



# SIERRA CLUB

## Sierra Club Texas Legislative Candidate Questionnaire – 2016

The Sierra Club Political Committee of Texas is a state political action committee dedicated to electing pro-environment candidates to the Texas Legislature and statewide offices. The goal of this candidate questionnaire is to gather information about your positions on issues of interest to the Sierra Club. **Please complete this survey and return it no later than August 22, 2016, to the Sierra Club Political Committee of Texas, P. O. Box 1931, Austin, TX 78767, or by email to [lonestar.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:lonestar.chapter@sierraclub.org) (please put “State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire” in the subject line of the email).** Thank you.

Name: **Matt Murphy**

Political Party: **Republican**

Candidate for (Texas Senate/House, statewide office): **Texas House**

District # (if applicable): **147**

### General Information

1. What has been your greatest environmental accomplishment or your most significant activity on behalf of the environment and/or managing natural resources as an elected official, private citizen, or business owner?

*I am not a superhero for environmental causes by any means. It is not that I don't want to protect the environment. I believe that everyone has a responsibility to do so individually. However most environmental protection groups are too extreme for me, too partisan, and their tactics infringe on our individual liberties. I am a member of the CCA, we have preserved a home in an effort to reduce on urban sprawl and make the home more energy efficient, and we own alternative energy vehicles; but my greatest environmental accomplishment is setting the example for our future generation (my son) by making “Reduce-Reuse-Recycle” a way of life instead of just a slogan.*

2. What environmental and natural resource goal(s) will you actively pursue in the next state legislative session if you are elected?

*One of my biggest environmental goals will be on preserving and promoting our Texas Coastal areas and open lands. I am a hunter and angler, and I see directly that we have harmed and constrained our environment so much that it has affected the wildlife population. That may never change, but we need to find alternative ways to promote more wildlife generation. An example would be the recycling of offshore rigs to become artificial reefs. All in all, education is the greatest way to prevent the abuse of our environment and resources, so I will do my best to make sure that our citizens are educated on environmental threats and ways of prevention.*

### Specific Legislative Issues



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## Energy

3. Most of Texas cannot import or export electricity to and from other states. In other words, unlike California, we have to generate and consume all of our electricity within the state. What should the Legislature do, if anything, to ensure we have enough power to meet demand?

*I don't think I would ever use California as an example of what to do with electricity. Several times California have historically had huge parts of their state without power. Texas has an overabundance of natural resources and methods to generate electricity. I don't think we ever have to fear that we will not have "enough power", but if we are limiting companies from exporting electricity to other states, then we are limiting our free market system and tax generation for the state on those exports. This demands more research, but I would be open to finding a better solution.*

4. Texas leads the country in installed wind power. As a state official, what would you do to improve market conditions for other renewable resources, such as solar and geothermal energy?

*While wind power and other renewable resources are great alternatives to fossil fuels, they also have an impact on our environment when it comes to changing paths of migratory birds and increased heat due to electrical generation. Ultimately instead of trying to find other ways to meet our energy needs, I think we should educate our society on how to reduce, reuse and recycle in efforts to prevent our energy needs and consumption. In plain words: If I want to get to the Flower Gardens in my boat, but I don't have the range. I would try to find a way to make my boat more fuel efficient instead of installing a bigger gas tank.*

5. Do you support homes and businesses generating their own power from renewable resources such as solar? If so, how would you reconcile the revenue loss by utilities that depend on selling kilowatt-hours? Would you support legislation to ensure that homes and businesses earn a fair market value for any excess solar generation?

*This is a very tough question that demands a lot of research. Ultimately it comes down to finding a solution that does not limit our liberties as an individual and the free market place. However, companies have to spend a lot of money to make sure their facilities are not only safe for the environment, but for their employees and their neighbors. If a private home decide to sell their excess solar energy, then they will need to be held up to the same regulations as a company would. Ultimately, I think the free market should help regulate this issue, and the government should not become a hurdle to solving the problem.*



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6. One of the issues with electricity is that once it is generated, it must be used. This can be a challenge for wind and solar power. What, if anything, would you do to help electric storage technologies expand in Texas?

*As previously discussed before, I would rather find a way to generate and distribute wind and solar power more efficiently so that it can produced as fast as fossil fuel energy instead of finding ways to store more of it. I also think we need to focus on how to reduce, reuse, and recycle in effort to prevent our excessive use of electricity. We can build better buildings and homes that don't use as much electricity, better televisions, appliances, etc.*

## **Water**

7. Groundwater (water in below-ground aquifers) continues to be a major source of water in Texas. Do you favor local management of groundwater resources through groundwater conservation districts or a larger state role in managing groundwater? Whichever approach you favor, what - if any - changes would you suggest in the current system of groundwater management?

