



Lt. Gov. Phil Scott and Sue Minter Vie for Governor

Where do they stand?

Phil Scott and Sue Minter won their parties' nominations in the August 9 primary elections. Sue Minter won the Democratic primary, and Phil Scott won the Republican primary. Legislative Director Lyn Des Marais had the opportunity to observe them debate in June.

Both Scott and Minter have accepted our invitation to our annual meeting annual meeting at the Stoweflake Resort and Spa in Stowe, Vermont on Friday, November 4.

Where do these candidates stand on the issues. Legislative Director Lyn Des Marais had the opportunity to take notes at a debate/forum in late June. Each candidate for governor was asked approximately fifteen questions about their environmental stances. The questions centered on three broad issues: climate change and energy independence from fossil fuels, water quality and funding Lake Champlain clean up, and toxic chemicals issues. The questions began with what each candidate's environmental priorities were for Vermont. "Climate change" said Sue Minter, and Phil Scott said cleaning up Lake Champlain.

Here is a summary of each candidate's responses.

Phil Scott

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Scott began by saying that he joined state government as a businessman to be part of the solution not the problem. He sees balance and compromise as successful components to solving problems. He said the environment is important and it is crucial to businesses to support our branding. He spoke of the importance of the tourism industry. Scott would balance environmental needs like cleaning up Lake Champlain with growing Vermont's economy. He believes that Vermont has a crisis of affordability.

Scott supports the updated comprehensive energy plan for Vermont which calls for renewable energy to supply 90% of Vermont's energy needs by 2050. He suggests that technology is key here both in creating the energy and in solving the energy storage issue. He does not

support industrial wind on Vermont's ridge lines. Scott supports other renewable energy, always has, but calls for better siting of solar projects, and to site these projects where they are needed: keep it local. Scott said that conservation of resources is also key to energy independence and that he is frugal by nature. Scott does not support the carbon tax. We cannot do it alone, he says. Vermont must be at least part of a New England coalition. He spoke again of not increasing costs for already economically vulnerable Vermonters.

On land use, Scott strongly supports rebuilding downtowns with a mixture of housing and commerce. He spoke of building affordable housing to attract more young workers to Vermont to reverse the loss in that age group. Scott does not see the urgency of forest fragmentation regulations. He pointed to historic land use and clearing of Vermont. He supports programs that conserve large tracts of forest land important to the forestry businesses.

On water quality Scott spoke of the EPAS recent TMDL for Lake Champlain and the challenge of trying to meet that goal. He said it is for the legislature to come up with funding for cleaning Lake Champlain but to commit to a long term process. He spoke again of the need to revitalize Vermont's economy, increasing tax revenues, so that Vermont can afford to increase funding for the lake clean up. When asked about toxic chemicals Scott said that Act 188 had been passed but the rules it calls for haven't been finalized yet. He asked that these be allowed to be completed and see if they work before he'd support any new regulations. At the moment he recommends that Vermont follow the EPA lead in this area and not go it alone. Like Lisman, he emphasized that Vermont has many needs and not a lot of financial resources. As to specifically PFOA he said he's watching it as it develops and thinks the current administration is doing an adequate job on it at this point in time.

In his lightning round Scott agreed that humans are the primary cause of climate change, supported the housing and conservation funding with more emphasis on housing, and supports downtown tax credits and wants them increased. Scott hailed Dean Davis and George Aiken as environmental leaders who influenced him.

Sue Minter

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When asked about Vermont's most pressing environmental priority, Minter said, "Climate change. It's real and it's here." She noted 15 inches of rain fell during Hurricane Irene. She highlighted her work on the federal climate change task force.

Minter supports Vermont's goal of energy independence by 2050. She spoke of reducing peak demand, weatherization, community solar, and more public transportation. She supports both large solar and wind arrays and said that, 'It is unbelievable that some candidates in this campaign do not support renewables and talk of banning some of them.' She would give incentives to community solar and have them move forward quickly. Her mode of payment for reduction in energy demand was to seek federal dollars and increase Vermont state funding. Minter supports a carbon tax. She supports it as part of a regional program for all of New England and supports a cap and trade program. She would seek to make public transportation regional as well. In her rebuttal time Minter said that climate change is a crisis that needs solutions and we cannot afford to cut out any options. Every decision and choice we make is important. The solution is with all of us.

On land use Minter said she has a professional degree in land use planning and spoke of plans she has created in the past including a downtown plan and one for interstate interchanges. She promotes a working landscape surrounding more densely populated downtowns and says Vermont's future is tied to its downtowns. Minter supports forest protection and supports strengthening and modernizing Act 250. She loves Farm to Plate and believes Vermont should create a forest products version. She suggests the best way to save Vermont forests from fragmentation is to grow the forest products industry. She said we will have sustainable forests through economic growth and that this will protect forests better than more Act 250 regulations. She suggested wildlife crossings of roads could be via under road tunnels.

On the issue of water quality and again how to fund it, Minter touted her strengths at knowing what to do because she's been doing it these last three years. She supports the \$24 million for farms and more for road runoff and suggests Clean Water Bonds as a funding mechanism.

On toxic chemicals, Minter spoke of having visited homes in Bennington and hearing directly from families their fears about the water they have been drinking for years. As a mom she said she's concerned about the toxins kids breathe, eat and are on toys. She said of the 85,000 chemicals in existence "we don't have a clue" if they are safe. She supports Vermont continue in to look into chemicals and go beyond the EPA.

In the lightning round Minter loves the idea of buying the dams but has to know the details, agrees that humans cause climate change, supports the Vermont housing and conservation board funding, supports downtown funding, and does not support an expanded gas pipeline. Her environmental inspiration is Rachel Carson whose book, *Silent Spring*, she believes began the legislative environmental movement.

Final Thoughts

I am no political expert and the candidates were only given, at most, two minutes to answer but the questions were pointedly asking candidates how we can get to energy independence when it is projected the renewables will fall short of the goal by 50%, the 30% reduction in demand called for by the plan is woefully underfunded and is mainly needed in home heating oil and transportation. I didn't hear of any detailed plans for funding these necessary changes. The same was asked of providing the funds for cleaning up Lake Champlain and very little detail was given. Forest fragmentation seems to be an issue for the Democrats and Progressives, although very few gave details of the problem and again of how to fund a solution. The concern seems to be that Vermont's forests are in private hands.