Issues at a Glance Grid Questions

1. Should West Hartford provide more incentives to assist and encourage small businesses? **YES**
2. Would you support reducing activities at senior centers to save money? **NO**
3. Should the town provide additional safe bike lanes? **NO**
4. Would you support an ordinance requiring developers to replant a tree for every tree removed in West Hartford? **NO**
5. Do you support prioritizing energy efficiency upgrades in the capital improvement budget? **YES**