

Just Harvest

JUST



The 2014 Election Voters Guide

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Just Harvest Education Fund

VOTE on Tuesday, November 4, 2014

Polls open 7:00 am to 8:00 pm

Check your registration status and polling place at www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us

This Voters Guide presents information about the upcoming election, including key policies relating to hunger and poverty that will likely be addressed in the next federal and state legislative sessions, and, when possible, the voting record of current Allegheny County Republican and Democratic candidates on these issues.

This guide has been created to help you make informed choices on Election Day so you can help influence these critical policies.

This information is strictly to inform and educate our community. Just Harvest does not endorse or oppose any particular candidate or political party.



Just Harvest is a membership organization which educates, empowers and mobilizes people to eliminate hunger, poverty, and economic injustice in our communities by influencing public policy, engaging in advocacy, and connecting people to public benefits.

For more information about voting procedures, where your polling place is, or more about valid ID guidelines, contact the Allegheny County Elections Dept. at: (412) 350-4500 or www.alleghenycounty.us/elect

Voting Information

Useful tips for Election Day:

- You only need to show ID the first time you vote at a particular voting place (poll).

Approved forms of ID include:

PHOTO ID (must be valid)

- PA driver's license or ID Card issued by PennDOT
- ID issued by US government
- ID issued by any Commonwealth of PA agency
- US Passport
- US Armed Forces ID
- Student ID
- Employee ID

OR

NON-PHOTO ID (must include your name and current address)

- Your voter's card
 - Firearm permit
 - Current bank statement
 - Current utility bill
 - Current paycheck
 - Government check
- You cannot lose your job, or your benefits, or be evicted for voting.
 - If the workers at the poll (voting place) do not accept your registration as valid, ask for a *provisional ballot*. By law, they must let you vote on a provisional ballot and the problem will be straightened out later.
 - People with felony convictions who are registered are able to vote in PA once they are no longer incarcerated.
 - People who are homeless can vote if they are registered.
 - People with disabilities are allowed to vote with assistance from a person of their choice or through an alternative ballot.

Ballot List

Click the name of each candidate below to learn more about officials running for re-election from the nonpartisan Project Vote Smart at votesmart.org, including their voting record, bio, positions, ratings and endorsements, speeches, and funding. Note that some of these candidate have responded to questionnaires about their positions on key policy issues at www.wtae.com/politics/.

You can find your state legislative district here: www.legis.state.pa.us

LEGEND: *Incumbent | Democrat | Republican | Independent

CONTESTED RACES

Name	Office	District
<u>Tom Corbett*</u>	Governor	Statewide
<u>Tom Wolf</u>		
<u>Jim Cawley*</u>	Lt. Governor	Statewide
<u>Mike Stack</u>		
<u>Keith Rothfus*</u>	Rep. in U.S. Congress	12 th North Hills, Plum, and parts of Beaver, Cambria, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties
<u>Erin McClelland</u>		
<u>Jake Wheatley*</u>	State Representative	19 th Hill District, North Side, South Side, Allentown, Hazelwood, Downtown, The Bluff, Knoxville, Beltzhoover, Manchester, Arlington, Arlington Heights, North/South/West Oakland
<u>Mark Brentley, Sr.</u>		
<u>Tom Fodi</u>	State Representative	20 th North Side, Strip District, Polish Hill, Stanton Heights, Lawrenceville, Reserve Twp, Ross Twp, West View
<u>Adam J. Ravenstahl*</u>		
<u>John Ritter</u>	State Representative	25 th Monroeville, North Versailles, Pitcairn, Plum, Trafford, Wall
<u>Joseph F. Markosek*</u>		
<u>Sean Watson</u>	State Representative	33 rd Brackenridge, Cheswick, East Deer Twp, Fawn Twp, Frazer Twp, Harmar Twp, Harrison Twp, Indiana Twp, Oakmont, Plum, Springdale, Springdale Twp, Tarentum, West Deer Twp, and parts of Westmoreland County
<u>Frank Dermody*</u>		
<u>Ken Peoples</u>	State Representative	35 th Duquesne, East Pittsburgh, Elizabeth Twp, Homestead, Lincoln, McKeesport, Munhall, North Versailles Twp, South Versailles Twp, Versailles, West Mifflin, Whitaker, White Oak
<u>Marc J. Gergely*</u>		
<u>Rick Saccone*</u>	State Representative	39 th Clairton, Elizabeth, Elizabeth Twp, Forward Twp, Jefferson Hills, South Park Twp, West Elizabeth, and parts of Washington County
<u>Lisa Stout-Bashioum</u>		
<u>Ben Gross</u>	State Representative	45 th Bridgeville, Carnegie, Collier Twp, Coraopolis, Heidelberg, Kennedy Twp, McKees Rocks, Pennsbury Village, Robinson Twp, Scott Twp, South Fayette Twp, Stowe Twp
<u>Nick Kotik*</u>		
<u>Jason Ortitay</u>	State Representative	46 th McDonald, Oakdale, South Fayette Twp, and parts of Washington County
<u>Jesse White*</u>		
<u>Eli Evankovich*</u>	State Representative	54 th Fawn, Harrison, West Deer Twp, and parts of Westmoreland County
<u>Patrick Leyland</u>		

