# Citizen Education Fund NONPARTISAN VOTERS GUIDE PRIMARY ELECTION

MAY 20, 2025 Polls open 7 A.M. to 8 P.M.

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#### "A STEP AHEAD OF THE VOTE"

#### FOR ELECTION INFORMATION

Contact your county Board of Elections or visit www.VotesPA.com. 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 via email. All reasonable efforts were made to encourage candidates to participate.

The candidates listed are those whose names appear on the ballot as of April 18, 2025. 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.

#### **PURPOSE AND POLICY OF THE LEAGUE**

The purpose of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania-Citizen Education Fund is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League is nonpartisan: it neither supports nor opposes any political parties or candidates.

#### PENNSYLVANIA JUDGE OF THE **SUPERIOR COURT**

# **JOB DESCRIPTION**

The Superior Court is one of Pennsylvania's two statewide intermediate appellate courts. This court, established in 1895, reviews most of the civil and criminal cases that are appealed from the Courts of Common Pleas in the Commonwealth's 67 counties. The Superior Court consists of 15 judges. The president judge is elected to a five-year term by his/ her colleagues. A large number of appeals flow to the Superior Court from the trial courts. Generally, appeals are heard by panels of three judges sitting in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, or Pittsburgh. The court often is the final arbiter of legal disputes. Although the Supreme Court may grant a petition for review of a Superior Court decision, most petitions are denied, and the ruling of the Superior Court stands.

Term: 10 years Base Salary: \$247,188 Vote for ONE.

# **DEMOCRAT**

**BRANDON NEUMAN COUNTY:** Washington

**OCCUPATION:** Judge of the Court of Common Pleas

**EDUCATION:** University of Richmond -BA in Criminal Justice. Duquesne University Kline School of Law - Juris Doctorate

QUALIFICATIONS: 8th year as a Judge-Presiding over Family, Civil, Criminal and Veteran's Court -Sheriff & Deputy Sheriff Education and Training Board. PA House of Representatives. Served on House Judiciary Committee, Commission on Crime Delinquency, and PA Commission on Sentencing -Former Trial Lawyer

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating opposing positions in evaluating a case? A. Part of the reason I was Highly Recommended by the PA Bar Association

was that my colleagues indicated I have a

high level of integrity, treat all individuals fairly, and is patient with all persons who appear before me. I will not have any preconceived opinions prior to having heard all of the information. I have a proven record as a judge of patiently listening to each party and applying the law equally and appropriately. I understand that parties deserve and expect an impartial ruling that follows the law. Once a case is properly presented to the PA Superior Court, each party is entitled to be heard as the law allows. I am the best candidate for the PA Superior Court based on my unique experiences and proven record as a judge.

# **REPUBLICAN**

**MARIA BATTISTA** 

**COUNTY:** Clarion **OCCUPATION:** Executive/Attorney **EDUCATION:** 2 undergraduate degrees: Elementary Education, Speech Communication & Theatre, Clarion University, B.S.; Westminster College, M.Ed.; Ohio Northern University, J.D.; University of impartial process in handling cases in my Pittsburgh, Ed.D.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** 15+ years experience in Civil, Criminal and Administrative Law; Former Assistant District Attorney; Former Attorney with the Governor Corbett Administration; Served as an Administrative Hearing Officer where I presided over hundreds of hearings and issued hundreds of administrative decisions.

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating opposing positions in evaluating a case?

A. The Superior Court is one of two intermediate appellate courts in PA. The Superior Court is responsible for appeals in criminal and most civil cases from the Courts of Common Pleas. This court is also responsible for appeals involving children and families. When a matter is appealed to the Superior Court, it is the role of the judges assigned to the case to review the record from the lower court along with the issue or issues on appeal. Each case has opposing positions/parties. Each case should

be fairly and impartially evaluated by the judges based on the specific facts, law and if applicable, the constitution. It is not the role of the court or any judge to legislate from the bench.

ANN MARIE WHEATCRAFT

**COUNTY:** Chester

**OCCUPATION:** Judge, Court of Common Pleas

**EDUCATION:** University of NH School of Law 1990-1993 JD; Pennsylvania State University 1983-1988 BS Psychology and Minor in Business

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Currently President Judge in Chester County. Initially elected 2011. 2000-2011 I served as a prosecutor handling every type of criminal case. I have presided over civil, family, criminal, and treatment courts.

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating opposing positions in evaluating a case?

