

Voters Guide

Candidates vie for state offices in Pennsylvania's primary election



ABBY DREY adrey@centredaily.com

Mail-in ballots for the June 2 primary election can be dropped off in a designated box outside of the Centre County government's Willowbank Building.

BY CDT STAFF REPORTS

PENNSYLVANIA ATTORNEY GENERAL

Description of office: The basic duties of the attorney general, as outlined by the Commonwealth Attorneys Act, are to: serve as the commonwealth's chief law enforcement officer; collect all debts, taxes and accounts due to the commonwealth; represent the commonwealth and all its agencies in any action brought by or against the commonwealth; administer the provision relating to consumer protection laws; represent the commonwealth and its citizens in any action brought about for violation of the antitrust laws.

Term: Four years
Salary: \$167,838
Candidates (choose 1):

Josh Shapiro

Party: Dem

County: Montgomery
Did not respond to questions

Heather Heidelbaugh

Party: Rep
County: Allegheny

Education: J.D., University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law; B.A. in economics and political science, University of Missouri-Columbia

Heather Heidelbaugh

Qualifications: Experienced trial lawyer with more than 35 years of courtroom experience who understands the complexities of the law, the intersection between policy and law, and how the law impacts the lives of citizens

Campaign website: heatherheidelbaugh.com

Facebook: facebook.com/HeatherforAG

Twitter: twitter.com/heidelbaugh4ag

Q: What are your top three priorities to address as attorney general?

A: 1). Keep Pennsylvania safe — The Commonwealth Attorneys Act states one of the main roles of the AG is criminal prosecutions. This would be my top priority. The AG works with local DAs and law enforcement to keep Pennsylvania residents safe, including a strong commitment to addressing drug trafficking and the opioid crisis. 2). Put people before politics — Restore the

AG's Office to following mandates set forth in the Commonwealth Attorneys Act and perform lawyering for the people of Pennsylvania versus using the office for political gain. 3). Protect the mentally ill — Establish a blue ribbon panel of experts from Pennsylvania to examine the treatment of the mentally ill, address the current state of mental illness and more. The panel would issue a report suggesting structural changes.

Q: The Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General is responsible for law enforcement and the equal protection of law for all citizens. What do you see as the primary challenges to achieving equality under the law?

A: Keeping Pennsylvania safe has to be the top priority of the AG. The AG's statutory role is the prosecutor of crime. The AG has to prioritize resources, so scarce resources are used for the highest priority tasks of the office. Crime enforcement, in conjunction with the DAs, is the first priority. Crime operates across county and jurisdictional lines, so coordination with multiple county DAs is critical. Investigations that may take years and cost millions can't be wasted by prosecutors failing to follow criminal procedure. The AG must take an active role in the management of the office. The purpose of prosecuting crime is to ensure safety, not create headlines. With that purpose in mind, equal protection for all should be achieved.

Q: What role will your administration play in reforming systemic problems and supporting restorative justice in our criminal justice system?

A: As the county councilperson at large on Allegheny County Council, I was critical of the operation of the county jail. The Allegheny County jail had more suicides than any other jail in the country. I determined that one county employee had repeatedly failed to process the proper release of a large number of people from the jail, and she was terminated. Each day someone is in jail, it cost taxpayers, they become a suicide risk and lose their liberty unnecessarily. As AG, I would continue to advocate for government institutions to properly run jails and prisons. Jails and/or prisons must be properly run so we have the space to jail criminals, not those who don't belong there.

PENNSYLVANIA AUDITOR GENERAL

Description of office: The principal role of the auditor general is to determine whether state funds are being used in accordance with the purpose and guidelines that govern each use of the commonwealth's dollars. The auditor general conducts financial and performance audits of individuals, state agencies and organizations that receive state funds, including school districts, state liquor stores and public employee pension funds. These audits are designed to measure how effectively government programs are using public money to meet their stated goals and objectives. The office performs more than 6,000 audits each year and is responsible for auditing all federal funds that are allocated to Pennsylvania state programs.

Term: Four years
Salary: \$167,838
Candidates (choose 1):

H. Scott Conklin

Party: Dem
County: Centre
Education: Phillipsburg-Osceola Area High School, Clearfield County Career and Technical School

Qualifications: Served as board chairman of Centre County, chairman of the Salary Board, Retirement Board member, Employee Benefits Trust member and Board of Assessment member, prior to representing the 77th Legislative District of Pennsylvania. Also a small business owner and union member.

