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## 2018 Suburban Legislative Questionnaire

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### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name:

Office Sought:

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature:

Date:

Please complete, sign and return this form via mail to:

**Neighborhood Networks  
c/o Stan Shapiro  
7213 Cresheim Rd.  
Philadelphia, PA 19119**

**If returning via email, please send to [shapsj@comcast.net](mailto:shapsj@comcast.net) and sign and return this first page with the candidate signature by mail.**

# NN Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

## BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?

School Director for the School District of Upper Dublin, 2014-present (appointed 2014, elected to a 4 year term in 2015).

I also worked as a Deputy District Attorney in Bucks County from 2005-2012.

2. If you have previously held a government office:
  - a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?

As a member of a school board, public education is the focus of my service. I've been heavily involved with contract negotiations with our teachers' union as well as establishing new and modifying the District's current policies.

As a member of the Bucks County District Attorney's Office, I was a trial attorney. While I prosecuted all types of crimes during my tenure, I specialized in child abuse and domestic abuse prosecutions. For two years, I ran the DA's Office's internship program. During my last two years at the DA's Office, I overhauled and managed the A.R.D. unit (a program for nonviolent first time offenders).

- b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

I am apart of a group of District Administrators and Board members that meets with the executive board of teachers' union quarterly to preserve our newfound working relationship. Since May 2015, I chair the Policy committee. I previously served on the Facilities Committee and now serve on the Education Committee. I regularly sit on a Board panel that decides grievances from both our teachers' and support staff unions. I also served on an Ad Hoc Communications Committee in 2015. I was on the Board when we as a whole searched and hired a new Superintendent hiring search in 2014 and I have since served on several hiring committees for administrative positions

In the DA's Office, I was on the Domestic Fatality Review Task Force, which reviewed several domestic murder-suicides and generated a report with standards of protocol that were later adopted by the Bucks County District Attorney's Office.

3. If you have not previously held a government office, what community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)
4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

5. What is your plan to win this race.

I am working under the assumption that my race will be against Republican incumbent Todd Stephens who has held the seat since 2010. However, rumors are circulating that Stephens may seek another position instead of running for reelection in 2018.

The voter registration in the 151st for Democrats and Republicans is nearly even as it is separated by less than 350 registrations out of more than 43,000 registered voters with Republicans having the slight edge. There is also a considerable amount of Independent registered voters. People in the 151st will vote for a Democrat if they “know” the candidate or dislike the Republican opponent as evidenced by Hillary Clinton’s and Josh Shapiro’s wins in every municipality of the 151st in 2016.

As a political newcomer, my greatest challenges will be to build name recognition and fundraise both in the 151st and in the political establishment. It is unorthodox for a State Representative candidate, who has not previously run, to campaign for more than one year prior to the general election. I am taking advantage of getting into the race early, as well as the political climate. First and foremost, I plan to raise an army of volunteers for my team.

I believe the success of my campaign will require the support from both progressive grassroots groups as well as the established Democratic party. I am working with several progressive grassroots groups and I am personally involved with Indivisible PA - BuxMont. I have made contact with all of the local Democratic committees in the 151st as well as the Montgomery County Democratic Committee and the House Democratic Campaign Committee. I am also involved in Emerge PA, which is an intensive 6 month candidate training program exclusive to Democratic women. Not only has this program provided me valuable information about the campaign process it has also expanded my political network of elected officials, campaign workers, and consultants.

Specifically in 2017, I will support the local races throughout the 151st. In the primary, I will focus on the School Board races in Horsham (Hatboro-Horsham School District) and Montgomery Township (North Penn School District) because these are contested as the majority of the candidates cross-file. I plan on having volunteers from my team canvass their areas and work the polls on primary election day. I would also like to have a few team

members canvass and work the poll for the 2-1 section of Lower Gwynedd in support of the Democratic Township Supervisor candidate (Mike Pironti) to help build his name recognition. During the summer and fall of 2017, I will re-assess and determine how I can best continue to support the local candidates of the 151st.

Also during 2017, I will continue to write Letters to the Editor and submit Op-Eds to the local newspapers as issues arise and have fundraisers for my campaign. I will have at least two interns this summer and will help my campaign communicate via social media.

In 2018, the gears will shift and the campaign will intensify with the same two goals, increasing my name recognition and raising money. The details will depend on several factors which won't be known until the time is nearer.

## **ISSUES**

**Please note: Although most of the following questions may be answered “yes” or “no” feel free to elaborate if doing so would provide a clearer statement of your position.**

### **I. OVERALL**

What would be your three highest priorities as a legislator? Explain.