A. I have been employing a fair and courtroom since taking the bench in 2012. I will continue to treat all with respect and dignity, considering evidence presented, arguments of parties, and the applicable law in deciding cases. On Superior Court, three-judge panels collaborate on cases, determining the appropriate law and applying it to the facts at issue. As the President Judge in my county, I collaborate with county officials and all department heads to ensure our courts are efficient and fair for citizens. Having been an advocate and a litigator for 12 years prior to taking the bench, I understand the role of the parties and am respectful of each party fulfilling their role in our justice system.

## PENNSYLVANIA JUDGE OF THE **COMMONWEALTH COURT**

# **JOB DESCRIPTION**

The Commonwealth Court is one of Pennsylvania's two statewide intermediate appellate courts. This court, established in 1968, is unlike any other state court in

the nation. Its jurisdiction generally is limited to legal matters involving state and local government and regulatory agencies. Litigation typically focuses on subjects such as banking, insurance, utility regulation, and laws affecting taxation, land use, elections, labor practices, and workers compensation. The Commonwealth Court also acts as a court of original jurisdiction, or a trial court, when lawsuits are filed by or against the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Court is made up of nine judges. The president judge is elected to a five-year term by his/her colleagues. Generally, appeals are heard by panels of three judges sitting in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, or Pittsburgh.

Term: 10 years Base Salary: \$247,188 Vote for ONE.

#### **DEMOCRAT**

STELLA TSAI

**COUNTY:** Philadelphia

OCCUPATION: Judge, Court of Common

Pleas

**EDUCATION:** B.A. - Pennsylvania State University J.D. - University of Pennsylvania **QUALIFICATIONS:** My 35 plus years of experience in law and the judiciary have equipped me with the skills and insights necessary to address the complex social, economic, and governmental issues facing our Commonwealth.

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating opposing positions in evaluating a case?

A. My job requires me to act impartially and to treat all parties with respect. I want all parties to feel that they are on a level playing field. I do my best to put the parties at ease and allow them to have a free and fair opportunity to present their case, including language access, and that parties receive what they recognize to be due process under the law.

## REPUBLICAN

MATT WOLFORD

**COUNTY:** Erie

OCCUPATION: Attorney

EDUCATION: Undergraduate degree:
Penn State; Juris Doctorate degree: Temple
University School of Law

University School of Law

**QUALIFICATIONS:** 38 years of relevant experience in government and private sectors, including Commonwealth Court hearings and appeals; ranked "Highly Recommended" by the PA Bar Association; see website for additional details.

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating opposing positions in evaluating a case? For this response, I assume that the

For this response, I assume that the Commonwealth Court is acting in its capacity as an appellate court. In my view, appellate courts should be "hot" courts, meaning that prior to oral argument, judges should become versed in the legal arguments presented. This requires reading the opening, response, and reply briefs; and, to the extent indicated by the arguments, reviewing portions of the reproduced record. Timely preparation allows judges to take advantage of the opportunity to ask unbiased, intelligent questions at oral argument. During oral argument, judges should treat all counsel with dignity and respect; and should be mindful of the extraordinary expenditure of time, effort, and resources required to appear before the Court.

JOSH PRINCE COUNTY: Berks

OCCUPATION: Attorney
EDUCATION: Juris Doctorate

QUALIFICATIONS: I've spent my career defending our civil rights in the state and federal courts. Beyond having successfully litigated numerous appeals in the PA courts, including before the PA Supreme Court, in just the past 6 years, I've successfully litigated more than 10 cases before the Commonwealth Court.

Q. What process would you follow to be fair and impartial in reviewing and evaluating

opposing positions in evaluating a case?

A. Fairness starts with listening. I would approach each case with an open mind, carefully reviewing the facts, applicable law, and arguments from all parties. I believe in applying the Constitution and laws as written—not based on personal opinion, favors, or political pressure. The courtroom must be an approachable place where everyone knows justice will be served impartially. Behind every legal matter are real people and communities, and I take that responsibility seriously.

# JUDGE OF THE COURT OF THE COMMON PLEAS

#### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

The Court of Common Pleas is the general trial court in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Term: 10 years Base Salary: \$227,411 Vote for ONE.

#### **DEMOCRAT / REPUBLICAN**

MARK BUFALINO

**COUNTY:** Luzerne

QUALIFICATIONS: Throughout my career, I have tried approximately 30 jury trials and litigated a wide variety of cases, including complex criminal, civil, zoning, municipal and labor law cases. I believe I possess the knowledge and experience to serve as the next Judge of the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

PRIORITIES IF ELECTED: I have practiced in various counties throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including all appellate courts. I have also litigated many cases in federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court. Regardless of the type of case, I have been — and remain — dedicated to the rule of law. That will be my overriding priority.

#### **TOM MOSCA**

Candidate has not responded.

# LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL

# JOB DESCRIPTION

The Luzerne County Council is the legislative body governing Luzerne County and providing direction to its operation of providing service and protection to the citizens of Luzerne County. Council is composed of 11 members.

**Term:** 4 years **Base Salary:** \$8,000 per annum **Vote for no more than FIVE.** 

# **DEMOCRAT**

**CHRIS BELLES** 

**MUNICIPALITY:** Luzerne County **QUALIFICATIONS:** I was born and raised in Luzerne County, and I know the challenges we face here. I have a particular set of leadership skills that I've acquired in my career that will help me make Luzerne County government more efficient, organized, and competitive so that our families are better served.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** For my whole life, most of the challenges in Luzerne County were caused by economic decline and underdevelopment. This campaign is about building a better future for Luzerne County. My biggest priority will be partnering with municipalities, businesses, and labor to attract investment into Luzerne County so that we can have more highpaying jobs, improve our infrastructure, and build more homes. We have much untapped potential here, and we need to be developing the county intelligently. We are going to make life better for working people so that more of our families, friends, and neighbors can stay here, build lives here, and share in life's joys with us in Luzerne County. Simply put, the Belles campaign is about more money in your pocket.

STEVEN M. COSLETT MUNICIPALITY: Forty Fort QUALIFICATIONS: As a 23-year employee of Luzerne County Corrections, I served as a union steward and went through 5 contract negotiations, and previously was the foreman of a million-dollar company where one of my positions was in sales and finance.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** Infrastructure issues: Get our bridges repaired and replaced

Opioid crisis: We must put people in place who have the knowledge to better treat the problem, not just treat the symptoms. RCO: This ordinance will lead to a better product and local labor being used in Luzerne County.

Communication: There has been a longstanding gap in communication from elected officials and the public, we must be available not only in the Council chambers but be available to get answers they need. Correctional Facility: There has been little to no oversight at the County Prison for many years, there are safety and personnel issues that waste taxpayer money and must be addressed ASAP.

Budget and Finance: To continue responsible management of taxpayer dollars

#### **TONY PERZIA**

Candidate has not responded.

**JOHNNY PRICE** 

MUNICIPALITY: Luzerne County QUALIFICATIONS: I am proud to boast an extensive track record of public service here in Luzerne County. My experience as a first responder, combined with my experience in politics here in the county, have given me a firsthand look at issues we face in the county, and the knowledge of what it takes to overcome them.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** More attainable housing for young people, older folks, and our veterans.

More responsible maintenance of countymaintained infrastructure.

Government ought to better support economic development in Luzerne County. We have incredible resources of economic growth here in the county that already exist (healthcare, higher ed., manufacturing) - I'll make it a priority to ensure government adds fuel to this economic machine of ours.

# DAWN SIMMONS

QUALIFICATIONS: I am a U.S. Air Force Veteran that served with distinction both stateside and abroad. My military service shaped my leadership skills, resilience, and unwavering commitment to public service. I am a local realtor and community advocate with strong ties to Luzerne County.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** My priorities are economic growth, infrastructure development, accessible housing, environmental protections, and transparent leadership that works together to better our local community.

# **EMILY SINGH**

MUNICIPALITY: Fairmount Township QUALIFICATIONS: 10+ Years Experience in Wealth Management Banking. Completed McKinsey Leadership Course. NEPA grown. Young candidate working full-time. Knows what it feels like to struggle coming from a low income household and being a queer first generation American and a woman of color.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** I hope to empower:

Anti-Discrimination Protections
Aging Support
Affordable Housing
Children and Youth
Economic Opportunity Programs
Education and Job Training Programs
Healthcare Accessibility
Local Labor and Unions
Mental Health and Developmental Services
Opioid Addiction Support
Renewable Energy Sources

# PROBLEMS

Report an election issue by calling: 1-866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)

1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (en Español) 1-888-API-VOTE

(Asian multilingual assistance) 1-844-YALLA-US (Arabic)

Roads and Infrastructure Small Businesses Veterans

#### **DENISE WILLIAMS**

QUALIFICATIONS: Have served community through roles in healthcare, education & civic engagement: R.N. - CEO's Home Help Program Coordinator, Religious Education, Saint Therese's Church, Shavertown Step by Step - Community Support Specialist.

Luzerne County Fair Districts/PA Chair, Luzerne County Board of Elections **PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** As a County Council member, I will focus on:

- Responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars
- Eliminating waste and inefficiency
- Open and transparent governance Delivering high-quality county services
- Long-term, responsible planning
- Accountability to all residents especially seniors and those on fixed
- Enhancing overall quality of life to make Luzerne County a great place to live, work, and raise a family

To every resident of Luzerne County, I pledge to do my homework on every issue, listen carefully, speak up when it matters, and always put the people first. I believe in doing what's right—every time.