Campaign website: conklinforpa.com

Facebook: facebook.com/ConklinforPA

Twitter: twitter.com/ConklinforPA

Q: What are your top three priorities in office?

A: I have always thought of myself as a hard working voice for all people, and have served with the trust of those I represent in Harrisburg. Now, I believe it is time to use my voice for all Pennsylvanians by holding our government accountable. If you believe, as I do, that our government needs to be held accountable for its spending, that our government must have an advocate for taxpayers, and that our

government must work for all Pennsylvanians, then please consider supporting this campaign. Only through building a strong coalition of voters across the state, can we hope to secure these goals.

Q: What distinguishes you from other candidates who are seeking to be Pennsylvania's next auditor general?

A: I am running for the office of auditor general because I have seen firsthand how wasteful spending can impede the missions of government. I believe that the work of the current auditor general's office must continue, and that every taxpayer dollar should be spent legally and efficiently. I have spent my career serving the people of the 77th Legislative District, first as chairman of the Centre County commissioners, where I oversaw a \$90 million budget. After I was elected to the House, I was placed on the appropriations committee as a freshman representative, because of my experience in government. Furthermore, I co-own and operate a business with my wife Terri in Phillipsburg.

Michael Lamb

Party: Dem

County: Allegheny
Education: B.A. Penn State; MPM Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University; J.D. Duquesne University School of Law

Michael Lamb

Qualifications: As controller since 2008 I have protected residents from waste, fraud and abuse of their tax dollars. My audits have uncovered millions in savings and I have provided unprecedented levels of transparency into city finances. I also led the effort to reform our county into a home rule community.

Campaign website: lambforpa.com

Facebook: facebook.com/MichaelLambPA

Twitter: twitter.com/MichaelLambPA

Q: What are your top three priorities in office?

A: The auditor general is our first line of defense against public corruption. I plan to address that in part by bringing unprecedented levels of transparency to the

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PENNSYLVANIA

KEY INFO

BY CDT STAFF REPORTS

The election is June 2. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, mail-in voting is encouraged.

On June 2, polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

This Voters Guide may be taken into the voting booth.

FOR ELECTION INFORMATION

Contact the county Board of Elections. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Information Center also provides election information. Call 717-234-1576 with any questions or go to www.Vote411.org.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The material in this guide was compiled by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania-Citizen Education Fund. This material may not be altered or reprinted without the permission of the league. Each candidate's reply has been printed as submitted. Candidates were invited to participate in the Vote411 online voters' guide sponsored by the LWVPA-CEF and Patriot-News/PennLive via email. All reasonable efforts were made to encourage candidates to participate. They are listed according to their party and then alphabetically. Nothing in this guide should be construed as an endorsement or non-endorsement of any candidate, party, or initiative by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania-Citizen Education Fund.

DEADLINES

You must be registered to vote in Pennsylvania by Monday, May 18. You may verify your registration status, register, change your address, or change your party affiliation online at votespa.com or CentreCountyVotes.com. You may also obtain a paper registration form online or by contacting the Centre County Office of Elections. CCOE must receive your completed registration by 5 p.m. May 18. Only registered voters affiliated with a political party holding a primary may vote in the primary election.

You must apply for an absentee or mail-in ballot by Tuesday, May 26. CCOE must receive your application for either ballot by 5 p.m. May 26. If you have a valid Pennsylvania driver's license or PennDOT ID, you may apply online. If you do not have either of those IDs, you may download a paper application at votespa.com or CentreCountyVotes.com and mail it to CCOE, or visit the CCOE in person. You may also drop it into the new ballot drop election mailbox, no stamp required, right outside the main entrance into the Willowbank Building, 420 Holmes St., Bellefonte, PA. The mailbox is emptied by Centre County Elections Office personnel twice daily.

Registered voters who are ill, disabled or will be absent from the municipality on Election Day may vote by absentee ballot. **Completed applications for civilian absentee ballots must be received by the county Board of Elections by 5 p.m. May 26.** You can request an application be mailed to you by calling the Centre County Elections office at 355-6703. You can also download an absentee ballot application. If you are registered in another county, you must request your application from that county. Any disabled voter having questions regarding the accessibility of a polling place should consult the county Board of Elections.

