

# 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.

Email address \*

rodasforpa@gmail.com

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

As a member of the General Assembly I will support Rep, Frankel's HB 2212 which would establish a board responsible for investigating drug costs. Among other preventative measures, I would also introduce legislation that would prohibit drug plans from modifying their drug formularies throughout the year.

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

I oppose work requirements because all the research suggests that work requirements actually do nothing to improve the conditions of our medicaid program funding and make it more difficult for low-income families to maintain necessary coverage.

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?

We can meet targets for carbon emissions by taxing carbon and reinvesting the money into clean jobs. By removing tax subsidies and taxing carbon we can create training programs, invest in green energy jobs to replace those being phased out and also meet carbon reduction targets. We must balance the changes through incremental changes.

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?

Despite an interpretation by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in 2018 which decided that "sex" when used in the PHRA or PFEEOA may refer to sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation, transgender identity, gender transition, gender identity and/or gender expression depending on the individual facts of the case, Pennsylvania has yet to codify the interpretation to apply to all applicable areas of the law and offer the necessary protections. I would introduce and/or support legislation that would provide protections against discrimination for all members of LGBTQ community as well as educate, request hearings, and testify to the importance of these basic human rights.

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 believe that the Capitol is overrun by conflicts of interests and one of the only ways to address this is through comprehensive government reform and campaign finance reform. I propose campaign finance restrictions that include a max amount to be accepted to help remove the special interests from legislating. I also support a gift ban that would prevent lobbyists from buying votes. We should restrict legislative privilege with right to know requests and have access to legislative expenses online.

I also believe that we must hold legislators to a higher standard when taking votes that they have personal financial interests in. One should abstain from votes that they have a personal financial interest in.

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

I am pro-choice and believe that it is not an issue that should be legislated.

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

Support an increase in public education. Fund full-day kindergarten. Increase funding for pre-k. Raise teachers wages to a livable rate. I believe that charter school funding should be reevaluated to reflect the actual cost of services instead of gouging our public school system.

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?

Investing in higher education has one of the highest returns on investment of state spending. I would introduce and/or support proposals that provide for a 4 year tuition-free education at the PASSHE schools for limited income families, and 2 year free education at all community colleges. I would also support increased access to scholarships, grants and loan forgiveness programs.

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

Yes. I support safe storage laws, universal background checks and closing loopholes, protecting PICS while also utilizing federal checks, mandatory waiting periods, extreme risk orders and a ban on ghost guns.

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?

I believe that conditions associated with poverty for children can be improved through access to mentors, investment in communities and after school programs, as well as improving resources in the public education system like access to counselors. Poverty has devastating impacts on our children. By investing in impoverished areas through access to jobs, community centers and recreational teams we provide access to mentors from coaches and professionals.

Additionally, research suggests that students facing poverty that have access to after school programs tend to get in less trouble and improve outcomes in school. When we invest in our communities and bring life back into a struggling area instead of look the other way we have long-term far reaching impacts.

In addition, blocking attacks on medicaid, cash assistance, SNAP and other vital safety net programs and increasing the minimum wage are necessary. We must address the root of the problem.

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?

I would advocate for an expansion of coverage of mental health services under medicaid by prohibiting a provider from refusing care based on medicaid which would create more providers and shorter wait times. I would increase funding for schools to employ licensed counselors to address mental health among adolescents. I would raise awareness of mental health disorders through hearings, forums, and educational measures to reduce the stigma and shame associated with mental health disorders. I also believe that student-debt forgiveness programs for mental health care providers should be established to encourage more people to enter a field that requires additional schooling past the initial 4 year degree.

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?

I support Governor Wolf's Restore PA plan. We must generate revenue through new tax streams and invest in adaptive and resilient infrastructure, as well as include taxpayer driven innovation and p3s.

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

1. Affordable healthcare and prescription drugs
2. Education funding
3. Jobs - access to, and minimum wage

Candidate Name \*

Brittney Rodas

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms