

On June 23, you will choose one of four\* candidates to be the Democratic nominee for Virginia's Fifth Congressional District. To help you make your decision, we asked each a series of questions about the issues. Which of these candidates best reflects your values? Which will you be excited to volunteer for so that—working together—we **FLIP THE FIFTH** in November?

# INDIVISIBLE CHARLOTTESVILLE VOTER'S GUIDE PRIMARY '20

We recommend that everyone vote absentee by mail this election. For information on voting in the June 2020 primary, including how to get your mail-in ballot, visit [indivisiblecharlottesville.org/vote](https://indivisiblecharlottesville.org/vote).

*\*Candidate Claire Russo was invited to complete this survey but chose not to do so. Candidates are presented in the order they will appear on the ballot.*



**R. D. Huffstetler Jr**

I want to ensure that everyone in the 5th district has access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, world-class digital infrastructure, and the education they need to compete in the changing economy.



**B. Cameron Webb**

Ensuring access to affordable care for everyone. Rising to the challenge of our climate crisis. Ensuring economic mobility for all Americans.



**John D. Lesinski**

1) A public option in healthcare, with the goal of moving toward universal coverage. 2) Environmental protections -- no to pipelines, no to fracking, yes to regulations to improve water/air, yes to expanding green power infrastructure; 3) universal broadband coverage

List your top 3 legislative priorities: What do you most want to accomplish in Congress?

**In broad terms, how do you see us providing healthcare for people without health insurance? And for those who are currently under- and precariously-insured?**

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I believe it is imperative for every American to have access to quality, affordable healthcare, which is why I believe in introducing a public option onto the exchanges immediately. I also support early Medicare buy-in, negotiation of prescription drug prices, and caps on costs. Healthcare is a human right, and we need to fight to make sure everyone has quality, affordable health care.

**B. Cameron Webb** Based on years of practicing medicine, caring for patients, and seeing the impact of a lack of access on health outcomes, I am a firm believer in the idea of universal health coverage. By that, I mean that all people should be able to use the healthcare services they need—of sufficient quality to be effective—without being exposed to risk of financial harm. I believe that we need to accomplish that swiftly in order to provide real relief to Americans—now more than ever. In order to cover the uninsured, I am in favor of the establishment of a public health insurance option—offering comprehensive healthcare benefits and available to anyone who wishes to choose it—as a critical first step toward a national health insurance plan. The cost to individuals of this health insurance plan would be directly correlated to income, and should not exceed 8.5 percent of income for any Americans, regardless of their income. Also, with record job loss in the setting of COVID-19, I think now is the time to legislatively decouple employment and health insurance. In my opinion, this was the “original sin” in the design of the American healthcare system, and is detrimental of the bottom lines for businesses, for the freedom of movement for American employees, and for ensuring some modicum of choice in healthcare for individuals. Finally, I think that the essential health benefits that were a hallmark of the ACA must be reinstated and required so that all private insurance offers a predictable, reliable, and sufficiently comprehensive range of coverage. As this question is specifically about coverage, I'll add that I believe private health insurance should be a not-for-profit endeavor, and we must address our crisis of healthcare pricing if we truly want to make healthcare accessible for folks. That's the cost of insurance, but also the cost of prescription drugs, long-term care, "out-of-network" care and hospitalization in general. We can leverage the market share of a strong public option to realign incentives from fee-for-service to a true value-based care model. These are critical next steps in creating a healthcare system that truly works for all.

**John D. Lesinski** We need a public option immediately, with universal coverage being the long-term goal. Employer-provided insurance simply does not work, and this pandemic has shown this.

## What do you think are the most important issues that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and how should we address them?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** The COVID-19 pandemic has not introduced new problems into our society as much as it has acted as a stress test on our existing structures, many of which are cracking as a result. We must, therefore, not only provide emergency relief to those whom our systems are currently failing, but also work to strengthen our institutions going forward so that we may better weather the next crisis that comes our way.

For example, failings in our criminal justice system leading to overcrowding in our prisons have made it so that prisons are woefully unprepared to contain COVID-19 outbreaks. It is not only morally wrong to have people incarcerated due to an inability to pay bail, it is now a clear health hazard.

Reports of domestic violence have also risen sharply across the country since stay-at-home orders have been implemented. As it stands, it is too easy for abusers to get their hands on firearms despite existing prohibitions, and as numerous studies have shown, women are far more likely to be killed by an abusive partner if the partner has access to a firearm. We have consistently prioritized closing these loopholes, but this pandemic has shown a light on how dire the situation could get if we do not act.

