

Capital Region Stands Up State House and Senate Candidate Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions by midnight on Monday, March 16th. Capital Region Stands Up will post the answers from all candidates on our website and share with our members and mailing list through email and Facebook.

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1. As a member of the PA General Assembly, what would you do to lower drug prices for Pennsylvanians?

Work with the 3 other states pursuing the ability to purchase prescription drugs from Canada (Vermont, Florida, and Colorado). Currently the US market subsidizes drug prices for the rest of the world. We live in one of few places in the world where drug prices aren't negotiated by governments. If we can bypass the U.S. market, drug companies will lose their pricing power in the U.S.

2. Do you support work requirements for Medicaid recipients? Why or why not?

No. Healthcare should be a right not a privilege.

3. As a member of the PA General Assembly, how would you balance the critical importance of meeting PA's goal for carbon reduction (26% by 2025 and 80% by 2050 as measured against 2005 levels) with the creation of good paying jobs that are claimed by the energy sector?

I would push for major tax incentives for solar and wind for residential and commercial applications. This would not only decrease our reliance on fossil fuels, but also create good jobs and reduce residential and commercial power expenses in the long run.

4. The first bill amending the State's Human Relations Act barring discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on gender identity and sexual orientation was introduced in 1976. PA still does not have a law on the books that accomplishes this. What action would you support to ensure protection of our LGBTQ community?

I'd work to pass a law that bars any and all discrimination that is currently allowed. Nobody should be allowed to discriminate, and no group should be allowed to be discriminated against.

5. When you become a state legislator, what specific steps would you take to attempt to improve the ethical rules in the PA General Assembly?

I'd work for a ban of all gifts to legislators.

6. In recent years, the General Assembly has attempted to constrict women's reproductive rights. What is your position on this important issue?

Nobody should be able to use another person's body without their permission. That means, even if a fetus is deemed to be a human being at x weeks of life, or even a citizen of the United States, it still doesn't have permission to use its mother's body without her permission.

7. What are your plans for improving basic education in this state? Should the rules for funding charter schools be changed?

Public schools need equitable funding. Private schools should be funded by private money. Public schools should not have to share tax revenue with private schools. My tax dollars should not be going to a private school.

8. State government support for tuition at state-supported and state-related institutions ranks among the lowest in the nation, helping to push the cost of attending public colleges up 66% in the last 15 years, after adjusting for inflation. Indeed, PA ranks number 1 in the nation for highest student debt. High tuition costs have also resulted in a decline in attendance of low and middle income students. How would you address this conundrum?

Our state-related and state-supported schools need more funding. The surest path out of poverty is education and every person who is qualified to attend college should have access to an affordable college education. We should also be encouraging students who don't want to go to college to pursue an education in a skilled trade.

9. Should this state have stronger gun safety laws? If you agree what would you do?

The country should have stronger gun safety laws. Most don't realize that former Republican presidents Reagan and Ford asked congress to pass an "assault weapons" ban (which congress did in 1994, but it expired 10 years later). I don't know how effective a Pennsylvania ban of high magazine, semi-automatic weapons would be when a resident can go to dozens of other states to buy their weapon of choice. I am all for a nationwide ban on these types of high powered weapons as well as strong background checks.

10. Children who grow up in high-poverty neighborhoods where 30% or more of the households have income below the poverty level live with toxic stress caused by financial hardship and fear of violence. Chronic stress in children has been linked with diabetes, heart disease and stroke later in life, as well as depression, suicide and teen pregnancy. An Annie E Casey Foundation study found that 323,000 children in PA live in high poverty neighborhoods – 12% of our children. If elected, what legislation would you promote that could begin to address these issues?

A higher minimum wage lifts all wages at the lower end eventually. We should raise the minimum to \$12 immediately, then phase in a \$15 minimum wage over 3-5 years and then index it for inflation. Greater access to affordable education and grants for skilled trades education can help people acquire the knowledge they need to secure a better job. Eliminating cash bail for most non-violent offenses would help people retain their jobs while awaiting trial. Legalizing marijuana and expunging all marijuana related criminal infractions could help people with those kinds of criminal records get better jobs. Increased infrastructure projects and increased alternative energy projects (see my answer to question 3). There is no one answer to solving the problem of poverty - I think we need to attack it in hundreds of different ways.

11. The PA County Commissioners Association has repeatedly called for restoration of an \$84 million cut to mental health funding made in 2012-13 by then Governor Tom Corbett. Indeed, funding for mental health services has been virtually flat-lined since 2007-08. Meanwhile, more than 21% of those who need mental health services in PA can't get them. There are long waits for visits to psychiatrists and therapists. Few schools have social workers on staff that can address the significant mental health needs of children. What would you do to improve access to mental health services in the Commonwealth?

We need to restore funding for mental health.

12. Despite boasting the highest gas tax in the country, and highways that are perpetually under construction, Pennsylvania still finishes 35th in the nation for the overall cost-effectiveness and condition of its highway system, according to a report by the Reason Foundation. Researchers found that overall, the state finished 25th for its overall fatality rate; 46th in structurally deficient bridges; 35th in traffic congestion; 32nd in urban Interstate pavement condition, and 32nd in rural Interstate pavement condition. What would you do to address these pressing infrastructure needs?

Increase spending on infrastructure projects. Not only will this speed up the fixing of our dilapidated infrastructure, but will provide good jobs, and save lives.

13. What do you see as the 3 most important issues for your district?

Most of my district is in York County, which has pretty bad air pollution. Also, I don't believe that there is a homeless shelter in my district (mostly Northern York County). The abysmally low minimum wage is an issue not only in my district, but across the state.

Candidate Name *

Doug Ross, candidate for PA House district 92

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