UNCONTESTED RACES

Name	Office	District
<u>Mike Doyle</u> *	U.S. Representative	14 th Pittsburgh, Mon Valley, Penn Hills, and parts of Allegheny River Valley and Ohio River Valley
<u>Tim Murphy</u> *	U.S. Representative	18 th Monroeville, South Hills, and parts of other counties
<u>Randy Vulakovich</u> *	State Senator	38 th Lower Hill District, Oakland, Upper Hill District, Polish Hill, Bloomfield, Lawrenceville, Morningside, Garfield, East End Mall, Highland Park, East Liberty, Homewood, Point Breeze, Squirrel Hill, Frick Park, North Side, Latimer Jr. High/Heinz Co. Area, Troy Hill, Spring Garden, Fineview, Perrysville, Riverview, Woods Run, Brighton Road, Aspinwall, Blawnox, Fawn Twp, Fox Chapel, Frazer Twp, Harrison Twp, Indiana Twp, Millvale, Oakmont, O'Hara Twp, Reserve Twp, Sharpsburg, Wilkinsburg, and parts of Armstrong and Westmoreland Counties
<u>Wayne D. Fontana</u> *	State Senator	42 nd Lower Hill District, Strip District, Oakland, South Side, Allentown, Beltzhoover, Brookline, Mt. Washington, Beechview, West End, Corliss, Manchester, North Side, Woods Run, Brighton Road, Chartiers, Westwood, Esplen, Crafton, Knoxville, Overbrook, Baldwin Twp, Bellevue, Brentwood, Carnegie, Castle Shannon, Coraopolis, Crafton, Dormont, Green Tree, Heidelberg, Ingram, Kennedy Twp, McKees Rocks, Neville Twp, Pennsbury Village, Robinson Twp, Rosslyn Farms, Scott Twp, Stowe Twp, Thornburg
<u>Robert F. Matzie</u> *	State Representative	16 th Crescent Twp, Leet Twp, Ross Twp, Bell Acres, Bellevue, Franklin Park, Leetsdale, and parts of Beaver County
<u>Dom Costa</u> *	State Representative	21 st Shadyside, Bloomfield, Morningside, Garfield, Etna, Millvale, Reserve Twp, Ross Twp, Shaler Twp, O'Hara Twp, Sharpsburg
<u>Dan B. Frankel</u> *	State Representative	23 rd Oakland, Shadyside, Point Breeze, Squirrel Hill, Frick Park, Hazelwood, Greenfield
<u>Ed Gainey</u> *	State Representative	24 th East End Mall, Highland Park, East Liberty, Homewood, Point Breeze, Squirrel Hill, Frick Park, Aspinwall, Wilkinsburg
<u>Daniel J. Deasy, Jr.</u> *	State Representative	27 th West End, Corliss, Chartiers, Westwood, Esplen, Crafton Heights, Avalon, Ben Avon, Crafton, Dormont, Emsworth, Glenfield, Ingram, McKees Rocks, Neville Twp, Stowe Twp
<u>Mike Turzai</u> *	State Representative	28 th Bradford Woods, Franklin Park, Marshall Twp, McCandless Twp, Pine Twp, Pine Twp, Richland Twp
<u>Hal English</u> *	State Representative	30 th Fox Chapel, Hampton Twp, O'Hara Twp, Ross Twp, Shaler Twp