My highest priority is to make sure that my constituents' needs and concerns are addressed. The 151st Legislative District encompasses Horsham Township, Montgomery Township, a third of Upper Dublin Township, and a quarter of Lower Gwynedd. At this point in time, I believe the 3 biggest issues facing the 151st are 1) increasing state funding for public education in both the classroom and the pension, 2) addressing environmental issues including water contamination in the 151st, and 3) improving the state's budget crisis by changing taxes for different groups. There are other issues that carry great importance to me like improving Pennsylvania's gun laws and addressing the opioid epidemic.

### **II. Education**

- 1) How do you feel about the role of charter schools in Pennsylvania's educational mix? If dissatisfied, what changes in state law would you sponsor to fix the problem?

Some charter schools are good for individual students, but they hurt us overall by diverting already less than adequate resources away from our public education system. Additionally, current PA law does not adequately regulate charter schools and many of the schools are failing. I would sponsor greater regulations for charter schools. I would also link the amount of public money that brick-and-mortar charter schools receive to actual expenses, and link cyber charter-school payments to competitive public offerings.

- 2) What factors do you believe should be considered in determining *overall levels* of school funding in the Commonwealth, and funding *per school district*?

Education should be our government's top priority and it should be funded as such. First, the Commonwealth should greatly increase basic education and special education funding for all districts in addition to increasing funding for the pension. Second, the Commonwealth needs to increase its use of the relatively new fair funding formula for more than just the "new money." I believe that the fair funding formula addresses school districts' needs, which must be a component of funding as all kids should get a great education. Right now, kids in affluent areas have fantastic opportunities, and kids in the less affluent areas should get them too.

- 3) Do you believe public college, or community college, should be tuition free?

Yes. Post-secondary education should not be a privilege reserved for only people who, or whose family is, financially able.

- 4) What role do you believe standardized tests should play in evaluating teachers, schools and students, if any?

Standardized tests should be used sparingly and should only be used to determine whether schools/districts are trying to meet state educational standards and the needs of their students.

I think that standardized tests can help identify kids that need extra services that may have been gone unnoticed (e.g. special education, gifted).

I believe there are better ways to evaluate teachers than standardized tests.

- 5) What is your view of plans to increase the use of computers in public schools, particularly as a way to reduce the number of teachers?

I think that increasing technology use in school is imperative to teach kids how to function in our world. Computers are like paper, pencils, and books.; they are essential tools. I do not support, however, increasing computer use as a way to reduce teachers in any way. Teachers are the lifeblood of our schools and simply cannot be replaced.

### III. Budget and Taxes

- 1) Do you support a Constitutional Amendment to permit progressive taxation in PA, in whole or part? Explain.

Yes. A graduated income system of taxation is a better, fairer system of taxation as it taxes those who can afford higher taxes and help those in need.

- 2) If legal, would you support raising the tax on unearned income as a way to increase state revenue without increasing burdens on working people?

Yes. State Senator Art Haywood recently proposed this type legislation and I support it.

- 3) What changes if any would you support in corporate net income tax levels?

Corporate tax revenue has decreased to below 18% in Pennsylvania as business taxes have been cut. I would support increasing corporate net income taxes above 9.99% or reducing the various credits and exemptions if a severance tax is not implemented, or other sources of revenue are not created.

- 4) What changes, if any, would you support in the personal income tax?

All of Pennsylvania's taxes are related. If one goes up, another may be able to go down and vice versa. The flat personal income tax may need to slightly increase to pay for services if other taxes are not, but this should be the last tax considered. As stated above, I support an Amendment for graduated income tax and I believe this be avenue taken if personal income taxes are to increased.

- 5) Do you support full elimination of the Delaware loophole?

Yes.

- 6) Do you support a tax on fracking, and at what level?

Yes. The level depends on the economy and natural gas market. I have supported Governor Wolf's various proposals to date (including rates of 6%

and 5%).

#### **IV. Public Banking**

Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after [the Bank of North Dakota](#)? Explain.

As the Bank of North Dakota is unique as the only state-owned bank in the county, I need to learn about PROs & CONs about creating and running a state-owned bank.

#### **V. Women's Rights**

- 1) Do you believe there should be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose? If so, what?

No.

- 2) What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care?

Pennsylvania should adopt a law that targets and combats TRAP legislation, seeks to reduce infant and maternal fatality rates, provide increased workplace protections, raise the minimum wage, require equal pay, and strengthen gun laws. All of these issues affect women's healthcare.

The Congressional battle over the ACA further jeopardizes women's healthcare. Thus, Pennsylvania should have a nondiscrimination healthcare law so if the ACA is repealed or modified that women cannot be denied free birth control, pregnancy cannot be considered a pre-existing condition, and maternity care and preventative screenings must be covered by healthcare insurance providers.

- 3) Would you support proposals to ensure that women and men working in the Commonwealth receive equal pay for equal work?

Yes.

#### **VI. Children and Families**

- 1) Should the state require businesses to provide paid family leave?

Yes and the Commonwealth should offer subsidies for small businesses.

2) Should the state provide universal availability of affordable child care?

Yes.

## **VII. Environment**

1) Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part? Explain.

I believe that there should to be a moratorium on fracking to study the environmental and economic impact. I do not know whether adopting stricter standards for the industry would provide the necessary protections for the environment. I am concerned about losing jobs if fracking is prohibited, so we would need to invest in renewable energy sources to provide employment for these workers.

2) Would you support developing the Philadelphia area as an Energy Hub? Explain.

I don't have a position on this issue yet as I need to learn more about the potential job growth versus the environmental concerns/pipeline.

3) Do you think Philadelphia should be compelled or induced to sell PGW?

I need to learn more about this issue to provide an answer.

4) What measures would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources?

I support increasing tax credits and state subsidies for renewable energy while increasing taxes and reducing incentives for fossil fuels, as well as educating citizens about benefits of renewable energy.

## **VIII. Criminal Justice**

1) Should marijuana be legalized in all circumstances, or for medical use? Explain.

I support the legalization of the recreational and medical use of marijuana. I believe that marijuana manufacturing and sales should be state regulated and taxed.

2) Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania?

No.

3) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

For most jobs, yes. However, I believe jobs that require a high level of fiduciary duty (e.g. overseeing a bank), being responsible for children, or law enforcement positions should be able to discuss criminal convictions at the application and interview stages.

4) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

No.

5) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

Before prisons can be closed, we need to re-evaluate our crimes code and criminal justice system. Prison overcrowding is not safe for the prisoners or workers. We cannot close prisons until we sentence less people to prison.

6) Do you support an end to the death penalty?

I believe that our system needs reform, that the death qualifying factors should be changed, and that the victim's family needs input, but I would not lobby to end the death penalty completely. Prior to my experience in the DA's office, I was anti-death penalty. But my work as a prosecutor exposed me to a special kind of evil that exists in this world. I think there are some things that if people do, they forfeit their right to live.

7) When if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult?

Yes, under the current law. The juvenile system is currently limited to supervising a juvenile offender until the age of 21. This limitation is not adequate for some offenders. I believe that the current restrictions limiting the circumstances (the juvenile must be at least 15 at the time of the offense, the offense must be a violent felony, and a deadly weapon was used in the commission of the offense) for a juvenile to be tried as an adult are sufficient.

8) How would you deal with the problem of mass incarceration of minorities, particularly minority youth?

I wish I had the answer for this. It's been more than 150 years since the end of slavery in America and yet its racist aftermath is still readily apparent in our society. There are so many factors that result in the arrest and incarceration of minorities including poverty, institutional racism, inequity in education, and criminal laws that target minorities.

A century ago, the criminalization of marijuana occurred as a way to criminalize and incarcerate minorities, which is one of the reasons I support legalizing marijuana. I do not support drug mandatory minimums and I would vote against a bill that seeks to reinstate them, or if one were to pass before I am elected, I would introduce legislation to remove them.

Minorities take the brunt of an inequitable public education system, thus I support increased funding for education. I don't have a great answer about how to increase hope and opportunities in areas where poverty and thus crime is rampant. A start is getting better people, those who truly care about equality, in charge of our government who will make this a priority.

9) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

Stop and frisk is unconstitutional and should not be supported.

### **IX. Campaign Finance Reform**

Would you support legislation to provide public financing for state and local election campaigns?

Yes.

### **X. Labor**

1) Should the minimum wage be increased? If so, to what level and should the increase be indexed to inflation?

Yes.

2) Do you believe that Philadelphia and other municipalities should continue to be pre-empted from increasing the minimum wage on their own?

No.

3) Do you support privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania? Are there any other services that you believe should be considered for privatization?

The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board is an odd and antiquated

approach to manage alcohol sales. Exclusively limiting such sales to PLCB Wine & Spirits shops and beer distributors is not consumer friendly. On the other hand, I am very concerned about the thousands of jobs that may be lost if liquor is totally privatized. I believe with the current laws allowing grocers to purchase licenses to sell wine and beer strikes a satisfactory balance of the competing interests.

- 4) Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union? Explain.

Yes, I would likely support such legislation, but it would depend on the specific protections provided.

## **XI. Transportation**

Currently the state constitution mandates that revenue from the state gasoline tax be spent only on roads and bridges. Would you support an amendment to the Constitution allowing gas tax revenue to be spent on public transportation?

I need to learn more about this issue before I have a position. I am concerned about amending the Constitution in this way as there may be consequences to construction jobs and labor. I do not want to see gas tax revenue being diverted from funding the construction and repairs to our roads and bridges while potentially chipping away at organized labor. However, funding for public transportation is also vital. Thus, I need to gain a deeper understanding of the current situation as well as the consequences of such an amendment before I can opine whether I support such action.