

Responses from Gubernatorial candidate Mike McWherter

1. What specific experience, expertise and education requirements would you use as criteria for selecting the new Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation?

- There are many character traits which are essential to be considered an excellent leader, but there are several core qualities that every Department Head should possess. As governor, I would select commissioners who are not only experienced, but also adequately knowledgeable in their fields.

2. Municipal and state-backed models exist for public-sector green jobs weatherization initiatives with innovative financing measures and cross-sector coordination (government, private investors, community, labor, businesses, etc.) How would you support a large-scale initiative in TN as a strategy to generate much-needed jobs, reduce peak demand for energy, provide a pipeline for our young people to stay in this state while protecting green spaces and agricultural lands in TN?

- Our state is poised to take the lead in alternative energy and become an example for the rest of the country to follow. Governor Bredesen's recruitment of Wacker and Hemlock, global leaders in sustainable business operations, is just the first step in transforming Tennessee into an environmental bellwether. Currently, there are several initiatives throughout the state designed to decrease our dependence on expensive foreign oil. One example is TVA's Generation Partners program, which provides a modest amount of upstart funding to qualifying solar, wind, biomass or hydroelectric projects of up to 200 kilowatts. Because the alternative energy movement is so young, most green companies are small businesses which would stand to benefit from my plan to provide tax breaks to small businesses and lend a hand to Tennessee's working families. I would also support initiatives encouraging long-term investment in "smart grid" infrastructure to conserve energy and reduce energy bills for businesses and consumers alike. Recently, Tennessee announced its participation in the national Electric Vehicle Project, which will provide a \$2,500 rebate on the first \$1,000 electric vehicles purchased in Tennessee. Governor Bredesen has steered our state in the right direction through turbulent times, and his efforts have given us a foundation upon which we can build a self-sufficient, sustainable Tennessee.

3. Almost half of Tennessee is in farmland, and agriculture provides over 200,000 jobs. Yet Tennessee loses over 42,000 acres of farmland each year to residential, commercial, and industrial development. What proactive measures would you take to improve the viability of Tennessee's farms?

- Tennessee's agricultural sector is vastly important to the overall productivity and economic health of our state. As governor, I would take a two-step method to make sure Tennessee farmers aren't forced to sell their land to residential, commercial, and industrial businesses. The first would be to build on Governor Bredesen's achievements by expanding, as revenues allow, the Agricultural Enhancement Program, which has been so successful in supporting farm development and Tennessee's agricultural community through the use of cost share funds for long-term investments in livestock and farming operations. The second would be to continue funding the Land Trust for TN, which searches for and uses public monies to purchase conservation easements from farmers so they aren't forced to sell farmland to businesses who will develop the property, degrade the quality of the soil, and permanently erase natural and historic treasures throughout the state.

4. What economic development incentives do you support to make Tennessee more competitive in the recruitment of renewable energy and energy efficiency manufacturing industries?

- Governor Bredesen positioned Tennessee to lead the nation and make tremendous leaps in renewable and green energy initiatives. The recruitment of Hemlock Semiconductor Group and Wacker AG, international leading producers of polysilicon, which is the material used to coat solar panels, represents the first step in attracting new green businesses to Tennessee. As Governor, I will make Tennessee a haven for green businesses looking to expand or relocate their operations, and leverage the proximity of world leaders in green energy like Hemlock and Wacker as a reason to pick this state.

5. The state is required to establish water quality rules and standards no less stringent than those established by the federal government. Recognizing Tennessee's diverse and unique environment, on what terms do you support water quality protections greater than the minimum established by the EPA?

- The EPA water quality rules and standards are based on exhaustive study and testing, so I favor aligning the lion's share of our state regulations with those established by an organization backed by decades of research. However, I also recognize that local concerns often differ from national priorities, and would be open to establishing stricter guidelines as situations arise in order to protect our state's fragile ecosystem.

6. As Governor, what steps would you take to support efforts to reduce the amount of water and coal TVA uses to make electricity by investing more in solar, wind, energy efficiency and other water saving energy technologies?

- I have met with energy experts across the state to discuss the effects of transitioning from fossil fuels towards renewable power sources. It is clear to me that not only are solar, wind, and energy efficiency initiatives environmentally friendly, they also make Tennessee more self-sufficient. If we can harness renewable energy and develop cost-effective green energy technology, we can save not only money, but also our state's ecosystems. When the Haywood County's West Tennessee Solar Farm begins construction next month, our state will have taken the first of many steps necessary to ensure we do not have to make the choice between our electronics and our environment.