



**Chris Dempsey for State Auditor  
The Environmental League of MA Action Fund  
Questionnaire Responses**

Submitted: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**1. We must reach our 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction mandate. With only eight years to reduce our emissions by 50%, we must act boldly, quickly and equitably -- and in a way that sets us on a trajectory to get to net zero emissions by 2050. Please briefly explain your top 2-3 priorities and how you intend to advance them, if elected.**

**Priority 1**

We must not underestimate or understate the importance of addressing climate change in the coming years. I released a policy paper on climate change nearly a full year before the election because I believe the climate crisis must be a top priority for elected leaders in every position and all levels. I have outlined my proposals briefly in this questionnaire but more information about my plans and policies regarding the climate can be found at <https://dempseyforauditor.com/climate/>. Our policy plan also received coverage from Boston.com here: [link](#).

My first priority: making the Massachusetts State Auditor's Office the first in the country to incorporate carbon accounting into audits of relevant state agencies. The Commonwealth will not achieve its own mandates for emissions reductions unless state agencies and programs are monitored and our progress is tracked. Carbon accounting will cover an agency's direct operations as well as areas of industry that those agencies oversee. As part of this work, I will incorporate emissions and local air pollution metrics into audits of the Massachusetts Highway Division to bring accountability and transparency to Highway Division decisions that have historically moved us in the opposite direction from our climate and environmental justice goals. And as state programs for mitigation of carbon emissions and resiliency to climate change expand, the Auditor can and must provide strong oversight so that the dollars we are investing to combat and prepare for climate change are being spent well.

To win on climate, Massachusetts must drive emissions to net zero. But that alone isn't enough. We must also be a national leader by charting a path for other states. Our carbon accounting proposal will make the Massachusetts State Auditor's Office a national leader. We will be the first in the country to take this approach, but we will not be the last.

**Priority 2**

Creating an Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission: Past and current decisions by state government on where to locate industry, route highways, and allow various forms of pollution have led to disparate impacts for communities of color and vulnerable populations (low income, linguistically isolated, the very old and very young, etc.). Understanding the costs of these forms of environmental injustice and

redressing them requires working directly with those most impacted. Knowing their experiences is essential to building the right sets of goals and measurements in our climate and environmental programs. As Auditor, I will create an Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission, composed of representatives of communities that are hit hardest by climate change and by local environmental pollution. Members will include a range of Commonwealth residents: from people who live near peaker power plants in Pittsfield, to residents of neighborhoods in Chelsea that are prone to flooding. This Commission will inform the work of the Auditor's Office before, during, and after state audits that cover agencies that impact climate, emissions, and pollution.

### **Priority 3**

Protecting taxpayers and ratepayers by ensuring mitigation, resiliency, and transition dollars are just and well spent. For example: the Massachusetts Gas System Enhancement Program (GSEP) is a critical issue facing natural-gas ratepayers that is not receiving sufficient attention from state regulators. The program's original intent was to enhance public safety and reduce gas leaks by replacing leak-prone pipes. But GSEP is on course to become one of the largest, most expensive infrastructure projects ever undertaken in the Commonwealth, with total costs likely to top \$20 billion -- rivaling the Big Dig in scale. The mega-project scale of GSEP's emerging costs requires the Auditor to exercise oversight over how these costs can be both recoverable by gas companies and sustainable by ratepayers.

- 2. Offshore wind is the single biggest lever we have to transition away from fossil fuels, significantly reduce GHG emissions, save ratepayers billions of dollars in electricity costs, meet our energy needs, and create good paying jobs. Several New England states, led by Massachusetts, have successfully worked together to procure offshore wind resources.**

**Do you support taking actions that would enable Massachusetts to have at least 14 gigawatts of responsibly-developed offshore wind under contract by 2035?**

Yes. We need at least 14 gigawatts of offshore wind under contract by 2035 for Massachusetts to be on path to net zero by 2050. I will work to ensure contracts are structured to ensure competitive bidding, keeping consumer prices as low as possible while making sure that the projects are completed on time, so we can meet our 2050 climate goals. Concurrently, I will help Massachusetts ensure we don't lose sight of the need to provide economic justice and support for low-income consumers.

**3. Offshore wind is a \$100B industry getting underway in New England, with 30-50 gigawatts needed in the region to achieve net zero. This is a massive opportunity to build wealth in disadvantaged communities and drive equitable economic benefits. Do you support legislation to ensure economic inclusion in the offshore wind industry?**

Yes. Absolutely. The threat of climate change presents an opportunity to help right some historic wrongs and ensure that the new skills, technologies, and industries that will rise out of meeting this challenge will not, once again, leave behind communities of color. The legislature has provided clear standards for diversity and inclusion in our energy programs. As noted in my [Climate Policy Paper](#), I will use the power of my office to ensure programs like offshore wind meet the diversity standards and I will support efforts to further strengthen these standards as well.

