



October 14, 2008

## Q&A: Colin Bonini

### State Senate, District 16

#### **1. What should the state do to make people feel safer in their homes, businesses and communities?**

One thing we should absolutely not do is eliminate the minimum mandatory sentences for drug dealers. Many of my colleagues want to reduce these sentences and I think we must keep tough sentences for all drug-related offenses. In addition I believe we must adopt a zero tolerance policy for even minor crimes as those lesser offenses are frequently gateway crimes for offenders who will commit worse crimes later on in their criminal careers. And perhaps most importantly, we **MUST** have more state troopers on the road in Kent County. I think a greater police presence will help deter crime significantly.

#### **2. What steps should the state government take to improve the health of its citizens, and make health-care more affordable?**

The major issue in health care is cost. I support creating ever larger insurance pools to reduce costs and allow members to have their premiums reduced significantly and I support doing away with many of the insurance mandates we currently have that drive costs up. Delawareans should be able to get the health care they want and not be forced to pay for more or less than they need. I do not support socialized medicine but I certainly support early access preventive care to help people avoid health issues. I also strongly support increasing the time available for school children to get out side and exercise during the school day and therefore combat childhood obesity.

#### **3. The state faced a \$217 million shortfall for the 2009 fiscal year and likely will have little to no increase in revenues for next year. Several attempts to raise taxes were defeated in the 2008 session. How do you assess the current level of state spending and taxation, as well as the priorities reflected in the budget? What, if any, changes would you make in spending, taxes or state services?**

Let me be crystal clear here: Delaware has a spending problem, NOT a revenue problem. We spend more per person than just about any state in the Union. I have led the fight to reduce state spending for years and now we must make the tough decisions necessary to balance our budget. I will make those decisions. There are literally hundreds of millions of dollars wasted in our state government and I will continue to fight to find those dollars and give them back to the taxpayers. After all, it's the people's money, not the government's.

#### **4. What should the state government's role be in public education, how well is this being carried out and what should be done to better fulfill that mission?**

The state has and should continue to have significant role in public education. I believe in a state the size of Delaware there is no reason to have 19 school districts with 19 expensive administrations. We need to consolidate and reduce the size of our public education bureaucracy significantly. Our public

schools need help and what we must do at the State level is make sure that at least 70 percent of our education tax dollars actually get into the classroom. Right now less than half of our education tax dollars get into the classroom. That's unacceptable. Parents followed by teachers are the most important people in a child's education: not administrators, not labor unions, not the government. We must get our resources into the classroom, not the bureaucracy.

**5. How do you assess the state's record in environmental protection, sprawl control and open space preservation? What, if any, adjustments need to be made?**

I think our efforts in preserving open space and farmland have been quite successful. I am obviously concerned about sprawl and I think we have a duty to make sure the appropriate infrastructure is in place to limit the negative impacts of growth. I think local governments should control land use issues but I believe the state has a responsibility to help ensure that infrastructure needs are met. I support the rights of land owners to be appropriately compensated when the government takes away their property rights. I also support eminent domain reform (Senate Bill 241).

**6. Do you support a law that would ban discrimination based on a person's sexual preference?**

No.

**7. Are current state laws governing land development adequate and appropriate? What changes, if any, would you propose?**

Local governments should make land use decisions. I do not have any confidence that the state government would make appropriate decisions on local land use issues. I do believe, however, that the state has a responsibility to help ensure that infrastructure needs are met. The best fix for land use issues at the state level is to get the state's financial house in order and that is what I will work to achieve.

**8. Do you support any expansion of gambling in the state, such as the effort to legalize sports betting? Are there other steps the state should take to meet gambling competition from states like Maryland, which has a referendum to add slot machines on this fall's ballot?**

I am undecided on sports betting. No other state has what Delaware could have with sports betting so it has been very hard to get reliable information on what its impact would be. I also think we must allow the current gambling casinos to operate their businesses in the best and most efficient manner they can. Otherwise we will certainly lose business to competing states. But again, Delaware has a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

**9. Do you support any changes in Senate rules governing the power of committee chairpersons over the status of bills, or in General Assembly regulations governing public access to deliberations by the Joint Finance Committee and Bond Bill Committee?**

The Senate rules must be changed (I forced a vote on this issue last year) to allow public notice and public review of legislation. Sunshine is the best disinfectant and the Legislature, including the "money committees" must be open to the public at all times except when personnel issues (because of confidentiality) are being discussed. I support doing away with the chairperson's power to stop bills without any legislative action and I will not support any spending bill that does not receive at least 3 legislative days of public notice and review. I have been the leading advocate for open government in the General Assembly and I will continue to fight for the peoples' rights to oversee their government.

**10. The state's Transportation Trust Fund faces a \$2.7 billion gap between revenues and spending needed to complete needed projects by 2012. How should the state address this problem? What, if any, new - or higher - fees, taxes or charges would you support to increase**

**revenues? What specific projects or DeIDOT activities should be eliminated to reduce spending?**

The \$2.7 billion is not an accurate number. That number reflects the DeIDOT "wish list" and not necessarily the priorities that most people in the state would agree need to be addressed. I do not support any tax or fee increase. There is plenty of revenue coming into the state, our problem is cutting the waste and reducing our spending. DeIDOT is one of the worst offenders when it comes to wasting tax dollars – we should not even consider more revenues until DeIDOT gets its act together financially and operationally.

**11. The federal Justice Department is now investigating the adequacy of state-provided health care for prison inmates, following revelations of poor care in recent years. What changes - if any - do you think are necessary to address shortcomings in health care afforded to state prison inmates?**

We must provide care, but we also must not allow prisoners to abuse the system. Having more companies willing to bid on our health care contracts would lead to better care and oversight, so I think we should offer incentives to attract more companies willing to bid on the prison health care contracts.

**12. How do you assess the state of Delaware's preparedness to meet emergencies caused by violence, natural disaster or public health crises?**

I am concerned that we have not been proactive enough in convincing the public at large to prepare themselves for a potential disaster. I have tremendous faith in our emergency responders (fire companies, police, etc.) I just think we should make a greater effort to educate the public on what they can do to be prepared.

**13. How do you assess the rate of job growth and economic development in Delaware? How do you assess the state's performance in recruiting new jobs and in attracting, retaining or growing existing businesses?**

Our Economic Development Office within state government has been a dismal failure over the last several years. Our state does a very poor job of enticing companies to come to Delaware. We must improve our public education system and reduce the size and intrusiveness of our government if we expect to attract and retain meaningful jobs.

**14. What would be the one most-important thing you hope to accomplish if elected?**

I am the voice of common-sense conservatism in the Delaware state Senate. I believe that families and individuals make better decisions than governments. I hold traditional values and I am willing to defend those values. And I'll never forget that it's the people's money – not the government's. By far the most important thing I can do is continue to be the voice of common sense conservatism in the Senate!

**15. How do you assess the performance of the state and Legislature in handling the Delmarva Power, Bluewater Wind contract for offshore wind electricity? Should the state follow New Jersey's example and use only subsidies and mandatory "clean power" goals to support private development of wind, solar and other alternative energy projects, or should Delaware intervene more directly and force utilities to sign more contracts with selected companies for alternative energy?**

I support the New Jersey model of goal-setting, although I think we should create incentives instead of mandates. The process here in Delaware for the Bluewater issue should have been open for public review. Although I hope the Bluewater deal will be good in the long run for Delaware, the plan was negotiated in secret by a few legislators and lobbyists behind closed doors and without any meaningful public input. Our state government cannot continue to operate in this fashion.