

# DYER FOR HOUSE 2020 UPDATE

Matt Dyer for State Representative, CT 66<sup>th</sup> District



## The Only Thing We Have to Fear....

An aerobatic flight instructor and good friend once told me that only two things kill in a cockpit: fire and panic. Flight training tries to address both of those situations in a variety of ways. Private pilot students learn both how to avoid fires and what to do if one starts. Students practice landing quickly, or descending steeply to exterminate an engine fire. Students learn where the fire extinguisher is in every plane, and they learn how to point its location out to passengers during the required FAA preflight briefing. But pilots also learn how to deal with panic and the paralysis or poor decision making that it can lead to. Panic can lead to either paralysis, which can obviously result in loss of control, or panic can lead to making hasty, rash, ill-conceived decisions that merely hasten the loss of control with potentially fatal consequences. Indeed, a good deal of recurring commercial pilot training involves placing pilots in simulated unexpected upset situations in order to force pilots to confront their fears and *still control the airplane*. As one of my dear



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friends, a long-time pilot with over 30,000 hours flying both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, explained his pre-Vietnam military flight training: “we were told in stressful situations that the first thing we should do is wind our watch.” Winding the watch gave a pilot something innocuous and completely un-plane related in order to settle the pilot’s mind and gain control over one’s faculties before taking some action in the cockpit to make things even worse.

The political arena may carry less risk of fire, but the panic is very much present on both sides of the aisle. People from both sides seem to be trying to outdo each other in *inducing* panic rather than trying to minimize panic and its attendant risks. And as COVID-19 is revealing to us, the risks of panic in the political realm can be just as deadly as the risks of panic in a cockpit. Federal inaction dominates the headlines and recent studies show that that inaction has increased the number of people who have died. On the other hand, the panicked decision to reopen public accommodations without stable testing and tracing data means that more people will undoubtedly die of COVID-19 than is necessary. Perhaps the lessons I learned in the cockpit apply equally well to our daily lives. Perhaps we should all take a moment to wind our watches so we can think clearly and start acting clearly rather than reacting harshly, angrily, and panicked. Perhaps we could take a quarantined moment to wind our watches rather than lashing out at each other over Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

The enemy is COVID-19, not our neighbors, regardless of their party affiliation. In my experience, *everyone* wants the same thing—the ability to hug our friends, to hang out together in public, to express the very essence of our communal humanity with the people and in the places we hold most dear. And to feel safe doing that. But for that to happen, maybe we should collectively take a deep breath and wind our watch.

*Paid for by Dyer for House 2020, Kristen Mostowy, Treasurer. Approved by Matt Dyer.*

*Photos by Lindsey Victoria Photography.*

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