

# In Their Own Words: Jennifer Douglas (D), Senate District 34

We talked to many of the local candidates running for public office in the upcoming 2020 election. We asked each of them the same set of questions, with the promise to print their answers only lightly edited for clarity. The following answers are from **Jennifer Douglas** (D), running against incumbent **Elaine Morgan** (R), for RI Senate District 34.

**Motif:** What are, in order, your top three priorities or issues if elected?

**Jennifer Douglas:** I will work on legislation to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour to fight poverty and stimulate the economy.

I will work on legislation to implement the environmental policies outlined by the Green New Deal (GND).

I will work hard to encourage and grow small businesses in the area that will complement the character of our rural community.

**Motif:** After the election, the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a case with ramifications that could eliminate the Affordable Care Act, potentially reducing the high insured rate in Rhode Island. In a country without ACA protections, what should healthcare for Rhode Islanders look like?

**JD:** Healthcare is a human right, not a way for insurance companies to get rich. Single-payer healthcare will improve health outcomes, save Rhode Islanders money and guarantee a woman's right to choose. I work in the medical field. I see so many patients who can't afford their medications, who don't get the testing they need because they can't afford the deductible, and forgo lifesaving treatment so they don't lose their homes and livelihoods due to overwhelming medical debt. We can do better. We need to do better.

**Motif:** Do you think police departments are overfunded, and if so, how would you reallocate those resources?

**JD:** I know in my own community our police operate on a lean budget, so they're definitely not overfunded. In others, they have the money for equipment that can militarize their departments and I also don't believe that is necessary. What I would like to see is our police receive the training and support they need to do the jobs they signed up for — actual police work. Our police aren't social workers or drug counselors or dog catchers, yet we expect them to attend to every need in our community. Let's remove that burden so they can do the important work they were hired to do.

**Motif:** Should school funds be pooled and redistributed on a weighted scale to address statewide equity issues, or should districts continue to fund their own community schools? Are there school districts that should be combined?

**JD:** Rhode Island's schools are failing and students cannot meet even basic benchmarks. And the problem is funding. The state provides inadequate resources for education, forcing school districts to rely heavily on local property taxes. This leads to inequality between different districts, where most cannot generate enough revenue to provide their students with a quality education. To fix this problem, we must amend the Rhode Island constitution to explicitly provide a right to a good education for all children, and our state must pick up the revenue shortfalls in communities that cannot generate enough money from local property taxes.

**Motif:** COVID most harshly impacted a lot of core industries in Rhode Island (eg, hospitality, restaurants, arts/entertainment). What can elected officials do to revitalize these industries and improve the lives of our poorest residents?

**JD:** COVID has highlighted the inequity our communities face. Job losses have left people without health insurance in the middle of a pandemic. Our small businesses are closing permanently. All of my platforms address this crisis we're facing now, and will strengthen our state going forward. Investing in small business, advocating for fair wages, providing universal health care, and finally, demanding that corporations and the extremely wealthy pay their fair share will lessen the burden on the hard working people of this state. It's time we invest in all people, not just profits for the well-connected few.

**Motif:** Climate change is a very real threat in Rhode Island — we are in close proximity to the ocean and broke temperature and drought records this year. If elected, what steps would you take to protect the environment?

**JD:** In this coastal state, we need to be focused on addressing climate change. Erosion, severe weather, downed trees, long power outages affect us all. I support a Green New Deal. We will invest in green energy and create jobs to build the infrastructure for it, putting people to work and ensuring our economy is sustainable. We will NOT, however, allow our forests to be cleared by corporations for solar

fields.