<u>Anthony M. DeLuca*</u>	State Representative	32 nd Blawnox, Penn Hills Twp, Plum, Verona
<u>Paul Costa*</u>	State Representative	34 th Point Breeze, Squirrel Hill, Frick Park, Braddock, Braddock Hills, Chalfant, Churchill, East McKeesport, Edgewood, Forest Hills, North Braddock, North Versailles, Rankin, Swissvale, Turtle Creek, Wilkins Twp, Wilmerding
<u>Harry Readshaw*</u>	State Representative	36 th South Side, Allentown, Beltzhoover, Carrick, Knoxville, Hays, Lincoln Place, Overbrook, Baldwin, Brentwood, Mount Oliver, West Homestead, Whitehall
<u>Bill Kortz*</u>	State Representative	38 th Baldwin, Dravosburg, Glassport, Liberty, McKeesport, Pleasant Hills, Port Vue, West Mifflin
<u>John Maher*</u>	State Representative	40 th Bethel Park, Upper St. Clair Twp, Peters Twp, and parts of Washington County
<u>Daniel Miller*</u>	State Representative	42 nd Bethel Park, Green Tree, Mt. Lebanon, Scott Twp, Rosslyn Farms, Thornburg
<u>Mark Mustio*</u>	State Representative	44 th Aleppo Twp, Ben Avon Heights, Collier Twp, Edgeworth, Findlay Twp, Haysville, Kilbuck Twp, Moon Twp, North Fayette Twp, Ohio Twp, Osborne, Robinson Twp, Sewickley, Sewickley Heights, Sewickley Hills

State Policy

Cash Assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a federal safety net program that provides basic cash assistance to families who are the most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. In 1996, federal “Welfare Reform” gave the states considerable freedom in setting the eligibility requirements for cash assistance, the grant amounts, and the length of time families can receive assistance (currently limited to 60 months over the course of a lifetime for most Pennsylvanians). Two bills to help needy families receive cash assistance have recently been introduced in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The outcome of this election could affect the likelihood of these measures being adopted.

The new House bill (**HB 2305**) would increase the cash grant amount available through TANF. Currently, these grants are very modest. For example, a family of 3 in Allegheny County receives only \$403 per month. TANF grants have not been increased in over 23 years - since 1990 - and have lost 79% of their buying power since then. These grant amounts are not even enough to cover basic necessities such as rent, clothing, utilities, school supplies, and transportation to work, so raising them would greatly help families in need.

- **Allegheny County legislators who are sponsors:**
 - Rep. Dan B. Frankel (D-23)
 - Rep. Daniel Miller (D-42)

Because TANF claims it is intended to help poor families “transition to work,” TANF recipients who get a job benefit from what is known as the Earned Income Disregard. Currently, 50% of a TANF recipient’s new income is not counted when calculating the amount of assistance they are eligible for. The disregard helps compensate for the expenses that come with working – such as taxes, transportation, clothing and child care co-payments – which eat into a large percentage of take-home pay. A second House bill (**HB 2306**) would increase the Earned Income Disregard to 75% and would enable more families to receive partial cash grants, allowing them to transition more gradually off TANF support as they work to climb out of poverty.