#### **REPUBLICAN**

## THOMAS DOMBROSKI

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Commercial rental building owner 32 years. King's College two bachelor of science degrees, accounting and information systems.

PRIORITIES IF ELECTED: Attempt to convince Council to use the \$24 million unassigned fund shown on page 15 of the 2023 Luzerne County Baker Tilley audit report instead of a proposed \$5 million tax increase the four incumbent Republican candidates are incorrectly proposing. Investigate/ audit the \$4.2 million hotel room tax collected in 2023. What was that used for? Increase Council's transparency and honesty with the 327,000 residents as to financial matters of Luzerne County the residents have the right to know.

KEVIN LESCAVAGE

Candidate has not responded.

#### JOHN LOMBARDO

**MUNICIPALITY:** Pittston City **QUALIFICATIONS:** I am a full time first responder and the current Chairman of County Council

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** I will prioritize continuing Luzerne County on a path forward by communicating with our staff and solving problems in a measured, conservative way.

RONALD D. KNAPP
MUNICIPALITY: Nanticoke
QUALIFICATIONS: Small business
owner of thirty-six years. Rental property /
maintenance / bookkeeper.
Allied Medical & Technical Careers

graduate, 4.0 GPA. Excel proficient, embedded formulas. Army Reservist Veteran. Administration

Specialist.

Hilldale College, 2024 - present. Completed twenty-six courses online.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** I will strictly adhere to the Home Rule Charter. United States Constitution as a backdrop and never suggest a reduction of public comments "time" and involvement in council meetings.

Think freely. Asking the important questions and standing by my beliefs. Abolishing the MS4 Storm Water Fee. Always explore ways to save hard earned Taxpayer resources.

Place litter containment in the spotlight through suggesting publication on T.V. & other media outlets.

As an Industrial Development Authority appointee, I will assist in attracting prominent business and corporations. Highly knowledgeable in the Bible. I have read it from cover to cover twenty-seven years running. Scripture used skills reigned in and the United States Constitution blueprint.

#### JACKIE SCARCELLA

Candidate has not responded.

**BRIAN THORNRTON**Candidate has not responded.

# STEPHEN J. URBAN

Candidate has not responded.

# WRITE-IN VOTING

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

#### **ROB VIARS**

Candidate has not responded.

#### **GREG WOLOVICH**

Candidate has not responded.

# LUZERNE COUNTY CONTROLLER

#### JOB DESCRIPTION

The County Controller shall serve as an independent watchdog over County fiscal and management activities.

Term: 4 years Base Salary: \$64,999 Vote for ONE.

#### **DEMOCRAT**

#### **TIM MCGINLEY**

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Served 12 years on Luzerne County Council. Chair of Council Budget, Audit and Finance Committee. Consulted and cooperative the third party County auditors.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** To review all financials transactions of county government. Provide complete reports to county administration. Note any issue and provide recommendations to remedy any issues.

#### REPUBLICAN

#### WALTER L GRIFFITHS

QUALIFICATIONS: I am the currently elected Luzerne County Controller and have been involved in Luzerne County Government for over 15 years. In 2018 I was elected to the position of Luzerne County Council and served for 2 years as a County Councilperson. In 2009 I was elected to the position of County Controller.

**PRIORITIES IF ELECTED:** The priorities of the County Controller is to be the constant overseer of county operations and report any problems or concerns to the County Administration or County Council. My priorities are to be the "Watchdog of the residents of Luzerne County" and always be working to make our county officials as accountable and efficient as possible. The independence, audit ability and unrestricted access of my office to all county information provides me with the ability to continue my work with the administration. My priorities are to always serve the people first as their representative and protect their hard earned tax dollars by conducting the required audits of county funds and oversight on county operations. This is the most important function.

# JOIN US IN OUR MISSION TO EDUCATE AND ENCOURAGE ALL CITIZENS TO VOTE AND MAKE INFORMED VOTING CHOICES.

Consider joining the League of Women Voters of the Wilkes-Barre Area

# **WHO WE ARE**

As an all-volunteer organization, we work diligently to promote citizen participation in our democracy by educating our community about voting and the democratic process. We encourage citizens to have a voice in their government by simply going to the polls to vote for the candidates who reflect THEIR views on how government should operate.

Voting truly is a simple act that can have profound effects on our county and how it operates.

Our nonpartisan status allows us to work effectively on voter education. The community knows that candidate meetings and our Voter's Guide will present information without bias. We are respected in our community because citizens know that we are fair in our presentations.

