

# SWIMMING IN A SEA OF BLUE

**Date of Birth:** October 31, 1988, Livingston, N.J.

**Hometown:** Westbrook

**Occupation:** Founder and CEO, Greenskies Renewable Energy, LLC, Middletown; state senator representing 33<sup>rd</sup> District (Chester, Clinton, Colchester, Deep River, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook).

**Education:** Sykes College of Business, University of Tampa (Fla.), 2010

**Accomplishments:** To borrow from sportswriter Frank Deford, to say State Sen. Art Linares is the fastest-rising Republican lawmaker in Hartford is a little like calling him the world's tallest midget.

After all, Democrats control filibuster-proof super-majorities in both the House and Senate. That reality, paired with the 2012 retirement of GOP Gov. M. Jodi Rell and the election of Democrat Dannel P. Malloy as her successor, renders Republicans all but powerless at the Capitol.

Nevertheless, the 24-year-old first-term lawmaker from Westbrook is rapidly making a name for himself as a champion of Connecticut's embattled entrepreneurial and small-business sectors.

Linares identifies with the business community in large part because he's one of them. As co-founder and CEO of Greenskies Renewable Energy, a five-year-old solar-energy enterprise he founded while still in college, Linares is uniquely positioned to be a voice for Connecticut's entrepreneurial community in a state many consider to be the most business-hostile in the Republic.

"I come from an entrepreneurial background," Linares says. In the wake of the disastrous 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, his grandparents fled Cuba to escape Castro. They brought their eight-year-old son — Linares' father — with them to the Land of Opportunity.

The kernel of the idea that became Greenskies was to install photovoltaic arrays on the abundant flat rooftops of big-box stores such as Walmart and Target. To turn idea into reality Linares spent a year in his basement outlining a business plan with partner Michael Silvestrini (now also Linares' brother-in-law).

To date Greenskies has done some 50 solar installations, growing a commercial client base from Massachusetts to New Jersey. Earlier this year the company passed a significant milestone, having designed and built installations that have produced more than five million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity. By the end of the calendar year

Greenskies is on track to have installed more than 88,000 solar panels.

As a state senator, Linares has been a vigorous advocate for the business community. He has been working with the New Haven Manufacturers Association to broaden the state's Manufacturing Reinvestment Accounts (MRA) law to make it available to more companies. He also wants to make tax credits available to manufacturers who hire new workers. Big-picture Linares themes include bringing runaway spending by state government under control as well as encouraging entrepreneurship and small-business growth.

In addition, with State Rep. Christopher Davis (R-57) of Ellington Linares has proposed legislation informally known as "Learn Here, Live Here" that would provide financial incentives for students who graduate from Connecticut colleges or technical schools to establish new companies in the state.

After taking office at the beginning of this year Linares embarked on something of a whirlwind tour of manufacturing companies throughout his district and beyond.

**Greatest Obstacle Encountered and How Surmounted:** Linares was a 19-year-old full-time college sophomore-to-be in Florida when he spent the whole summer "chasing the idea of starting a solar-energy business," he says. "It was clear to me that solar had a future; there was a movement to fight climate change. All roads led to solar for a young entrepreneur."

But of course he needed capital to get Greenskies off the ground. To get the ball rolling, "My father invested a very small amount of money to allow us to operate," Linares explains. We had no salaries — my car became the company car." Linares and Silvestrini charted a very conservative growth trajectory: "We would do one project at a time and reinvest into our business," Linares explains. "We bootstrapped it."

On the political side, Linares understands that he is swimming against a strong Democratic current at the Capitol. But at his tender age he is optimistic that he can be an agent for positive change.

"Right now the state legislature and the executive branch of government have to make the economy their number-one [priority]," says Linares. "That's the perspective I'd like to bring."

**Person Who Most Influenced Life:** Linares reserves special praise for his father, who personifies the venerable saw, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

"I watched my father start literally with nothing," his son recalls. "When I was an infant he started a hose company; that didn't go anywhere. He started a roofing company — that didn't go any-



At the ripe young age of 24, Sen. Art Linares is making strides in the Senate for his energetic and bi-partisan approach to tackling state issues, including a re-bolstering of the manufacturing industries.

where." Eventually Linares *pere* found success buying and selling property in a then-booming commercial and residential real-estate markets. "I used to see him working long days, long nights, starting these businesses. So the entre-

preneurial bug has always been in my system."

— Michael C. Bingham

John Hodson, of True Benefit, and his staff congratulates

**Karin Patriquin**

for a job well done!



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