



**Editorial for Opinion Page**  
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**For Immediate Release**  
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## **What We Would Have Asked**

By Zaxaro Bennett

For 90 years, the League of Women Voters at the local, state and national levels has hosted candidates' forums, giving voters the chance to see, hear and question those running for offices from selectman to President.

Candidates for office at all levels need to answer serious questions that are both relevant to the office they seek and address the concerns of voters.

Too often, the questions asked during televised candidate forums are contrived and irrelevant attempts to catch candidates off-guard and generate sound bites for upcoming news broadcasts. That was particularly true during last year's extended Presidential campaign. It's the "Boxers or briefs?" syndrome.

The Massachusetts League of Women Voters had planned a Jan. 13 U.S. Senate candidates' forum, but had to cancel when Attorney General Martha Coakley did not confirm her participation in time, though State Senator Scott Brown and independent candidate Joseph Kennedy did commit to the event.

The Massachusetts League sought questions for that forum from real voters around the state. We think these questions deserve thoughtful answers from the candidates.

Here are the questions we would have asked at our January forum. The League challenges the three candidates to post their answers on their websites, and to send the answers to the League for posting on our website as well.

### **Federal Role in the Economy**

Should the Senate require increased regulation of the financial industry? If so, what specific regulations are needed?

Given the current unemployment situation, what role do you think the federal government should play?

What conditions would you place on financial, auto and other companies that receive federal funds to ensure that taxpayers benefit?

### **Environment**

What steps should the U.S. take to protect the global environment and deal with climate change?

What role should the federal government play in developing and manufacturing clean energy technologies?

What role should the U.S. play to assist the growth of economies in developing nations in ways that minimize pollution and contamination problems?

### **War and Peace**

What questions should be asked in determining the U.S. policy and military positions in the Middle East and Central Asia?

What level and type of intervention is appropriate in Afghanistan?

What steps should the U.S. take to address the threat of nuclear weapons worldwide?

How can the U.S. best advance the cause of human rights, particularly for women and children?

### **Federal Role in Health Care**

Congress is working on a much-revised health care bill. Which provisions of that bill do you support, which do you reject, and what is the one change you'd most like to see?

Once Congress finishes with the current health care bill, what are the next steps you think the federal government should take on health care reform?

### **Education**

The Race to the Top in education has prompted a lot of buzz about increasing the number of charter schools in Massachusetts and how to get the federal funds available in this program. Is this the best solution for Massachusetts, and is the Race to the Top initiative the solution for improving lagging schools across the country?

What, if any, changes should be made in the No Child Left Behind program?

### **On Being a Senator**

Which Senate Committee would you most like to serve on, and why? And for Mr. Kennedy, which major political party would you caucus with?

We expect political leaders to be guided by their principles yet to know when compromise is needed to achieve meaningful results. What factors would you take into consideration when faced with a difficult compromise situation?

How will you make "Senator Kennedy's seat" your seat to represent the interests of the people of Massachusetts while serving the greater good of the nation?

*Zaxaro Bennett is president of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts*