

## 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?  
Not applicable
2. If you have previously held a government office:
  - a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?
  - b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?
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.)

I am running for State Representative in HD-150. I serve as a committeeperson in the Montgomery County Democratic Party (Lower Providence 3-2). I am active in Indivisible Mid-Montco PA as well as Indivisible PA District 8 and Indivisible Norristown Area. I attend occasional protests, though I have been focusing my resistance efforts on electing Democrats up and down the ballot. I have been working with the municipal candidates in all five of the municipalities that overlap HD-150, as well as fundraising and laying groundwork for my own campaign. Please contact Katie Muth or Laurie Higgins to confirm.

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

Those materials are not available at this early stage of my campaign. I am still working with my team to develop a fleshed out strategy and a detailed finance plan. Even my website is currently still under construction, but more information on my campaign is available at [facebook.com/saracampbellszymanski](https://facebook.com/saracampbellszymanski)

5. What is your plan to win this race.

I chose to run in my home district, 150, because I know I can win. I am a graduate of Ursinus College, which is at the heart of the district, and has shaped my life and values. I still have a few connections on campus. I own a home in Audubon, Lower Providence, the part of the district most strongly under Republican control. I have been working with the Democratic candidates and committee members in my community to weaken that control. I have already knocked over 400 doors and raised thousands of dollars.

My district went to Clinton in 2016, though the Democratic State House candidate lost. I can win in 2018 without turning a single Republican if 85% of the registered Dems who voted in the 2016 general turn out for me. The voters are there, it's just a matter of getting them to the polls and getting them to vote for State House. The Democratic committee in my area has done a historically bad job on both counts. They believe that to win elections they must nominate candidates who are moderate to conservative in order to appeal to Republican voters. This is not the case, at least not this year. I am bold in my

individuality as well as my politics. I am the candidate who will get left-leaning voters to the polls in 2018.

## **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.

The biggest issue affecting my community is gerrymandering. While there are many progressive issues I care deeply about, I believe we cannot address any of them if our democracy is broken and our votes don't count. My county is cracked into five different congressional districts, with Montgomery County taking up a mere sliver of each one. The Republican State Legislature have diluted our voices because they don't like what we have to say. If elected, I will work closely with Fair Districts PA, an organization committed to ending gerrymandering in our state. I support a constitutional amendment that sets up an independent, non-political commission to draw the congressional districts in the state of Pennsylvania.

Another major issue that affects my future constituents is health care reform. I have a disability (aka 'pre-existing condition'). You would be hard pressed to find a household in Pennsylvania without at least one member who has some sort of medical problem. Health care is not only a human right, but an economic necessity: businesses can't thrive if their owners can't get care for themselves and their employees. My neighbors are worried that our national health care system will be dismantled and if that happens, the issue will be punted to the states. Should I become the next representative for PA HD-150, I am committed to working with state lawmakers like Rep. Pam Delissio (Philadelphia) and Senators Daylin Leech (Montgomery) and Art Haywood (Philadelphia/Montgomery) who have been working to bring single-payer healthcare to Pennsylvania for years.

Finally, the threat of global climate change looms over our entire planet, my district included. My background in Biology makes me uniquely qualified to address environmental issues that come before the General Assembly. I will work to make sure that our air and water quality are protected, our State Parks remain pristine, and that dirty energy companies exploiting our resources pay their fair share.

### **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?

While I understand that charter schools can be wonderful for some children, the current funding system siphons taxpayer money away from the children who need the most help. Charter schools receive funding based on average public-school expenditure per student, but not all students cost the same to educate. Under the current system, charters can choose to admit, for example, only students without disabilities, or those who do not need free or discount lunches. Such students would cost less than average to educate, while the school could receive public funding for *average* per-student costs and administrators pocket the difference. The question of charter schools is complicated and nuanced, but the current system could be improved by implementing a funding formula with tiers for students with different needs. This could incentivize charters to accept special needs students, while helping to ensure that school funding goes (and stays!) where it is most needed.

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

I'd need to do a great deal more research to come up with a detailed answer to this question, but I believe that school funding per district should be decoupled from local property taxes. Funding should go where students need it the most.

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

yes

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

More than none, but less than they have now. Standardized tests can be useful to identify areas where students and schools need extra help, but become disruptive to education if too much value is placed on the scores.

- 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?

While it is important for students to become proficient in the technologies they will use for the rest of their lives, computers aren't teachers and cannot replace them.

### **III. Budget and Taxes**

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

Progressive taxation could help ensure that the super wealthy pay their fair share for the infrastructure and public services they take advantage of. It may even prevent a future budget crisis. Should an amendment be enacted, I would carefully review any proposed tax legislation to ensure it protects middle class families.

- 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?

The concept makes sense, but I would have to carefully review any proposed legislation and consult with tax policy experts.

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

I would need to consult with tax policy experts before forming an opinion on this topic

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

I would need to consult with tax policy experts before forming an opinion on this topic.

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

I believe that businesses that operate in Pennsylvania should pay their fair share back into the community.

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

I support the calls for an extraction tax. Beyond that, I would need to consult tax policy experts.