School closures have also greatly exacerbated the digital divide already so prevalent in our district. Having our teachers resort to online instruction is only a solution to the problem if all of our students have reliable access to the internet at home. Otherwise, it only works to widen existing achievement gaps, including the so-called homework gap, between our students with and without internet access. Students who used the WiFi from McDonald's to do their homework are now left unable to do even that, and are falling further and further behind. This pandemic has shown exactly how crucial broadband access is for our current world, and we must fight hard to make sure that everybody, regardless of zip code, has access to reliable digital infrastructure.

**B. Cameron Webb** This pandemic has really exposed the weaknesses in our public health preparedness, in our healthcare infrastructure, and also the vulnerabilities that accompany social inequity across a

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number of fronts. I'll discuss each in turn:

Regarding public health preparedness, this pandemic showed that our ongoing disinvestment in public health infrastructure goes beyond being an oversight—it has imperiled millions of Americans. Our support for the World Health Organization is inadequate, particularly given the knowledge that viruses neither acknowledge nor respect borders. Our funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is inadequate, knowing that this agency is our mechanism to address infectious outbreaks. We need a swifter and more effective ability to initiate countermeasures—both pharmaceutical (like vaccines and treatments) and non-pharmaceutical (like testing, personal protective equipment and medical devices). We need thoughtful, consistent, and factually accurate communications to the public and key stakeholders.

Regarding healthcare, our system was not designed to adapt to the challenge of a pandemic of these proportions. We saw the lack of access for too many people to testing or treatment. We saw the sudden and unforeseen loss of revenue to hospitals by deferring elective procedures and having significantly lower patient volumes. We saw how a system designed for turning profits is stressed when its mission is suddenly the only practical consideration. I think that we address these challenges through the expansion of access that I've described above, but also through the realignment of incentives for healthcare providers as well. We have to make our health care systems whole after standing in on the frontlines of this pandemic, but also make sure that we take this moment to move our model of American healthcare forward into a more equitable and resilient future.

Finally, this pandemic has laid bare several challenges our society has faced for generations. In education, we see more than ever the inequity that comes with a lack of broadband access. In housing, we see how redlining and exclusionary zoning disproportionately leave minorities in communities where social distancing is harder and viral transmission can spread more effectively. Our epidemic of mass incarceration places a disproportionate burden of the risk incurred by those who are incarcerated on communities of color. With high levels of food insecurity we see how families already struggling to get back can be stressed to a breaking point when need in the community suddenly increases. We see how “essential workers” are disproportionately minority and at greater risk, but also how the ability to telecommute and maintain a salary is a privilege

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enjoyed by too few. There is no easy fix for these challenges, but our commitment—our social contract to one another—necessitates that we do the hard things at such a time as this. Thoughtful policies to address equity in education, housing, food access, criminal justice, healthcare and our economy are the key to moving forward.

**John D. Lesinski**

- 1) The lack of a prepared presidential administration, due to an incompetent administration that removed our ability to plan for this pandemic. This can be addressed with new leadership that rebuilds federal agencies and approaches problems in an analytical and logical manner.
- 2) Employer-provided healthcare that disappears when folks are laid off. We need a public option, so that healthcare is not tied to employment. Virginians shouldn't have to worry about whether they can afford to get treatment.
- 3) A healthcare infrastructure not up to the task of caring for thousands of sick Americans. We need massive investment in our hospitals.
- 4) The President's petty and unjust handling of the crisis, which has privileged some states over others based on feuds. This can be resolved by, well, voting the President out.

### Do you support a \$15 minimum wage?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I support an immediate increase of the federal minimum wage and indexing minimum wage going forward to inflation.

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support some form of Universal Basic Income?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** This pandemic has illustrated the need to explore this option, however, we should not rush to replace existing safety net programs with a universal basic income.

**B. Cameron Webb** No. I am always open to considering ideas that help to address income inequality and ensure that all Americans have the resources to meet at least their basic needs. I am more in favor of increasing minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit, and increasing the availability of federal jobs to meet these needs.

**John D. Lesinski** This is a matter that deserves more study, but in theory yes

### Do you support the right of farm/agricultural workers to unionize & collectively bargain?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support raising teacher pay?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

## Do you support tuition-free public college?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I believe that we should pursue programs, such as the HOPE scholarship and the GI Bill that I benefited from, to make college accessible to all Americans.

