

# WHCA Sends Candidates Short List of Questions

**TN House of Representatives,  
U.S. House of Representatives,  
and U.S. Senate**

To help the West Hills community become better informed about the candidates' positions on issues of general interest to our neighborhood, West Hills Community Association leadership prepared a brief questionnaire and extended an invitation to each candidate to respond and to also share any additional remarks.

Five of the six candidates responded. If WHCA receives responses from U.S. Senate candidate Marquita Bradshaw in advance of the November 3 Election Day, they will be added to the following responses.

## WHCA Questions for 2020 Political Candidates

1. A federal rule that promotes fair housing and sets desegregation as a national priority has been in the national news recently. The policy is known as **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing**, or AFFH. This is an interpretation of a language within the Fair Housing Act of 1968. This policy decision directly conflicts with local jurisdiction and establishment of property zoning definitions.

From the perspective of homeowners this exceeds the constitutional authority of the Federal government and disenfranchises citizens within municipalities across America. Additionally, the federal legislators have suggested withholding not only housing grants, but also are willing to extort local governments by threatening to withhold highway funds.

**Do you agree or disagree? Please explain the rationale for your position.**

2. What is your position regarding incentives for developers to utilize “**green construction**” methods, incorporate low impact development features and other environmental quality sustainable techniques to minimize storm water runoff; protect air and surface water quality; and the natural environment.

**Do you agree or disagree? Please explain the rationale for your position.**

3. With the COVID-19 pandemic now in its seventh month, and the resulting devastation to our economy, local, state, and federal governments have also been impacted. If you are elected to office, how will you approach the financial challenges of reduced revenue you will deal with as a legislator?

**Do you agree or disagree? Please explain the rationale for your position.**

4. Do you support **term limits**?

**Do you agree or disagree? Please explain the rationale for your position.**

5. Should **legislators be exempt from the laws** they craft?

**Do you agree or disagree? Please explain the rationale for your position.**

6. Is there any **additional comment(s)** you want to share with the **West Hills** community?

## The Candidates Respond

**Tennessee House of Representatives  
District 18**

**Virginia Couch**

[www.votevirginiacouch.com](http://www.votevirginiacouch.com)

1. In January 2018, HUD suspended implementation of the 2015 regulation and in July 2020 President Trump and HUD

Secretary Ben Carson revoked the rule. As President Trump said in his tweet related to that action:

"I am happy to inform all of the people living their Suburban Lifestyle Dream that you will no longer be bothered or financially hurt by having low income housing built in your neighborhood. Your housing prices will go up based on the market, and crime will go down. I have rescinded the Obama-Biden AFFH Rule. Enjoy!"

HUD now has the Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice rule. Whether that rule will have any impact on ending discriminatory housing practices or residentially segregated communities, which is the goal of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, is to be seen. As to future federal action on this front, it would be a matter for Tim Burchett, Renee Oyos, or Matthew Campbell as our congressperson to address on our behalf.

**2.** In both commercial and residential development we must encourage construction methods that reduce the negative impact on surrounding communities and the environment; however, we must recognize that these methods normally increase the cost of and often the timeline for construction. We, as homeowners and consumers, ultimately pay these increased costs and suffer the construction delays. Provided the incentive program is regularly reviewed for effectiveness (to ensure it truly addresses only the additional cost of the green part of the construction and is ultimately effective in increasing green construction), I would support developer and/or homeowner incentives such as tax abatement, rebates, or credits as well as grants or special loan funds. We could also encourage expedited permit/plan review processing for green projects at the local level.

**3.** It is impossible at this time to answer this question because we do not know, among other things, how much state revenue will be affected, how much the federal government will offer in additional assistance, how long the pandemic will last, and whether Governor Lee will look to utilize any reserve funds, including the Rainy Day Fund. As most people understand, TN is required to have a balanced budget so any revenue shortfall must be addressed through reduced spending, increased taxes, or a combination of the two. Legislators should focus on how to help businesses and consumers recover to minimize the revenue shortfalls.

**4.** Please read my complete discussion but for now I will leave it to the voters to "term limit" state and federal legislators. I believe if we want real change in this area, we need better informed voters and more voter participation to hold those up for election or reelection accountable. I truly wish we did not have life-time politicians because I do believe decisions are often made to prolong time in office and that we lack diverse representation because the same person remains in office for many years (incumbent advantage). If the most powerful office in the state – Governor – and the country – President – are limited, then why not state and federal legislators? I do recognize though that what we have seen in Knoxville and Knox County is that term limits resulted in some politicians moving from one political office to another and there being no real change in the makeup of the people running much of the local government.