**4. Buildings are the second largest source of emissions in Massachusetts. Do you support legislation that would raise significant revenue dedicated to retrofit existing buildings?**

Yes. With over [2 million buildings](#) in Massachusetts, it is imperative that the state dedicates substantial funding to retrofit existing buildings and put us on a path to full decarbonization by 2050. We cannot ensure a rapid transition of our oldest and least efficient buildings without the necessary policy interventions. I am fully supportive of raising revenue dedicated to retrofitting existing buildings.

Within the purview of the Auditor's office, by adding carbon accounting to state audits, I will have the opportunity to document and make recommendations for State-owned buildings and resources. With 5,142 buildings under state control, the efficiency of State-owned buildings is only a tiny slice of the pie, but it is imperative that state agencies are leading with the highest efficiency standards as we work towards the economy-wide net zero mandate.

**5. Would you support a ban on fossil fuel hook-ups in new buildings?**

Yes. Decisions we make about housing and buildings today will live with us for decades to come. I support using a range of tools to ensure that new buildings in Massachusetts are fossil-fuel free, including a ban in some cases. I have voted to support a fossil-fuel ban as a Brookline Town Meeting Member. However, I want to be sure that these tools are implemented in ways that support the Commonwealth's goals on housing production, particularly climate-friendly transit-oriented development. Thankfully green technologies like heat pumps are both climate-friendly and affordable, and energy-efficient buildings have lower ongoing operating costs. The Commonwealth must be a national leader in pushing all new buildings to adopt these technologies and techniques.

**6. Electrifying public transit and personal vehicles will reduce emissions, eliminate harmful tailpipe pollutants, and save consumers money on fuel and maintenance. Would you support policies that electrify publicly owned vehicle fleets and transit by 2035?**

Yes. To win on climate, we need to reduce vehicle-miles traveled and electrify all of the miles that remain. I have long been supportive of fully electrifying public transit with an expedited timeline. As part of my [Climate Policy Paper](#), I detailed an audit of the state fleets to ensure that we are moving towards electrification as quickly as possible. My first priority when it comes to the state fleet will be to look for excess and unnecessary vehicles that waste taxpayer dollars and add to our emissions. Second will be to ensure all state agencies are purchasing electric vehicles whenever possible and are effectively searching for alternatives to non-electric vehicles currently in the state fleet. I also support aggressive measures to electrify the commercial and passenger vehicles that make up the private fleet.

**7. Our statewide transportation system has unfunded needs well into the billions of dollars. Would you support raising new state revenues for transportation investments throughout the Commonwealth?**

Yes. I wholeheartedly believe that our transit system is vastly underfunded and that new revenues are needed throughout the state to address the shortcomings. As the Director of the Transportation for Massachusetts coalition, I worked directly on improving the Commonwealth's transit systems. Our state's transportation sector isn't just a source of frustration for commuters and businesses, it is also the largest polluter in the state and responsible for the largest share of greenhouse-gas emissions of any sector of our economy. We must invest heavily in public transportation, walking and biking infrastructure, and other methods that will help us reduce transportation emissions. We need to be creative in raising revenue for transportation investments to ensure we are reducing pollution and emissions while simultaneously investing in public transit that is greener and more equitable. Congestion pricing, carbon pricing, and other strategies that balance competing demands for fuel and road space can help us do that.

Under the purview of the Auditor, I plan to audit the more than \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars that are spent on state-owned roads and highways in Massachusetts each year so that commuters and businesses know that we are effectively and appropriately allocating resources.

**8. Because transportation emits more climate pollution than any other sector, would you support prioritizing existing and any new revenues (state or federal) to enhance and expand public transportation, walking, and biking investments that reduce greenhouse gas emissions?**

Yes. A recent Harvard Kennedy School paper found that our subsidies for driving total [billions of dollars per year](#). They far outweigh our subsidies for public transportation. As we raise additional state revenue, that funding should be focused on transit, walking and biking, not increasing our subsidies for single-occupancy driving.

**9. Would you support mandating that all new light duty vehicles registered in Massachusetts starting in 2035 be electric?**

Yes. Massachusetts should be a leader in moving to electric vehicles. California Governor Gavin Newsom recently announced that the state would require that all

new cars and passenger trucks sold in California be zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Massachusetts should join California and other states in embracing an EV future.

