

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

QUESTIONS FROM GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE CLIMATE FORUMS - MARCH 8 and MARCH 9, 2022

Climate Policies

1. How important is it for you to make Maryland a leader in fighting climate change, and to be seen as a climate leader yourself?

Maryland, it must be said, is already a leader in reducing carbon emissions and addressing climate change within the U.S. And, yes, I would strive to keep it that way, promoting policies as described in the balance of my answers.

2. Would you hire a climate czar in your administration? If so, what would that person's responsibilities be?

Positions like a drug czar or a climate czar are a political stunt, because the persons in those roles do not actually control anything (whether by constitution or statute or budget). So, no, I would not hire a climate czar. Rather, I would assign responsibility for agriculture, energy, climate, and commerce to my Lt. Governor, Christiana Logansmith. These four issues are inextricably intertwined. Christiana as LG would coordinate and oversee the priorities, policies, and activities of the relevant departments (Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources, etc). She would bring the power and prestige of the LG's office. She would have direct, regular access to me. She would be empowered to actually make a difference.

3. What efforts will your administration support to decarbonize Maryland's government operations and/or the Maryland economy? Will you commit to investing in green or environmentally friendly schools, libraries and other public facilities to continue the reduction of Maryland's carbon footprint?

I would, yes, support efforts and investments to make Maryland's public offices and facilities more environmentally friendly. For example, by pursuing LEED compliance and showcasing in public buildings that which private developers might wish to emulate. Always, I'd emphasize, as budgets will allow. Always, too, without prescribing specific clean-energy sources for reducing carbon emissions.

4. What are your plans for increasing access to affordable renewable energy for Maryland residents?

My approach is to extend incentives such as tax rebates, which incentives are to be neutral as to the particular carbon-reducing energy sources that are eligible. Neither politicians nor government agencies should be picking winners and losers amongst either the available or the emerging sources of clean energy -- for the simple reason that politicians and government

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

agencies possess an abysmal record of making good picks, whether in regard to energy or any other growth industry. We need to let consumers (whether individuals or organizations) pick from the range of clean-energy options available to them. And we need to let investors/producers steadily expand the range of options that are available by picking for themselves amongst the vast range of short-term and long-term options that are emerging for clean energy as to where to put their growth capital. All of which decisions and choices by consumers and investors/producers I will be keen to encourage via market-neutral incentives, including special incentives on the consumer side for low-income and historically disadvantaged communities.

5. Does nuclear power need to be part of Maryland's clean energy portfolio? How do you propose to safely store nuclear waste from the Calvert Cliffs plant?

Yes, nuclear power needs to be part of Maryland's clean-energy portfolio. We need to sustain that which we already receive from Calvert Cliffs. And, while remaining true to the "level playing field" approach above, we need to promote the adoption of modern, modular nuclear power such as that being pioneered by Maryland's own X-energy in Rockville. Indeed, the more that an individual feels that we face an imminent climate catastrophe, the more imperative it becomes to support a broad portfolio of clean-energy sources. Quite simply, renewables such as solar and wind are not enough.

As for nuclear waste, the current approach of relying on the generators themselves to store the waste on their own accountability has been working. One of the reasons being that the amount of the waste from the U.S. nuclear industry is not great in a physical sense: If the total amount produced since the 1950s were to be placed on a single football field, the stack of canisters would be 30 to 50 feet high (the estimates vary). Thus, given the vital importance of nuclear power as a no-carbon energy source for at least some decades to come, I find the storage-related risks to be worthwhile.

6. How would you commit to working with environmental justice advocacy organizations in Maryland to help you identify and select the heads of agencies and commissions responsible for protecting our environment? Do you feel the state should diversify the leaders on environmental commissions and in agencies?

My administration will reflect the makeup and diversity of Maryland. My door will be open to justice-advocacy organizations. Civility and decency will be my hallmarks. Diminishment... rather than excitement... of suspicions and resentments is my resolve.

7. How will you prioritize and ensure funding allocated to address environmental injustice will be used in the communities impacted most by climate change – and who will oversee this effort?