**5.** No

**6.** In Tennessee, only 12 women currently hold a seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives. That's out of 99 seats. Only 26 of the 99 seats are held by Democrats. What this means is there are a lot of voices not being heard – in fact – not even being invited to the table. With this significant imbalance, true democracy does not exist. I want to take a step toward balance. And the issues I will advocate for are not partisan – adequate funding for our public education system; doing what we can to make sure we're all healthy; improving economic opportunities for everyone. I encourage everyone to visit my website to learn more about me and my platform or email me at [virginia@votevirginiacouch.com](mailto:virginia@votevirginiacouch.com) and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

## **Eddie Mannis**

**[www.eddiemannis.com](http://www.eddiemannis.com)**

**1.** The Fair Housing Act is an important civil rights law that seeks to correct previous discriminatory policies such as redlining. I believe we can and should find ways to protect local zoning rules while still following the federal housing rules. With that said, it is a federal issue, but I am opposed to discrimination practices of any kind.

**2.** This is a local issue and the State Legislature should not mandate ordinances to local municipalities, but I will always be a proponent of clean air, clean water and side walks like the new one in West Hills. West Hills has one of the oldest Neighborhood groups in Knox County so I will always welcome your input.

**3.** Tennessee is better positioned to weather the COVID-19 storm than most states, but that doesn't mean that we are exempt from the challenges. I don't believe that increasing the tax burden on struggling families is the right approach. I'd rather work to find government efficiencies that can save us money without harming families. Raising taxes is not a

solution and would be a step in the wrong direction.

4. Yes. I recently signed on and pledged to support term limits with the USTL (U.S. Term Limits).

5. Absolutely not. Elected officials must be held to the same standard as the people that they represent. Legislators shouldn't pass laws that they themselves are not willing to live by.

6. *No additional comments*

## **U.S. House of Representatives District 2**

### **Tim Burchett**

**[www.burchettforcongress.com](http://www.burchettforcongress.com)**

1. While I oppose discrimination in housing, I also oppose the federal government seeking to overturn local ordinances from Maine to Hawaii. Folks in East Tennessee should be able to handle these matters without federal intervention. As your Congressman I have and will continue to oppose such legislation.

2. As a cosponsor of the Trillion Trees Act, I realize that often my party misses the mark when it comes to taking care of our environment. There are plenty of common sense reforms and solutions to environmental issues that can be found with little cost to businesses. However, this is really a local government issue in regard to developers and not one for the federal government to legislate. Certainly I believe in workable environmental quality policies as well as clean air and water standards. KUB has spent millions of dollars to separate waste water from storm water runoff which is important for clean water. Incentives such as described here should be considered at the state and local level, not at the federal level. The federal government would do a lousy job making and enforcing standards along these lines.

3. I have been a tireless advocate of reducing the federal debt and held the line on taxes when I was county Mayor. At the federal level, we have failed on cutting the debt, which is why I introduced the Do Your Job Act to cut legislators' pay every time congress fails to pass a budget, and the bipartisan RAFT Act to improve the budgeting process. As a member of the Congressional Budget Committee, I will continue to fight waste and oppose increases in expenses which are not essential to create jobs and reduce hardships.

4. We have term limits in Knox County and the city of Knoxville. I support H.J.R. 4, which proposes a constitutional amendment to impose federal term limits for Congress despite false statements by my opponent that I oppose term limits.

5. Legislators at all levels should live under the laws they enact without exception.

6. West Hills has a wonderful history and I was fortunate to grow up in West Hills. The West Hills Neighborhood Association is respected and viable. I welcome input and recommendations as your Congressman just as I did when County Mayor and a state lawmaker, and I hope any West Hills resident who needs assistance will feel free to contact me. If you'd like to know more about me, please visit our website [www.burchettforcongress.com](http://www.burchettforcongress.com), or like us on Facebook at Burchett for Congress.

### **Renee Hoyos**

**[hoyosforcongress.com](http://hoyosforcongress.com)**

1. As a member of Congress, I don't have authority over this rule. I would certainly monitor it in the courts, as I know the Trump administration rolled it back and faced lawsuits for doing so.

I support affordable housing, but communities and neighborhoods should be allowed to self-determine & plan their own neighborhoods. This should be a municipal issue.

