



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

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2019 City

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to: info@phillynn.org and mail a copy with the signature page to

Gloria Gilman

CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Kahlil Williams

Office Sought: City Commiss

BACKGROUND

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

1. *What, if any, elected or appointed office have you held?*

This is my first campaign

Candidate Signature: _____

Date: _____

2. *If you are an incumbent in an office for which you are seeking re-election, or if you have previously held this office, what do you consider your three greatest achievements while serving in this position?*

N/A

3. *If you are a challenger, what about your background qualifies you to hold this office?*

I have spent my entire professional career working on voting rights and elections in some capacity, and I want to use my extensive experience to benefit the City of Philadelphia. As a congressional fellow in 2006, I worked to help reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As a policy analyst at the Brennan Center for Justice, I advocated for redistricting reform, campaign finance reform, and the restoration of

voting rights to individuals with felony convictions. And as an attorney, I have trained and overseen hundreds of volunteers working for Election Protection program through the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. I am well-prepared for the myriad problems that occur on Election Day and to tackle the issues that plague Philadelphia between elections, including low voter engagement and a lack of information about voting.

4. *Both incumbents and challengers: What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?*

If elected, there are numerous policy initiatives I would enact. To name three, I would: 1) adopt randomized ballot positions for municipal offices, in hopes that Philadelphia could be a model for state level change in judicial races (e.g., the court of common pleas); 2) transform the office into a resource of information on election reforms, including the adoption of independent redistricting commissions, no-fault absentee balloting, early voting, and same day registration at the state level; 3) focus more of the resources of the Office (e.g., voting registration drives, poll worker trainings, voter education) on parts of the City with low turnout and voter participation.

ISSUES

Although many of the questions below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, please state which way you are leaning and what additional information you would need before deciding, if any.

I. Public Education

Describe what would you do to:

1. *Educate the public about voting issues.*

The Commissioners' Office has a vital role to play in public education on voting and the electoral process. I will use the office as a platform to inform voters that the key to making progress on the other issues they care about (e.g., public education, gun violence prevention, health care, jobs) is to vote and expand access to voting. Further, with the adoption of new voting machines, the Office will have to work very hard to educate Philadelphians on the new technology, with frequent and well-publicized public meetings where voters can experience the new machines, and poll workers can gain comfort with solving problems with the machines that may arise.

The Office should also be cognizant of the differing needs of Philadelphia's communities, and develop solutions that help different aspects of the "public." For instance, we need to do a better job of making disabled voters aware of how to get a proxy to deliver their absentee ballots; in communities where English is not the primary language, we need to deliver translations on charter questions to those communities ahead of time, and work with them to identify persons that can provide language assistance at the polls. For young and older voters, we need to be thinking about how the Commissioners' website is designed, to ensure that they can get the information they need in an effective way.

2. *Educate those under 18 about voting issues.*

Elected officials in Philadelphia have a duty to engage and educate the next generation of voters. If elected, I will design a curriculum for middle and high school-aged children and Philadelphia, and link that curriculum with programs that incorporate our new technology and the structure of our polling places, so that, upon turning 18, our schoolchildren are fully prepared to participate as full citizens. While the current Commissioners Office has an hoc program of voting education, I would formalize the curriculum, and work with teachers to introduce the curriculum at times around an election. Commissioners would work with teachers in the school district to create a curriculum for middle school and high school students on voting, which includes teaching students how to look for information to research candidates, the mechanics of using a voting machines, and the rules around voting. Part of

the curriculum I plan to implement for Philadelphia schoolchildren will include a voter registration component, so that we ensure more children are registered when they turn 18.

3. *Increase voter registration, particularly among high school and college students, and other traditionally under-registered groups?*

In addition to curriculum design, my office would create and maintain strong relationships with student government organizations of colleges within the City. Information about voter registration and local elections would be communicated to these organizations to then disseminate to their respective campuses.

In order to increase voter registration in communities that usually face barriers at the polling place, City officials need to spend more time in Philadelphia neighborhoods, rather than simply holding meetings downtown. As a policy initiative, I would push the office to hold its publicly-stated meetings in different parts of the City, so that citizens have better access to the Commissioners. My plan to put the Commissioners office in more neighborhoods is targeted, in part, at increasing awareness in low-turnout areas about how and when to register to vote, and making people more familiar with the electoral process. This effort would dovetail with my plan to advocate at the state level for election reform, which would include a push for same-day registration, which will increase the number of registered voters citywide.