No matter what the funding lawfully passed in Maryland might be, I will work to best of my ability to make sure it goes to its designated purposes, even when I might disagree with the

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

purposes that were funded (which, to be clear, is a general statement about my approach, not a specific statement on environmental spending). Moreover, having served in top-level operational roles in Maryland's Dept. of Health, and having thereby learned the nitty-gritty of State procurement and administration that not even a Comptroller or a Cabinet member could reasonably be expected to know, I will make sure that the allocated funding not only goes to its purposes but also is spent with as little inefficiency and waste as any state government can achieve, notably by making sure that IT (which has been my professional career at senior levels) is overhauled in the State to perform at a vastly higher level than has been the case under Gov. Hogan and his predecessors due to their failures to understand and empower their own Departments of IT. As for who will be responsible, it will be me as Governor for budget, procurements, and IT (amongst other responsibilities, of course). And it will be Christiana Logansmith as my Lt. Governor for agriculture, energy, climate, and commerce. The two top officials in the State government. What more could be asked?

Agriculture and Water Quality

8. Agricultural runoff is widely accepted to be the biggest contributor to Chesapeake Bay pollution. How do you plan to reduce farm runoff? Have you accepted or do you plan to accept any campaign contributions from the poultry industry?

Agricultural runoff does indeed appear to be the biggest contributor to Chesapeake Bay pollution. But most of it by far is emanating from farms along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania and New York. Pennsylvania, at least, was a signatory to The Blueprint for the Bay, and needs to be held to its commitments under that plan. For which, I would as Governor ally with the Governor of Virginia for a joint effort through our respective Attorneys General to obtain compliance and progress. I would likewise seek to enlist the federal EPA for whatever it might be able to do to help. As a parallel tactic, I would heartily promote the creation or restoration of riparian buffers to mitigate agricultural runoff along the creeks and streams where it originates. As for the poultry industry, I vigorously support its right to make its arguments and press its interests within our democratic process. I will not vilify them or anyone else for doing so. And it would be a severe case of false bravado for me to say, "I won't accept their donations," when the real-world fact is that as a third-party alternative to the Republicans and Democrats, I will not be offered any such donations. Our lobbying groups in Maryland and America are just as invested in the two-party system as our media outlets have come to be. Which has created a crisis for our democracy. Which is perhaps the main reason that I decided to stand as an alternative.

9. The state does not regulate or monitor emissions from poultry plants on the Shore, even though residents there have complained about ill effects from the ammonia and other greenhouse gasses. As governor, would you monitor this air quality?

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

I am not necessarily opposed to monitoring air quality. But I would not as governor support measures that are singling out the poultry industry or any other specific industry for new costs and new regulations.... triply so at this time, given the impact of pandemic shutdowns on the supply chain, payments for workers to defer their returns to work, and our accelerating inflation compliments of the Republicans and Democrats in Washington. Generally speaking, our elected officials in Maryland need to show vastly more respect for the businesses that generate paychecks across the state... and provide us the goods and services that we consume in our day-to-day lives. In sum, I would as Governor need to learn more about these particular complaints and the reasonable options that might be available for remedy before arriving at any policy.

10. Plastics are a major source of pollution for fish and crabs. Individual cities have instituted plastic bag bills, but most jurisdictions do not have them, and the state does not have one, either. As governor, what would you do to reduce plastic and microplastics in our waterways? What measures will you take to require manufacturers and merchants to cover the true cost of their production and use of plastics?

I have not yet seen evidence that plastics are anywhere near the source of pollution and harm to the Bay that agricultural runoff is. So, although it is always tempting for a candidate for office to pledge to "do something" on any issue raised, I will respond instead by re-iterating that by my read, the top priorities for the Bay are 1) to mitigate runoff (from urban streets and suburban parking lots as well as rural farms) and 2) to promote a broad portfolio of clean-energy sources in Maryland. Those would be my top priorities. And Christiana's. We would look to county and local governments to move on plastics as they might decide is their own priority for the constituents in their jurisdictions.

Transportation

11. Do you plan to revive the Red Line proposal in Baltimore? How would you make up for the economic development lost to Baltimore since Gov. Hogan killed the Red Line?

I am firmly in support of an initiative and investment to provide modern east-west transportation in Baltimore. But I am firmly against reviving the boondoggle Red Line proposal with its tunnel under the Inner Harbor, which was to deliver an old-school mode of transportation that is already low-ridership in Baltimore for north-south travel. Gov. Hogan was actually right to kill the Red Line in its proposed form. Where he was wrong was to fail to engage with the Baltimore community to develop an alternative. I myself would do so. My ideas include a modern "on demand" fleet of buses, vans, and cars coordinated by modern IT to provide transportation this is

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

both agile and affordable; also quite possibly, a surface-level and/or above-ground rail line. Just not the Red Line as it was wrongly conceived and rightly canceled with its old-school subway running under the Inner Harbor.