WRITE-IN VOTING

Information for write-in voting will be available at the polling place.

ELECTION DAY PROBLEMS

If your right to vote is challenged at the polls on Election Day and the problem cannot be resolved at the polling place, the judge of



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what I do my best to take with me every time I make a vote on behalf of the 81st District.

Q: Do you support a state constitutional amendment to form an independent commission to redraw Congressional and legislative districts? Why or why not?

A: For the past two sessions I have supported and co-sponsored legislation to form an independent commission. Voters should choose their legislator not the other way around.

Q: 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, many barriers still exist for people with disabilities. What will you do as a state legislator to improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the commonwealth?

A: Everyone is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness regardless of a disability. The biggest issue I have experienced with the Disabilities Act is, when an individual is working to advance their career, pay could put their disability and medical benefits in jeopardy by earning too much money. Once they reach that earnings level all assistance could be removed and the disabled individual would otherwise not be able to afford to live on the pay level they worked so hard to reach. Government should not inhibit individuals from working to their maximum potential.

District 171

Candidates (choose 1):

Peter Buck



Peter Buck

Party: Dem
County: Centre
Education: Ph.D. educational theory and policy, Penn State

Qualifications: Current: chair, Intergovernmental Solar Working Group; vice chair,

Climate Adaptation and Action Plan Technical Advisory Group; president-elect, Pennsylvania Environmental Resource Consortium; Former: chair, Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors;

member, Centre Region Council of Governments

Campaign website: buckforpa.com

Facebook: facebook.com/BuckForPA

Twitter: twitter.com/buckforpa

Q: Access to the ballot box is one of the most important rights for a citizen. Although Pennsylvania recently modernized its election code, there are other reforms that would further modernize Pennsylvania's elections. If elected, what reforms would you support to ensure that all citizens who want to vote are able to securely, privately, and independently cast a ballot?

A: I support open primaries and ranked choice voting. While I am in a party, I believe they have too much control of our elections. Elections in a fair and free country should be both fair and free. By limiting people's choices, we gag the expression of voters' values. Ranked choice voting is working in many places. While slightly more complicated, ranked choice voting can be handled by modern technology and voter education quite easily. We can create a system that weighs our preferences better than the blunt either-or system that's in place.

Q: While there have been some positive legislative actions recently, partisan gridlock in Harrisburg has taken its toll, and many people feel that Pennsylvania's state government is dysfunctional. What types of reforms, if any, would you support to make the legislative process in Harrisburg more effective?

A: I support a limit on individual campaign contributions. Having looked at some of the contributions from individuals with deep pockets to some of my future colleagues and seeing their voting records, I'm appalled. This is legal bribery that I am committed to ending. I support shrinking the lower chamber's size by 1/3, from 203 to around 140. The state House of Representatives is just too big, too expensive and bogged down in pointless gridlock. After our next census, we should begin the process to a smaller more efficient House. I support legislation to slow down

the revolving door of legislator to lobbyist. The natural gas industry is a notably bad actor in this space.

Q: Do you support a state constitutional amendment to form an independent commission to redraw congressional and legislative districts? Why or why not?

A: Yes. A free people need fair representation. When legislators draw voting maps, they will do so in order to keep themselves in power no matter what party they are in. Human nature and the nature of holding onto political office will override almost any legislators' sense of fairness. That's what happened in Pennsylvania, as legislators worked behind the scenes with a lot of data to make maps that work for them and their fat cat donors and special interests. A constitutional amendment that forms an independent commission will ensure a fair process that makes maps by and for the people.

Q: 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, many barriers still exist for people with disabilities. What will you do as a state legislator to improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the commonwealth?

A: The Americans with Disabilities Act touches nearly every aspect of our society and economy. As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe in the dignity of all people. I have three statements, from the personal to policy. First, my staff will do everything we can to create a welcoming environment for disabled people. Second, we must address issues of acceptance, stigma and discrimination by being mindful of the challenges of all people by talking about ableness and sharing and listening to stories. Third, and most importantly, I would follow the Employment First Commission's October 2019 recommendations to support inclusive and competitive employment, accreditation, education, and funding that increases compliance and enforcement.