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

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

While I believe robust public programs are key to a functioning society, this is not a topic I have researched, and, as far as I'm aware, is not of interest to my hopeful future constituents. If I am elected and a motion concerning this topic is brought to the floor, I will research it thoroughly. For now, I choose to spend my limited time researching districting reform, healthcare policy, and other topics of interest to the people of House District 150.

## 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?

This is an interesting question. I imagine that you are looking for something like a constitutional amendment barring lawmakers from interfering with healthcare decisions. While I'm sure such a measure would be helpful if passed, I am more interested in the root of the problem with women's health in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is one of the worst states in the Union for women's representation in government. The proportion of lawmakers who are capable of becoming pregnant is depressingly low. One of the best things we can do for women's health is to create a system wherein it is easier for women to be elected to public –particularly legislative– office. This will require many measures to be taken, starting with assuring equal pay for equal work, and equal parental leave policies to combat the forces that prevent women from advancing in their careers once they become parents. When we bolster women professionally and economically, we give them a stronger political voice. Next, campaign finance reform is essential. We must introduce contribution caps and even public financing to give more Pennsylvanians of all genders a fair chance at being elected, but I believe our current system, which places undue weight on fundraising ability, is partially to blame for excluding women, who tend to have an economic disadvantage, from public office. Additionally, we must address our legislative districts, which are drawn to favor incumbents (who are currently disproportionately male). This could be accomplished by creating an independent commission to draw legislative districts, similar to that proposed for congressional districts in HB 722

- 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. In particular, I believe that all new parents deserve paid time off to care for and bond with their children, regardless of whether they have given birth, though some parents may need additional time to recover from labor and delivery.

- 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.  
Fracking is terrible for our communities and our open spaces. It leads to poisoned water supplies, disrupted ecosystems, and global climate change that threatens all of us. I am opposed to any new fracking operations in Pennsylvania. However, while they are incredibly destructive, wells and pipelines do provide jobs in some economically devastated communities. A fracking ban must take the needs of those communities into account, and include provisions for bringing economically and ecologically sustainable industry to our rural regions.

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

This is an interesting question. In general, I believe that matters having to do with Philadelphia are up to Philadelphians, and as a politician from elsewhere in the state it is not my place to comment. I do not oppose developing Philadelphia as an energy hub, but as hopeful State Legislator I need to think of the entire state, and I would most like to see energy hubs develop in parts of the state that have been dependent on declining industries like manufacturing and fossil fuels.

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

I defer to Philadelphians on matters concerning Philadelphia.

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

Demand for fossil fuels is decreasing, meaning that that industry is not sustainable economically, let alone environmentally. It is our responsibility to ensure that families that have long depended on the energy industry for their livelihoods continue to thrive well into the twenty-first century. This means bringing renewable energy jobs to rural Pennsylvania. I also support environmental guidelines for new construction. We must incentivize developers to include green roofs, solar panels, natural lighting, and car charging in their projects.

## VIII. Criminal Justice

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

I believe that recreational marijuana should be regulated like alcohol and tobacco. State-run dispensaries could be a source of government revenue.

- 2) Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania?  
no

- 3) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?  
yes

- 4) Should PA continue to build new prisons?  
no

- 5) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain.

I believe that as we work on solving mass incarceration, fewer prison beds will be needed and some of the facilities will be able to be converted to different uses.

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

- 7) When if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult?  
never

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

Mass incarceration is a huge problem with many contributing factors. It will take many steps to fix (don't consider this list exhaustive). Many minority youths are incarcerated for drug possession, so one of the most important steps we can take will be to decriminalize recreational marijuana. Secondly, no one should be given an economic incentive to imprison Americans. This means closing Pennsylvania off from the for-profit prison industry, and eliminating quotas for arrests and convictions. We must also eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing, particularly in drug-related cases. Finally, we must begin to train our law enforcement officers, judges, and other professionals involved in the criminal justice system to recognize and override their implicit racial biases.

- 9) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

I support Pennsylvanians' fourth amendment rights, which protect them from unreasonable search and seizure. Nobody should be searched without a warrant.

## **IX. Campaign Finance Reform**

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

Dear God yes.

## **X. Labor**

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

\$15/hour would be a good start. When workers have more money to spend, it benefits the entire economy. A minimum wage must be indexed to inflation in order to be effective.

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

Pennsylvania is a very diverse state, and the only way we can serve all Pennsylvanians, whether urban or rural, is to allow municipalities to

enact policies that work for their communities. This is an example of one such policy.

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

Pennsylvania's liquor retail stores provide revenue for our government as well as good jobs for many Pennsylvanians. While changes could be made to make the system more customer-friendly, I'm hesitant to call for privatization.

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

The American Dream and the prosperity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were made possible by labor unions. In my lifetime I have seen unions come under attack and even begin to disappear. As the unions go so follows the American Dream. My generation are poorer than our parents, with more debt and less income compared with inflation. It is no wonder that we are not buying houses or starting families. Corporations that would have depended on our disposable income are disappearing as well. The only way to insure broad prosperity is by protecting workers rights to organize and collectively bargain.

## **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?

While that seems like a reasonable change, I would need to carefully review any proposed legislation and consult with tax policy experts.