12. Do you support proceeding with Gov. Hogan's plans to widen the Capital Beltway and Interstate 270? Do you anticipate that the next governor will be able to kill or alter the project?

I am committed to solutions for mitigating congestion along I-495 and I-270. But not by pouring more concrete (a major source of carbon emissions, by the way) and not by aggravating traffic snarls via construction projects for years to come. Instead, we should look at innovative use of the concrete already poured. For example, "zip lanes" and/or "re-striping," both of which tactics recover new lanes from existing roadway... as Gov. Hogan deserves credit for having done on the Rt 50 bridge eastward across the Severn River. Other tactics surely exist, and we can look to innovative projects like I-4 in Orlando for ideas. Which is to say, yes, action to relieve congestion, but not by pouring more lanes of concrete, which experience across the country has shown for decades will trigger only more development and traffic and congestion in the corridor, so is not a sustainable solution.

13. During the pandemic, transit ridership has fallen across the country. Because Baltimore's workforce has a high percentage of essential workers, Baltimore's ridership fell about 55-60% compared to 94% in the California bay area. With two out of three jobs in our region requiring at least a 90-minute commute by public transportation, how would you determine the level of investments you would make in public transit services?

I would rely on methods and experts from the Federal Highway Administration and the Maryland Department of Transportation in order to come to a determination. I would emphasize that at least for knowledge workers... which is much of the workforce in the DC / Baltimore metro area... the pandemic has brought a change in modes of work that will permanently and perhaps dramatically change the need to commute, whether by personal vehicle or mass transit. So before coming to any major determinations, we do need to allow time for people and the economy to settle into our go-forward modes of work and travel. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

14. Shortly after coming to office, Gov. Hogan canceled the shovel-ready Red Line light rail project that would have brought 10,000 jobs in a five-year construction phase, dramatically reduced commute times, and \$3.0 - \$6.5 billion in transit-oriented-development. The Purple Line from Bethesda to New Carrollton was approved for construction and already has \$12.0 billion committed to

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

development along its corridor. How would you make up for the economic development lost to Baltimore?

Let me begin by reminding that just because a study says that benefits might accrue in prospect does not mean that the benefits will actually accrue in reality. Whether in private companies or public agencies, these kinds of studies always tell a very happy story so as to secure funding. So, we need to maintain our skepticism. That said, I've already stated my commitment to a modern east-west transportation solution for Baltimore. And for completing the Purple Line, I am likewise committed, saying only that under a Lashar Administration, I myself would have intervened in the project (due to it being a strategic project for Maryland) at the early warning signals of delivery being amiss, so as to understand and remediate. If elected Governor, I certainly will not retreat to The 2nd Floor of the State House as my ivory tower and safe space, as some other Governors have done.

Climate Mitigation Measures

15. We are losing many historic sites on the Eastern Shore, including Black churches, due to sea-level rise. The Maryland Historical Trust has very little funding to assist with rebuilding and relocating. How would you allocate resources to ensure we do not lose this history?

I want to start my response by saying that of all the questions in the survey, this one excited me the most. Nothing against the other questions! But they are all in the nature of necessary-but-normal policy questions. This one allows me to open up a bit by sharing that amongst those whose writings have most influenced me are Nelson Mandela, MLK Jr, and Frederick Douglass. And further, of all the places in the world in which I delight, our Eastern Shore is right there in my top most favorite. So, if elected Governor, I would be immensely gratified to use both the power and prestige of office to assist The Maryland Historical Trust in obtaining public grants AND raising private donations to re-habilitate and/or re-locate historic Black churches. If indeed elected, I look forward to being held account to this promise.

16. What efforts will your administration support to decarbonize Maryland's government operations and/or the Maryland economy? Will you commit to investing in green or environmentally friendly schools, libraries and other public facilities to continue the reduction of Maryland's carbon footprint?

Per my previous answers, I do so commit. I have striven to be direct and informative in my answers, so I do not know what more to add, except that later this spring, I will be releasing a more formal statement on my ideas for energy and climate, if indeed elected Governor. I appreciate the opportunity to have participated in both the sessions and this questionnaire for

Gubernatorial Forum Responses from: David Lashar

the Climate Forum. Special appreciation to Maryland Matters, the NAACP, and the League of Conservation Voters.