We never support political candidates or parties, nor do we do things that would appear to support one over another. Our Wilkes-Barre League focuses on voter education. Our members include men and women.

# WHAT'S IN A NAME? OUR HISTORY!

The Wilkes-Barre League of Women Voters was established in 1944. The League of Women Voters of the United States was founded in 1920 — six months before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified.

This amendment gave women the right to full voting rights after a 72-year hard-fought struggle.

The amendment was ratified on August 26, 1920. On November 2 of that year, more than eight million women across the United States voted in elections for the first time. The League of Women Voters was created to help newly enfranchised women learn how to register to vote, how to vote, how to learn about their candidates, and how to learn about the workings of their governments.

The League of Women Voters is nonexclusionary – all are welcome to join and participate in our programs.

Our name honors our rich history and those women who paved the way for all of us by working tirelessly to gain the right for disenfranchised women to vote so many years ago.

# WHAT WE DO:

- Voter Registration Drives
- Candidate Forums before General Elections
- Annual Breakfasts with Legislators
- Annual Publication of a Government Directory
- Publication of a Voter's Guide before each Primary and General Election
- Annual Meeting Dinner
- Annual Holiday Dinner

LEARN MORE: LWVWBA.ORG • M LWVWB
CONTACT US: P. O. BOX 1480, WILKES-BARRE, PA 18703-1480 570.675.3429

## **LWVWBA DEMOCRACY 101**

Presenting Democracy 101, an ongoing series of brief articles regarding government and elections, written by Board Member Dr. Thomas Baldino, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Wilkes University. Please visit our website for the latest additions!

## **Primary Elections**

What are Primaries, and Why Should I Vote In Them?

In Pennsylvania, Primary Elections occur every year in late May, except in presidential election years, when the primary moves to late April. Each party holds its own primary to determine who will represent it in the November General Election. Thus, primary elections are the first step in deciding who will run the government. Although many people only think about the primaries in presidential elections, they are also important in off-year elections, when Senate and Congressional seats are up for grabs, as well as state and local seats. Moreover, ballot measures, which allow voters to decide issues directly, are often decided in primary elections.

## What is a Closed Primary?

In Pennsylvania, we have closed primary elections, meaning that only members of a given party may vote in that party's primary: for example, only registered Republicans may vote in the Republican primary, and only registered Libertarians, in the Libertarian primary. As a result, voters registered as "Independent" cannot vote in a primary unless there is a question or measure on that ballot.

In contrast, there are states with open primaries, which come in several kinds. In one type, a registered voter may decide which primary to vote in on Election day (but may only vote in a single party's primary). In some states with this type, only voters registered with a party may participate, while in others, voters registered as independent may also participate. In another type, the ballot shows all of the offices and all of the candidates, and voters can select one candidate for each office regardless of party, but only one candidate per office. Independent voters do participate in this type.

#### What are Judicial Elections?

Judges in Pennsylvania have been elected since the mid-19th Century. These elections typically occur in odd-numbered years, when presidential and congressional races are not on the ballot.. Should an unexpected vacancy occur, however, an election can be held in an even-numbered year.. The judicial elections determine all Pennsylvania judges, from local magistrates to the State's Supreme Court..

There are several other means of selecting judges: appointment by the governor with confirmation by the legislature, appointment by the governor without confirmation, and variations of the Missouri system, in which a commission of individuals screens judicial candidates and make recommendations to the governor, who then nominates one candidate for each vacancy. Usually the legislature has the opportunity to confirm the governor's choice.

All district or county judges are elected by voters in their respective counties; all appellate judges and justices are elected state-wide. All judges and justices serve 10-year terms. At the conclusion of their terms, they may seek to remain on the bench by standing for election in a retention election.

# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE WILKES-BARRE AREA

P.O. Box 1480 | Wilkes-Barre, PA 18703-1480 | 570-675-3429 | lwvwba.org

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The League of Women Voters of the Wilkes-Barre Area is a nonpartisan organization which has as its purpose the promotion of political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. Membership is open to any person who subscribes to the purpose and policy of the League. While the League of Women Voters has made every effort to ensure that the information provided to us by the candidate is typed properly in this guide and it will not be liable for damages arising out of error, deletion or omission.

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Prepared by: The League of Women Voters of The Wilkes-Barre Area and The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania.

Special Thanks to the Times Leader for publishing the Voters Guide. The Voters Guide is a member-supported publication.

# Online Voters Guide:

The Vote411 Online Voters Guide is available at www.vote411.org. Useful information for voters can be found on the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania homepage: www.palwv.org. This Voters Guide is available on the League of Women Voters of the Wilkes-Barre Area homepage: lwvwba.org.