- **Allegheny County legislators who are sponsors:**
 - **Sen. Dan B. Frankel (D-23)**
 - **Rep. Harry Readshaw (D-36)**

Fair Taxes and Budget Priorities

This election has the potential to determine the outcome of the vote on a state senate measure that could place more financial strain on low-income and middle class families – Senate Bill 76 and House Bill 76 – bills with both bipartisan support and opposition. Supporters claim these bills will benefit individual homeowners by eliminating the school property tax.

However, SB 76/HB 76 is a tax shift, not reduction, scheme; the bills would increase the sales tax to 7% and expand it to cover a wider range of goods and services and make Pennsylvania 1 of only 3 states in the nation to apply a full sales tax to food. They would also raise the state income tax by 41% and make permanent the Corbett administration’s massive school budget cuts. Meanwhile, SB 76 will eliminate all property taxes for large commercial and industrial property owners – corporations – costing the state billions in revenue.

Pennsylvania’s tax structure is already unfair to working and poor families who face rising taxes and declining services, and whose schools suffer from unequal and insufficient funding. Meanwhile, Pennsylvania corporations already benefit from tax breaks introduced by Governor Corbett (R-PA) – including tax breaks for Marcellus Shale drilling companies - that are set to cost the state \$770 million annually. Middle-income families in Pennsylvania pay more than double the percentage of their income in taxes than the very wealthiest Pennsylvanians, while low-income families pay nearly three times as much.

A law passed in 2013 to close corporate tax loopholes in Pennsylvania failed to get the job done, leaving companies free to continue to avoid paying income taxes. New tax credits and other policy changes mean that corporations are paying a smaller share of taxes overall in Pennsylvania, leaving individual taxpayers to contribute more.

- **Gov. Corbett’s opponent, Tom Wolf, has proposed a 5% severance tax on natural gas drilling to generate an estimated \$1 billion a year, the bulk of which would restore the \$1 billion Corbett cut from K-12 public education. He has also promised to close the state’s corporate tax loopholes.**
- **Allegheny County candidates for PA legislature who are sponsors of SB 76/HB76:**
 - **Sen. Wayne D. Fontana (D-42)**
 - **Rep. Dom Costa (D-21)**
 - **Rep. William Kortz (D-38)**
 - **Rep. Robert Matzie (D-16)**
 - **Rep. Marc Gergely (D-35)**
 - **Rep. John Maher (R-40)**
 - **Rep. Rick Saccone (R-39)**

Food Stamps

Incumbent PA Governor Tom Corbett (R) has supported measures that make it difficult for families in need to get food stamps, and, if re-elected, will likely keep these measures in place. In 2012, Corbett reintroduced the food stamp asset test in Pennsylvania in a supposed effort to curb “waste, fraud and abuse” by families applying for SNAP/food stamp benefits. As a result, food stamp applicants are required to submit additional information about their assets, such as their bank accounts, home, and car ownership.

Nationally, food stamp fraud has been found to make up only 1% of program spending whereas 20% of Pennsylvanians who are eligible for SNAP don't receive the benefits. The state already ranks 44th for food stamp processing time and is under corrective action by the federal government. The food stamp asset test is just an additional barrier for families in need. Furthermore, the food stamp asset test wastes taxpayers' money by adding more paperwork burdens onto already overworked caseworkers in the state's County Assistance Offices. Since the asset test was put in place, 111,000 households have been denied benefits, not due to ineligibility but for failure to provide proper documentation for the test.