2. I support incentives to developers for green infrastructure. For too long, the playing field was sediment limit during every storm event for the next two years. I know developers can do better. We need both a carrot and a stick. I am happy to provide a fat incentive for developers to use low impact development practices. I will also support increased enforcement for scofflaws. tilted towards developers who cut corners and violated environmental protections on their sites. In my early years at TCWN, we reported sites all over Knox County in violation of stormwater regulations. We were the first group in the United States to sue a local developer for violating stormwater regulations and imposed a numeric limit

on sediment. The developer met the [sic].

3. I would work to repeal the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. This tax relief bill for the uber wealthy has increased the deficit by \$113B to \$779B in 2018 and zoomed to \$924B in 2019. This loss of revenue can be captured and put back to work for the tax payer to bolster the failing economy and health care system. I would also support increased taxes for those over \$1B in net worth.
4. Yes. I took a Term Limits pledge and then limited myself to 4 2-year terms.
5. Absolutely not. All laws that govern the public, should apply to all branches of government. To my surprise, insider trading, can be pursued by members of the legislative and executive branches. While the STOCK ACT passed in 2012 has significantly reduced insider trading by members of Congress, its subsequent amendments have created loopholes for members of Congress to use for personal gain. Congressman Tim Burchett took advantage of these loopholes after attending a private briefing and sold stock in a restaurant prior to the COVID-19 quarantine.
6. *No additional comments*

## **U.S. Senate**

**Marquita Bradshaw**  
[marquitabradshaw.com](http://marquitabradshaw.com)  
*No response*

**Bill Hagerty**  
[teamhagerty.com](http://teamhagerty.com)

1. As your Senator, I will not support legislation that exceeds the constitutional authority of the federal government. Local governments and municipalities are best qualified to make decisions that directly impact their communities. Instead of withholding housing grants and highway funds, the federal government should partner with state and local leaders to create more opportunities for those living in these communities.
2. In the Senate, I will work to remove unnecessary and burdensome government regulations that hinder the ability of communities to grow and build. That being said, I believe we must be good stewards of our communities and protect them. It is the job of the federal government to work with local communities to do this, not to create bureaucratic red tape that burdens local governments and the American people. Forcing communities to adhere to unnecessary and costly regulations, as proposed in initiatives like the Green New Deal, would destroy the economy in Tennessee and our nation. Innovation should lead our efforts to protect the environment, not regulation - that's how the United States has become energy independent. Through technology and innovation, we can move forward to address climate and pollution issues without destroying the economy like the policies in the Green New Deal.
3. As the former Commissioner of Economic and Community Development for the state of Tennessee and a businessman myself, I have experience in helping businesses recover from a recession. In January 2011, when I stepped in as economic development chief for the state, our unemployment was higher than the national average and when I left four years later we were the number one state in the nation for jobs created through foreign investment, and we had been named the top state in the nation for economic development - two years in a row. We must get back on that track again. Now more than ever, we need leaders who understand the importance of reducing government overhead and regulatory red tape in a manner that supports small business growth. In the Senate, I will work to reduce unnecessary regulations to ensure our businesses in Tennessee can grow and thrive, which will boost local communities and increase their revenue.
4. Yes, I support term limits. Too often, career politicians like Nancy Pelosi and Joe Biden, when he was in the Senate, go to Washington and don't come back. They lose touch with the needs of the people they are meant to represent and term limits could help solve this bipartisan problem. I believe that limiting Senators to two terms would make it possible to climate career politicians while promoting innovation with our legislative branch. I am proud to have signed the U.S. Term Limits Amendment Pledge.
5. No, I do not believe that any legislator should be exempt from the laws that they craft. It is a tremendous responsibility and privilege to legislate in a manner that directly impacts the communities across our state and country. For this reason, legislators should be held to a high ethical standard and should operate and be subject to the laws they pass.
6. I am so grateful for the support of Tennesseans in Knox County. My team is proud of our solid primary victory in August and we are continuing with our business-like approach - blocking and tackling, allocating scarce resources and working harder than anyone as we look ahead to the November general election. We are not taking anything for granted, and I need your help. In the Senate, I will fight for the Christian conservative values that are so important to me and to all Tennesseans. I will work with Senator Marsha Blackburn and President Trump to get our economy going, protect

our Tennessee values, give our law enforcement the support they need and hold China accountable for the damage they've done to the world by unleashing the coronavirus onto the world.