

Come Back Home Program

Thank you for coming. My name is Jeffrey Kerekes and I'm running for Mayor of New Haven in the Democratic Primary and also running all the way to November as an Independent Democrat.

Why? Because puny, incremental change by Mayor DeStefano across the last 18 years has not worked and is not working today. We don't need little ideas for big problems. We need big solutions for big challenges or we sentence ourselves to the treadmill of repeat history: High crime, poor educational results, high taxes, chronic shortage of money and growing dependence on the state and one time asset sales to bail us out every single year.

It's long past time to quit blaming *everybody else* for problems the DeStefano Administration has not solved and in fact, has been an active part of creating a lot of them. It is time to start talking about **TRANSFORMING CITY HALL**, making it work for the people of New Haven with concrete, rational, problem solving ideas and proposals. Don't confuse the current political rhetoric of "Reform" with "Transform." If elected mayor, my goal will be to fundamentally transform what we do.

Therefore, one of the first things I'll do is pass and implement **Come Back Home**. We want, indeed we need our city employees to come home and help us rebuild and advance our city.

In October, we had 4531 employees and 2869 didn't live here. Nearly 80 percent of New Haven police and teachers live outside the city and nearly 70 percent of firefighters and school administrators also don't live here. This cannot be allowed to continue as it has for the past 18 years. How are we to believe in our ability to improve, grow jobs and businesses if our own employees won't live here? What does that say about our city? Our taxes? Our schools? Our safety?

I don't like mandatory residency requirements because while a requirement may provide a barrier to leaving, its does little to address the underlying problems that cause our people to leave. After 18 years under DeStefano, the City suffers from struggling and failing schools, limited services, high crime rates, higher poverty rates, and a higher unemployment then surrounding communities. It's really hard to blame our employees for choosing to live outside of New Haven 70-80% of the time.

The median home value, according to CERC, is \$225,000, which means that under Mayor DeStefano, the median tax bill is \$6,525. This has doubled in the last 8 years.

Economics assumes that people will make rational decisions about where they live. They will do their own calculation to choose the best location for them and their families. People will stay in New Haven if New Haven is the best choice, specifically if we have **1) Good Government including lower taxes, 2) Education That Works, 3) Safe New Haven and 4) a Charter that Works for everyone.**

The problem is: what comes first?

The term 'affordable housing' has traditionally been associated with low-income housing, **but it's a middle-class problem**. With DeStefano's taxes, people can't afford to buy here and they can't afford to stay.

If elected, it will be the policy of the City to encourage employees to live and spend within the communities in which they work - with hiring preferences for City Residents (all other qualifications being equal). It will also be the policy of the City to enhance security and school performance so that employees will freely and enthusiastically choose to live here.

To do that, we need our employees to **COME BACK HOME and help us transform this city whether they are on the clock or not!**

Do you want *real* community policing? Get the cops **to be** the community, to know you as neighbors and not as an "other." Want *real* education reform? Get the teachers to send their own children to our schools and have them teach their neighbor's kids. City employees are vested in the pension and health care plans, lets get them vested in living in New Haven. Our resident employees have a special connection to the City. It's like this: we can love children in general, but people love their own children more.

My campaign is about things we can believe in, be proud of and move towards.

Today, I'm very excited to announce, if elected, I would implement **The Come Back Home Program - 50% off your tax bill** up to \$3,250 when you, our city employees come back home.

This will stabilize neighborhoods and increase the personal investment (and risk) in the City's success and future. This pilot project would help 300 employees come back to New Haven during the five-year period. The program cap will be \$1 million a year. This would equal an incentive of \$16,250 to the employees who invest their homes in New Haven.

Some Details

- We're not going to hire anyone new to administer the program
- The money for Come Back Home will be capped at \$1 million per year
- First Come, first served – maximize your benefit by doing it the first year
- \$3,250 maximum which is 50% off the median tax bill. If your bill is less than \$3250, the benefit will max out at 100% of your bill.
- Must be an active full time, permanent employee
- Owner occupied building
- Employees have to stay five years or pay back the loan at a prorated amount
- Apply every year – proof of residency
- Limit to one per household

We are going to work to ensure that Come Back Home can be combined with other programs such as HUD's Good Neighbor Next Door, CHFA's teacher and police program that gives a discounted interest rate, private banks such as Webster's Community Loan Program and our own, City of New Haven Down payment Assistance Program.

After 5 years, we will evaluate the program and determine whether it makes sense to expand it, such as whether we can offer this to our current group of resident employees. This will not be, as has been the practice in this city for nearly a generation under the current administration – launch a program with stated goals and *never cancel it, never review it and never hold it accountable*. It will be held accountable on an interim basis and over the long term.

In the coming weeks, when we announce our financial platform for the City, we are confident that the reductions in property tax will benefit not only our resident employees, but everyone in the City. Because remember, **high taxes equals high rents**. Our out of control budget affects everyone. I want 70-80% of employees living in New Haven, not out-of-town like we have currently. I look forward to discussing more specifically how we will fund such initiatives in the coming weeks. It will focus on **Stopping the Waste and finding efficiencies**. Simplifying and Streamlining our city government will be our mandate. With the voters support, we will TRANSFORM New Haven and make it a proud city once again.

Come Back Home and Stay Home.

Previous Announcements

Term Limits – 8 yrs for the President, 8 yrs for the Mayor
End to cronyism and special favors
Simplify and Streamline City Government
We need Transformation, not incremental changes
Clean Elections Candidate

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