- **The winner of the Governor's race will have the authority to keep or end the asset test. Gov. Corbett and his Secretary of Public Welfare have resisted calls to eliminate the asset test. Gov. Corbett's opponent, Tom Wolf, has said he will eliminate the asset test if elected.**

Healthcare Coverage

This gubernatorial election will determine whether hundreds of thousands of low-income Pennsylvanians will receive healthcare coverage. Under the Affordable Care Act (or “Obamacare”), which was signed into law in 2010, states are allowed to use federal funds to expand Medicaid to provide coverage to the millions of low-income uninsured Americans.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett refused to accept billions in federal funding to expand Medicaid, however, and instead introducing the “Healthy PA” plan to use those federal dollars in a different coverage scheme. Of the 682,000 people who would have been covered by Medicaid expansion under the ACA, Healthy PA will likely leave 125,000 completely uninsured – too poor to purchase health insurance on the open marketplace but making too much to qualify for Medicaid. Healthy PA would also cut some benefits for 1.1 million Pennsylvanians already on Medicaid and will end the Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities and SelectPlan for Women programs.

- **Gov. Corbett's opponent, Tom Wolf, has said he will implement full Medicaid expansion to all low-income uninsured Pennsylvanians if elected.**

Minimum Wage

Pennsylvania legislators could raise the state minimum wage, which would have many of the same benefits as an increase at the federal level. Raising the state minimum wage would improve the economic lives of many Pennsylvanians and is an important first step in reducing economic inequality in the state. In 2014, a Democratic State Senator introduced Senate Bill 1300 to increase the minimum wage in Pennsylvania from \$7.25 to \$10.10 by 2016 and index it

to inflation so it will keep up with increasing costs of living. The bill would also allow municipal governments in Pennsylvania, like the City of Pittsburgh, to increase the minimum wage even further. If passed, Pennsylvania would join D.C. and the 23 other states who have enacted minimum wages above the federal level.

The Senate bill is currently being reviewed by the State Senate Labor and Industry Committee, and co-sponsors include 11 Democrats and no Republicans. A similar House version of the bill is also stuck in committee.

- **Allegheny County candidates for PA legislature who are sponsors:**
 - **Sen. Wayne D. Fontana (D-42)**
- **Gov. Corbett's opponent, Tom Wolf, supports raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 and indexing it to inflation.**

Payday Loans

Lawmakers in Harrisburg are considering legislation that would bring back payday loans, a type of loan that benefits the businesses that give them while often keeping consumers in debt. Payday loans are short-term loans usually made to “tide you over until your next payday.” But due to the outrageously high interest rates on these loans, these predatory lenders make most of their money when borrowers have to take out a second payday loan to repay the first one. This results in extremely high fees that help trap consumers in a cycle of debt.

- Thanks to effective advocacy, Pennsylvania outlawed these types of loans. However, payday lenders have been aggressively lobbying to allow them back. So far, advocacy efforts have been successful at keeping payday lenders out of Pennsylvania.

Federal Policy

Cash Assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act under the Clinton Administration, is a public benefits program that provides basic cash assistance to some families who live well below the federal poverty level, but it is in dire need of updating. Although the bill has been up for reauthorization several times in the past few years, Congress has repeatedly extended the current bill as-is without making sure TANF benefits are keeping up with increasing costs of living.

Congress must extend or reauthorize TANF on or before December 11, 2014 as the current extension is set to expire. This election could affect whether TANF gets extended again or gets necessary revisions.

- Learn more about how Allegheny County candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives voted on related issues at www.ontheissues.org:
Mike Doyle: www.ontheissues.org/PA/Mike_Doyle_Welfare_+_Poverty.htm

Child Care

Subsidized child care for low-income workers is a critical federal anti-poverty program. However, this funding is allocated to states as a Child Development Block Grant, which is discretionary spending – states may wind up spending far less on this than they are authorized to. Furthermore, the authorized amount states can spend on child care has not been increased since 1996. This affects not just how much workers can spend on child care, but the quality of child care centers and the pay of child care workers.