4. *Increase voter turnout, particularly among high school and college students and other traditionally low-voting groups?*

We need to think critically about how people--especially young people--participate in the political process. Our campaign will be hosting a event in April 2019 on voting by phone, and talking about how the process, now in its nascent stages, could be implemented in Philadelphia in the coming years. Youth participation will also be influenced by election reforms like no-fault absentee ballots, which allows for greater flexibility on when and where people vote.

5. *Increase the number of people willing to serve as election staff (e.g., judge of elections) on election day?*

The Office should raise the pay of poll workers further. Although Philadelphia recently authorized an historic pay raise for poll workers, Judges of Elections--who are paid the most--still only make just above our Commonwealth's anemic minimum wage for 15 hours on election day (from 6am to 9pm). Interpreters are the lowest paid workers, amounting to about \$7.30 per hour, which might be unaffordable for someone who wants to serve, but has to decide between working the polls or collecting a regular paycheck. Paying folks appropriately for their time would help the Commissioners' Office attract and retain poll workers.

I would also remove the restriction of limiting poll workers to their divisions or wards, and draw from a deeper pool of students, including law students, that could be deployed across the city to administer elections. Philadelphia has colleges and universities that are full of people that want to become more involved in their communities and intend to make Philadelphia home. Recruiting these folks to help run elections helps to infuse more technological awareness into each polling place, and it creates incentives for students to visit and explore other parts of the city. For law students, I'd work with the Pennsylvania Bar Association to offer pro bono hours for those who help administer elections., which would make these jobs more attractive.

Finally, as with progressive legislative initiatives like predictive scheduling, the City Commissioners should be more flexible in its scheduling of poll workers. In the poorest large city in the US, we should help people work around their work and/or child care schedules. Adding half-day shifts is one way to attract more people for whom a 15-hour commitment is a hardship.

6. *Assure that election staff are well educated for carrying out their duties on election day? What, if any, changes would you make to the current training program?*

One of the most significant problems at polling places on Election Day are a reliance on poll workers that are improperly or insufficiently trained. To solve the poll worker problem, we must overhaul the training program designed by the Commissioners, which is particularly important given the City's adoption of new voting machines. The training must do far more to include scenarios in which problems arise, and must be solved by the poll worker before continuing the training. The training should be easily accessible so that workers can refer to it--on paper or online--at any time, including on election day.

7. *Familiarize the public with the process for running for office?*

The Commissioners should work with content providers (e.g., Comcast) to enable candidates to post videos about themselves in fora that are easily accessible to voter. The videos would enable voters to understand more of what candidates do and to follow them more closely. In addition, the Commissioners can ensure that the "How To Run For Office" tab on its website is updated and sufficiently detailed.

II. Public Communication

1. *Do you think there should be a regularly maintained published schedule of meetings among the commissioners open to the public?*

As with City Council, all publicly-stated (Sunshine) meetings ought to be streamed live and then the video recordings archived online and available prominently on the Commissioners website. Groups like Indivisible Philadelphia have recorded meetings with mobile phones, so there are no credible objections based on cost or privacy concerns. In addition, the agenda for each publicly-stated meeting of the Commissioners should be published at least 48-hours ahead of time so that Philadelphians know what is to be debated and can arrange to appear in person for question and answer sessions and/or submit their questions or statements online in advance.

2. *Do you think the pros and cons of advocating for the purchase of new voting machines has been discussed and debated adequately with the public? If not, what more do you believe should have been done?*

No. A couple months ago, I attended the City Commissioners' meeting requesting public comment on new voting machines. The Commissioners had previously made no public statement that the City intended to purchase new voting machines, so the announcement of the meeting was the first real notification to the public. Commissioner Deeley announced the meeting on her Facebook page a full day before the meetings were announced to the public.

Despite the short notice, concerned citizens attended, listened, and gave incredibly insightful comments, which was particularly impressive since Philadelphians had zero visibility into the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, and the RFP itself was difficult to locate. Anyone who wanted to comment was required to go out and study the vast array of options, then make educated guesses as to which system would be preferable.

This closed-door approach to election integrity is unacceptable, and it's something I'll work to address on day one as City Commissioner. Indeed, I made my concerns about the process plain at a public comment hearing, and recommended that the Office do three things to improve transparency: 1) Make the RFP more accessible by posting it on their own website; 2) make the transcripts from the hearings available online for free or provide recordings; and 3) explain the Office's rationale for choosing to roll out new voting machines in 2019 and when that decision was made and announced to the public.

3. *Would you advocate publishing the names and contact information for all committee persons online?*

I think publishing the names and addresses of committeepeople is advisable and appropriate, given that committeepeople are elected persons, and their information is already available through street lists and other databases. Phone numbers would also be published online where voluntarily furnished during registration, or if the committeeperson opts in, but not in other circumstances.

4. *Do you think that the public should be entitled to obtain free copies of voter registration lists?*

Yes, I think that the public should be entitled to obtain free digital copies of voter registration lists.

III. Voting Policies

Would you:

1. *Support early voting? If so, what would you do to get this policy implemented? If not, why not?*

Yes, early voting would be extremely helpful in increasing electoral participation. I'll work hard to lobby legislators in Harrisburg to push for election reforms, and will organize other county boards of elections to push for the same.

2. *Support voting by home computer? If so, what would you do to get this policy implemented? If not, why not?*

I think voting by remote means (including by computer) is an issue that election officials should be discussing; we need to think big about how to solve the problem of how infrequently people--especially young people--participate in the political process. My campaign will be hosting a event in April 2019 with Bradley Tusk on voting by mobile phone, and talking about how the process, now in its nascent stages, could be implemented in Philadelphia in the coming years. The implementation of mobile voting would be achieved, again, by advocating for reform at the state level.

3. *As you are no doubt aware, the City of Philadelphia is under a mandate to purchase and implement a voter-verifiable paper record voting system no later than December 31, 2019. What type of voting machine system do you support for the City to purchase? Please be specific and give reasons why you support this system over the other ones that are available.*

I did and do support the procurement of hand-marked paper ballots with optical scanners, and was very disappointed in the ballot marking devices that the City ultimately chose. Paper ballots are easier for voters to audit and verify, are harder to hack, and are better for administering elections in the event of a power outage or machine malfunction. Optical scanners are also far less expensive than the BMDs that the City purchased. I am sympathetic to the argument that the machines we chose "look and feel" like the current machines, but that factor was given undue weight in the RFP process and should not have been given substantial weight in determining which machines were picked.

4. *Support voting over the course of several days? If so, what would you do to implement this policy? If not, why not?*

Yes, I absolutely support voting over the course of several days, and utilizing voting centers to avoid having every single polling place open for multiple days of voting. Again, this policy would be implemented by lobbying at the state level, and would involve organizing other county boards of elections, who could speak with one voice about the benefits of early voting and financial consequences, if any, of doing so.

5. *Do you think the office of City Commissioner should continue to be an elected one? If so, why? If not, would you have City Commissioners appointed, and by whom?*

In my view, Philadelphia would ideally have a non-partisan Board of Elections appointed by the Court of Common Pleas, who, being elected to 10-year terms, are comparatively insulated from politics and influence by party insiders. Further, the Board would be larger than 3 people (perhaps as many as nine members) in order to account for the geographical, racial, and socioeconomic makeup of the city, and would sit in various parts of the City throughout the year (rather than one location on Delaware and Spring Garden). The Commissioners would report to City Council twice a year for hearing that would be open to the public, and would serve staggered terms to ensure continuity across elections, while providing for predictable turnover.

The reasons for this structure are relatively straightforward: Philadelphia should have election officials that are responsive to the needs and desires of the public, and any election office should be set up to further that objective. Moreover, I believe the Commissioners' office, in its current state, is part of a series of elections that are low-information and, thus, result in many citizens choosing officials that are ill-equipped for the position, and appointments would tend to ensure that highly qualified people oversee our elections.

Of course, as our system currently exists, voters choose our elected officials, and stripping that right away is difficult, and, as of now, lacks sufficient political support. As such, we must elect competent, qualified people to the job, which is my main motivation for running. But if the political will existed for the Commissioners' office to be abolished, I would be happy to participate in unwinding it and transitioning it to an appointed position.

6. *What system do you think should be implemented to improve the registered voter check-in system on election day? What would your plan be to implement this and when? If your plan involves the purchase of an electronic system, how do you believe that the security of the voter registration list can be maintained?*

Along with the new voting machines, the Commissioners have purchased new electronic poll books, which should alleviate the problems with voter check-in. These should be made available during the November 2019 municipal general election.

It should be noted that these particular poll books--KnowInk--are cloud-based and, thus, are vulnerable to hacking. The Commissioners must work with election-security and cybersecurity experts to ensure that intruders can be detected, and I'd hope to harness the power of tech professionals in Philadelphia to assist in those monitoring efforts.