**B. Cameron Webb** No. I am supportive of the idea of tuition-free community college, and feel that we need to work to make all of higher education affordable in order to provide opportunities for success to students regardless of their family's financial means or background. I support strengthening public service loan forgiveness for professionals committed to serving to their communities and the availability of other loan repayment programs—particularly to level the playing field for those for whom prior education debt is preventing fair opportunities for present success.

**John D. Lesinski** Not at the moment, but ultimately.

## Are you in favor of cancelling all student loan debt or of all qualifying student debt (for example, up to \$50K debt elimination for those making less than \$100K annually)?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I was able to attend graduate school due to the GI Bill, and I believe similar opportunities should be opened up to students across the country for service to their country in any form. I believe that if students are willing to participate in service programs, such as Teach for America or Americorps, or work in the public sector for a specific number of years after they graduate, they should be eligible for debt forgiveness.

**B. Cameron Webb** No. Again, I am committed to bringing down the cost of higher education and making it more accessible and affordable—particularly for those of the most modest financial means. Similarly, I do think that we can strengthen loan forgiveness and loan repayment options to ensure equitable future opportunities specifically for those who have been previously saddled with educational debt disproportionate to their means at the time the debt was incurred.

**John D. Lesinski** This deserves more study, but I am in favor of making student debt more manageable.

**Do you support automatic voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting?**

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

**Do you support automatic re-enfranchisement for former felons who have completed their sentences?**

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

**Do you support eliminating the electoral college?**

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I believe that if we were to reform our presidential election process, we must do so in a way that ensures that rural, less-densely populated areas do not get overlooked.

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes. I support a national popular vote with a popular majority deciding the presidency. I believe that ranked-choice voting would be a fair and simple mechanism to ensure that this is achieved in every presidential election.

**John D. Lesinski** No



### Do you support abolishing ICE?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Stories that have come to light in the past few years have strongly illustrated the need to enforce stricter oversight and accountability measures over ICE, to ensure that they are meeting their mandate of immigration enforcement humanely, and we should pursue comprehensive immigration reform.

**B. Cameron Webb** No

**John D. Lesinski** No, but I support extreme reforms of the organization.

### Do you support permanent legal protections and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth brought to the US as children that only know this country as their home?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** We must keep our promises to the DREAMers.

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you OPPOSE the Atlantic Coast Pipeline?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support the Green New Deal?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I support the enactment of aggressive policies aimed at stemming and reversing the tide of climate change, as well as massive investment in green energy technologies.

**B. Cameron Webb** No. I support a robust effort to address our climate crisis. I believe that the United States must be a leader in ensuring that we cut carbon emissions by 45 percent (relative to 2010) by no later than 2030. I believe that we must lead efforts to fully decarbonize by mid-century. I believe that every effort must be made to speed our transition to a clean economy in order to accomplish these goals. I believe that our investments in energy infrastructure both presently and moving forward should solely be in clean and renewable energy sources.

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support doing away with open carry?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** It is clear that the gun violence epidemic in our country requires swift and robust action, which is why enacting common-sense gun legislation and ensuring stricter enforcement of existing gun legislation is one of my top priorities if elected to Congress.

**B. Cameron Webb** No

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support a Federal ban on the purchase of assault weapons?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes. I support banning new sales of assault weapons. At this time, I do not support efforts to confiscate any such weapons or accessories from law-abiding gun owners. I believe that—coupled with other thoughtful, evidence-based policies to reduce gun violence (like “red flag” laws, and banning the purchase of high capacity magazines)—this will be an important part of our strategy for preventing future mass shootings and saving American lives.

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support a ban on the purchase of high capacity magazines?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

### Do you support “Red Flag” laws?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** Yes

**B. Cameron Webb** Yes

**John D. Lesinski** Yes

**Do you believe it is Congress's role to authorize the use of military force?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr Yes

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

**Do you support adding the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr Yes

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

**Do you support a woman's right to choose?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr Yes

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

**Would you support prohibiting the use of federal funds for the creation, maintenance, & display of Confederate symbols on federal property (except those providing context in an educational setting)?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr Yes

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

**Would you support directing the Secretary of Defense to rename military installations that are named for Confederate military leaders?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr Yes

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

**Have you or has your campaign accepted any money from a corporation, a corporate PAC, or a corporate-backed special interest group?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr No

B. Cameron Webb No

John D. Lesinski No

**Will you pledge not to accept any money from a corporation, a corporate PAC, or a corporate-backed special interest group in the future?**