Kerry A. Benninghoff

Party: Rep

County: Centre

Education: State College Area High School; Penn State

Qualifications: Former health care worker; two-term Centre County coroner; multiple terms as state legislator — Finance, State Government and Policy Committee chairman; chairman — Cancer Caucus



Kerry Benninghoff

Facebook:

facebook.com/RepBenninghoff

Q: Access to the ballot box is one of the most important rights for a citizen. Although Pennsylvania recently modernized its election code, there are other reforms that would further modernize Pennsylvania's elections. If elected, what reforms would you support to ensure that all citizens who want to vote are able to securely, privately, and independently cast a ballot?

A: I am proud to have worked on and voted "yes" to the most significant package of election law improvements in 75 years. We, the legislature, provided \$90 million in state aid to help counties pay to replace their voting machines that Gov. Wolf unilaterally outlawed. In addition, our legislation allows Pennsylvanians to vote by mail without extenuating circumstances and to submit their absentee or mail-in ballots up to 8 p.m. on election day. The bill also moved voter registration deadlines to 15 days prior to an election and added an additional \$4 million for census outreach in Pennsylvania.

Q: While there have been some positive legislative actions recently, partisan gridlock in Harrisburg has taken its toll, and many people feel that Pennsylvania's state government is dysfunctional. What types of reforms, if any, would you support to make the legislative process in Harrisburg more effective?

A: Most legislation that is passed is usually "agreed to" in a bipartisan manner and vote. When 4,000-plus bill ideas are introduced each year to become law, you need a very deliberate process both in committee as

well as the House floor to sift out those bills where agreement can be reached. While many people think emotional debate and even disagreement is a negative thing, it is actually beneficial. Similar to the process of tempering steel, you take raw material, heat and hammer it and eventually pound or mold it into the desired end product. In much the same way, the legislative process is deliberate and insightful but not immediate, so that the final product is not written by quick, raw emotions, but researched deliberation and debate.

Q: Do you support a state constitutional amendment to form an independent commission to redraw congressional and legislative districts? Why or why not?

A: As a legislator, I have co-sponsored redistricting bills to remove "politics" from the process. I continue to be open to these ideas and have participated in many local discussions on this. I want to be careful to not replace one undesirable system with another potentially flawed one. Our democracy is too valuable to allow any special interest to gerrymander legislative districts. It is important to note that my office serves anyone who contacts us regardless of their "assigned" legislative district or their political affiliation.

Q: 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, many barriers still exist for people with disabilities. What will you do as a state legislator to improve accessibility for people with disabilities across the commonwealth?

A: One of the most significant roles of our commonwealth is to take care of those facing challenges beyond their control. These challenges, while varied, should not limit these individuals from enjoying a happy and engaging life in their communities. I enjoy supporting local events, fundraisers and legislation to assist in gaining employment for our citizens with intellectual disabilities. I have also sponsored legislation to ensure support services can be provided to them while living in their family's home or other community-based settings.

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elections at the polling place should telephone the county Board of Elections. The problem could be resolved by phone if your name appears on the county records. If it does not and you want to try to resolve the problem, then you can

go in person to the county Board of Elections where a judge from the Court of Common Pleas will be on duty to resolve election problems. Alternatively you can ask for and vote by provisional ballot. If it is later determined that you were eligible to vote your ballot will be counted. You will be given instructions on how to determine if your vote was counted. If you have any questions or need to

report any problems, call 866-OUR-VOTE for assistance in English or Spanish or 888-API-VOTE for assistance in Asian languages.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW VOTERS

If you are a new voter or if you are voting at a polling place for the first time, then you must bring your voter ID card or a

photo ID such as a driver's license, student ID or some other form of federal or state government-issued ID. Some forms of non-photo ID are also acceptable such as a firearm permit, current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or government check. If you do not have any acceptable ID, then you must be allowed to vote by provisional ballot. If you are not a new voter and are not

voting at your polling place for the first time, you are not required to bring or provide identification.

ONLINE VOTERS GUIDE

The Vote411 Online Voters Guide is available at www.vote411.org. League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania homepage is www.palwv.org.