*If you are implying "local management" is more regulation, then I am totally against it. However, I am always for stronger local control on all issues instead of finding a way to centralize the control on a state level. I know that a group of representatives in Austin will never fully understand the problems and issues of my neighborhood unless they live in my neighborhood.*

*As for changes: I don't know. This would demand a lot more research before coming up with an educated suggestion, but ultimately the change suggestions would have to be generated and approved from the citizens that I represent in district 147.*

8. Some legislators have proposed a state water "grid" for Texas – a network of pipelines, pumping stations, reservoirs, and other infrastructure for moving water between river basins, water sources, and areas of water use in the state. Others have expressed concern about the impacts of such a water grid on rural areas, landowner rights, and the environment. What is your perspective on the creation of a state water grid?

*This would demand more research before I can provide a prospective, but since I grew up in a rural city that suffered a water shortage for our citizens because the "big city" took it all, I would be sensitive to finding the right and ethical solution that benefits all of the citizens of Texas and does not infringe on property rights.*

9. Using the water that we already have as efficiently as possible is one strategy for meeting at least some of our future water needs. Would you support state funding for a statewide water education campaign to inform people of their sources of water and how to conserve those sources?

*Yes, as long as the education is free of partisan politics.*



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## *Environment*

10. Do you accept the broad consensus of the scientific community that climate change is occurring and human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, is causing it? What, if anything, would you do as an elected official to address climate change at the state level?

*This is a loaded question. I think that science tells us that global warming is cyclical and this cycle has been accelerated. I don't think we truly understand why this cycle has become accelerated, and we should find ways to help reduce the speed of the cycle if we can do it.*

11. What is your position on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from stationary sources, such as coal-fired power plants, to protect human health, including the Clean Power Plan? Please explain why you take this position.

*The EPA is too much centralized government for me. I would like for the EPA to focus their efforts on educating our society in a bi-partisan way on the impact of carbon dioxide pollution that would allow local communities to find ways to reduce pollution on a local level.*

12. Texas faces unique challenges because of ozone pollution, with Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and El Paso routinely violating the health-based standard. Fortunately, Texas has a program to reduce emissions mainly from transportation sources called the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERP), which has more than \$1 billion generated and available to finance grants to local businesses and governments to clean up the air. Would you support a four-year plan to actually spend the money that has been generated for its intended purpose? What other strategies would you suggest to reduce air emissions and meet the new EPA standard?

*If money has been generated for this use, then it should be used for its intended use. I am not aware of the timetable that was used to get the TERP approved in the first place, therefore I cannot answer either way if I would support or oppose a 4-year plan.*

13. Given the dramatic rise in activity and growing public concerns about its environmental impacts, what is your position on "fracking"?

*It was the subject of an entertaining movie, but as a filmmaker, I know how easy it is to warp facts through documentary filmmaking. There are a lot of solutions that can come from listening to both sides of the issue and educating society on those bi-partisan findings instead of keeping our citizens in the dark.*



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14. Would you support needed reforms at the Texas Railroad Commission, including raising the maximum fines that can be assessed to oil and gas companies that violate the law from \$10,000 to \$25,000 per day?

*I don't think that larger "blanket" fines are the answer to this solution because not all oil and gas companies are equal in size and profit. Small businesses already have enough hurdles that limit their opportunity of success. Instead, I think we need to focus on finding better ways to educate our citizens the of law and find ways to implement their assistance in finding a solution on a local level.*

15. Would you support additional funding for our state parks and wilderness areas, including a dedicated fund for the acquisition and development of additional parkland and wilderness areas?

*Acquisition to me means taking away a citizens land. As much as I would like to generate more areas of parkland and wilderness, I think there is a better way of doing so such as public/private partnerships that support landowners if they choose to allow their land to regenerate into their original wilderness state and/or open their land up to the public.*

### **Transportation**

16. There is much debate and discussion about how to meet the current and future transportation needs of Texans. What do you see as the best ways to address the transportation needs of the state, especially given constraints on funding?

*I think we should look into other ways of transportation that benefit the majority of our citizens. I think we should invest in public/private partnerships to help with constraints of funding.*