R. D. Huffstetler Jr We already have; it was one of the first actions I took when I launched my campaign.

B. Cameron Webb Yes

John D. Lesinski Yes

## Briefly, what is your strategy for flipping the Fifth District in November?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** To flip this district in November, we must not only work to turn out Democratic voters, but we must work to win over independents, who make up over 40% of the district's electorate. In 2018, Tim Kaine won 49% of the vote, which shows that with the right candidate, a candidate that appeals to across the political spectrum by understanding the electorate's background and exemplifying their values, we can take the 5th. Donald Trump is going to carry VA-05 in November, and so to close that gap and carry the district, we must ensure that there are split-ticket voters, and putting forward a candidate who identifies with rural voters is the way to achieve that. Our campaign also plans to register as many voters in the district as possible so as to build the Democratic base within our district.

**B. Cameron Webb** ON THE ISSUES: Healthcare has consistently polled as the top issue to voters in VA-05. While other issues are of great importance to so many who live here, no issue resonates for voters—particularly Democrats and undifferentiated voters—like healthcare. As a practicing clinician, as the Director of Health Policy and Equity at the UVA School of Medicine, as a member of the Virginia Medicaid Board and as a former health policy advisor in the Obama White House, I bring a depth of expertise that makes me ready to serve and lead on healthcare on behalf of the District from Day 1. Rep. Riggleson won in 2018 in part by claiming that he would not only support the Affordable Care Act, but build upon it. Instead, he voted against protecting patients with pre-existing conditions and against reducing the cost of prescription drugs. More recently, he voted effectively in support of block granting the Medicaid program. As a physician, I know that his record leaves him very vulnerable on healthcare when it comes to serving the needs of the residents of the Fifth. As a lawyer, I look forward to prosecuting that record.

BY THE DEMOGRAPHICS: This district is incredibly large, yes. It is also incredibly diverse. Traditionally, the Democratic Party does well in districts that are as diverse as ours. And while Virginia has become increasingly blue—as evidenced by the recent changes in our General Assembly—there are more reasons why I believe I can win in November. A large part of the traditionally Democratic base tends to be the African American, and VA-05 has nine counties south of the James River with more than 35 percent African American population. Leslie Cockburn lost by 20,299 votes in 2018, which is a margin of just over 6 percent. However, there are currently 38,000 Black residents of the Fifth who are

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unregistered to vote. There are currently over 33,000 additional Black voters who are registered, but did not cast a ballot in 2018. With the General Assembly's recent laws geared toward voter protection, a Presidential election year that increases turnout, and a candidate—in me—with a proven track record of serving the black community, I think we have a unique opportunity to expand the electorate and flip this seat!

BY CONSENSUS: When my White House Fellowship extended into the Trump Administration, I knew that it would be challenging. I also knew that—as a physician who has served and served with people across all backgrounds—I was well-equipped to work with folks who see the world differently than I do. My focus is on being effective and delivering real results. That message will resonate with the large percentage of independent voters here in VA-05. The fact we're from here—that I grew up in Central Virginia (Spotsylvania County) and my wife, Leigh-Ann, grew up in Southside (in Appomattox) also helps. I'm able to connect across this district because I have known it my entire life and I have experience serving everyone here, no matter their ideology.

**John D. Lesinski**

It's clear that we have to expand our traditional base in order to win in the 5th. Therefore, my strategy rests on three pillars: 1) taking advantage of the presidential election to engage voters who typically do not vote down-ballot; 2) expanding the electorate to include Dem-leaning folks who tend not to vote at all because of cultural reasons but are reachable on issues; and 3) appealing to moderate Republicans who have had enough of the corruption and just want a steady, firm hand guiding our affairs. As an elected official, Marine colonel, and small business owner, I am uniquely suited to reaching all three.



## Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

**R. D. Huffstetler Jr** I am a candidate that is from the working class, for the working class. I want everybody in this district to experience the American Dream in the way that I was lucky enough to, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, or zip code, and I will fight to make that a reality.

For more information, visit R.D.'s site: <http://rdforva.com/>

**B. Cameron Webb** Keep resisting and thanks for organizing!

For more information, visit Cameron's site: <http://drcameronwebb.com/>

**John D. Lesinski** I am the only candidate in this primary with elected experience. You know you can count on me to make the tough calls and stand up for our values, because I've already done so in office on the Board of Supervisors and Board of Education. I've lived in this Commonwealth for 35 years, know what our problems are, and am committed to fixing them for the benefit of all Virginians.

For more information, visit John's site: <http://johnforva.com/>

*For more information about Claire Russo's campaign: <http://clairerussoforcongress.com>*