- **A current U.S. Senate Bill (SB 1086) to raise the amount is currently being blocked by Pennsylvania's Sen. Pat Toomey (R). He is not up for re-election at this time, but if the bill clears the Senate it would also have to be approved by the U.S. House.**

Child Nutrition

Programs that ensure that low-income children have access to healthy and nutritious foods in their homes, communities, and schools are at risk. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Children Act of 2010 authorizes all federal child nutrition programs, including the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, school meals, and the summer food program. These child nutrition programs help millions of children across the country by improving educational achievement, economic security, and health.

- **Although some child essential programs are authorized permanently, all other programs due to be renewed on September 30th, 2015, which is an opportunity for Congress to make improvements or cuts to the programs.**

Meanwhile, there are efforts to weaken the country's existing nutrition standards in some of these programs. Under pressure from the potato lobby, this past spring Congressional leaders attached amendments to the House and Senate Agricultural appropriations (spending) bills that would allow WIC vouchers to cover potatoes, which have little nutritional benefit. Additionally, the House spending bill would allow school districts to opt out of the new higher nutritional standards for school meals. This bill has the backing of the food service industry.

- **The spending bills containing provisions to weaken child nutrition are awaiting full Senate and House votes, which will not take place until after – and thus may be determined by - this election.**

Minimum Wage

The Fair Minimum Wage Act would raise the current federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 by 2016, and be set to increase regularly to keep up with inflation. This would help many families make ends meet and lift 28 million people and 14 million children out of poverty. Raising the minimum wage would also help the economy by putting more money in workers' wallets and boosting their buying power. It would also reduce the burden on taxpayers for government spending on assistance benefits for low-wage workers.

- **The bill was introduced by Senate and House Democrats in 2013. The House version (HR 1010) has all 197 Democrats and no Republicans as co-sponsors. House Republicans have blocked movement on this bill twice in the past two years.**

Fair Taxes and Budgets

Tax breaks for corporations significantly reduce the government's budget and its ability to spend. Typically, the same Congressional leaders who push for such tax breaks also push for less spending on the social programs and public benefits that help middle-class, low-income, and poor Americans. In the past year, Congress has passed measures to reduce unemployment compensation and cut funding for food stamps in the Food and Farm Bill, while supporting greater corporate tax reduction.

Even though the corporate tax rate in the United States is the highest in the world at 35%, most corporations do not actually pay that much. A 2014 University of Southern California report, for example, found the tax rate corporations actually pay to be only 12.6% on average due to various loopholes and different state and federal tax credits and benefits. This is a lower tax rate than the 18.1% that Americans pay in income tax on average.

These harmful policies are kept in place by legislation from both political parties, such as efforts to extend what were meant to be temporary corporate tax breaks granted during the recession (allowing businesses to write off certain purchases and investments). Republicans are trying to make even more emergency corporate relief efforts permanent parts of legislation. These tax breaks help big corporations stay at the top of the market and hurt small business owners and the average worker by maintaining wealth inequality.

The next Congress will likely consider other corporate tax policies as well as President Obama's and six recent congressional proposals to strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) for families with children and married filers, and to extend the EITC to low-income workers without children. The EITC lifts more American children out of poverty than any other government program.

- **2014 vote on corporate tax breaks:**
FOR: Rep. Keith Rothfus (R-PA-12)
FOR: Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA-18)
AGAINST: Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA-14)
- **2014 vote on cutting food stamp funding:**
FOR: Rep. Keith Rothfus (R-PA-12)
FOR: Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA-18)
AGAINST: Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA-14)
- **2014 vote on not extending unemployment funding:**
FOR: Rep. Keith Rothfus (R-PA-12)
FOR: Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA-18)
AGAINST: Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA-14)

Current Stats

Legislative Body	Democrats	Republicans	Other
PA Senate	23	27	
PA House of Representatives	92	111	
U.S. Senate	53	45	2 Independents
U.S. House of Representatives	199	233	3 Vacancies

Just Harvest

16 Terminal Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

(412) 431-8960

www.justharvest.org

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