**10. Low-income communities and communities of color have borne disproportionate impacts from past transportation decisions, in terms of being underserved by the system, unable to afford options, and living in neighborhoods with poor air quality due to transportation pollution. Would you support dedicating a certain percentage of state and federal funds we anticipate receiving to ensure that environmental justice communities receive their fair share of service and projects?**

Yes. As Auditor, I will not control where the funds are directed, but I will use my platform to advocate forcefully and repeatedly about the need to ensure funds are reserved for environmental justice communities. As stated above, I will create an Auditor's Commission on Environmental Justice that brings together voices from frontline communities across the state. Further, the audits by my office will present ample opportunities to highlight how our state offices do, and do not, serve these communities and to estimate the impacts of our decisions on them. It is often said that if a problem cannot be measured, it cannot be managed. By making this kind of measurement a priority, my office will provide the tools to our state government to address these problems head on.

**11. Additionally, these same communities continue to bear the impacts from the disproportionate siting of polluting facilities in their neighborhoods, including power plants and fuel storage facilities. Would you support legislation that would reform the energy facilities siting board to add climate, public health and equity into the decision-making process, expand the board's membership to include a representative from an environmental justice community and**

**ensure EJ communities are able to meaningfully participate in the process?**

Yes. I absolutely support this reform. As I wrote about above, we cannot fully understand the impacts of pollution and climate change without hearing directly from those who are impacted. Adding representatives from an environmental justice community would help to ensure those voices are elevated. My Auditor's Commission on Environmental Justice will inform the work of the Auditor's Office before, during, and after state audits that cover agencies that impact climate, emissions, and pollution.

**12. Energy and environmental agencies do not have the staff and resources to effectively carry out their current mandates and the increasing responsibilities of addressing climate change, protecting natural resources and public health and addressing environmental justice. Would you include energy and environmental agencies in your shortlist of budget priorities?**

Yes. While the Auditor's Office does not create the state's budget, the office can be a bully pulpit for calling out misprioritization and misallocation of funding. My plan to audit agencies includes an audit of environmental agencies to ensure they are able to do their work effectively and are properly funded to do the work necessary for Massachusetts.

**13. The idea of a public bank and/or a 'green bank' has been raised as an opportunity to increase access to capital for entrepreneurs, companies and projects in the environment and clean technology sectors. Such an entity could also help to address long held disparities in access to capital. Would you support the creation of a Massachusetts public bank and/or a green bank?**

Need more information. I support more investment in the clean technology sector, and I believe that growth in our clean energy economy presents an opportunity to right historical wrongs and injustices. Economic opportunity must be open to everyone. I would need to better understand the structure of the proposal before committing to supporting it, but I certainly support the goals outlined in the question.

**14. Do you support policies that incentivize energy storage to significantly increase its role in our energy system?**

Yes. Our current federal tax code supports the production of clean energy, but does not provide significant support for energy storage. But energy storage is an essential part of a sustainable and reliable grid and complements clean-energy investments. I support policies that incentivize storage and the investment in storage technologies that can reduce costs and add scale. We need to go big on energy storage, and we need to embrace policies that will make and keep Massachusetts as a national leader.

**15. Do you support significantly expanding responsibly-sited solar on our grid?**

Yes. We need more solar in Massachusetts, especially large-scale solar that can power a significant number of homes and businesses. As Auditor, I will look into reducing barriers to solar development so that we can get good projects online sooner.

**16. Do you support committing Massachusetts to a path of 100% clean electricity by 2035?**

Yes. I support putting Massachusetts on a path to 100% clean electricity by 2035. We can move down this path by enhancing Renewable Portfolio & Clean Energy Standards, accelerating clean-energy investments and streamlining the permitting process, and investing significantly in energy efficiency programs.

**17. We are generating huge amounts of waste and the ways we dispose of it are degrading our environment. In addition, the rising costs of recycling are burdening municipalities. By shifting the responsibility of paying for packaging to its producers, we can incentivize waste reduction, minimize the amount being sent to landfills and incinerators, relieve pressure on tight public budgets, and improve air quality. Would you support policies that ask product**

**manufacturers to pay into a fund that supports programs to reduce solid waste?**

Yes. We need every player in the supply chain to have an incentive to reduce waste. I support policies that ask product manufacturers to pay to support reduction of solid waste. I also support the adoption of pay-as-you-throw programs for consumers. These programs take advantage of market factors and incentives so that we all benefit.