

Why Should I Care About School Board Elections?

Local Elections are May 18, 2021

In most communities, school districts are the largest employer, largest purchaser of energy and materials, largest food program, and largest real estate and construction projects. Most people do not realize that property values, wages, crime rates and even employment rates have been tied to how your school district operates.

Issue	What does the school board do?	Why should I care?
Taxes	While the state determines the increase in property taxes each district can levy, the school board can choose to not implement tax increases.	Many voters without children care more about taxes than the quality of education. To appease local residents, the school board may choose not to implement the tax increase. The school board then claims “poverty” when additional education needs cannot be met.
Budget	The school board decides how to allocate the budget.	Will there be overcrowded schools or a new building built? Will there be equitable distribution of technology? Should there be funding for a new football field or band uniforms? Should money be spent on music and arts programs? Is it useful to provide a laptop for every student? How about building upgrades—is the ventilation system safe?
School Safety & Gun Control	School boards decide on the school’s policies regulating security guards and other protective measures	There are trade-offs that are made. Safety and security go hand-in-hand with a positive school culture: trauma-informed policies - such as equity, inclusion, and social-emotional awareness programs - lead to a positive school culture requiring less armed guards. Alternatively, schools may choose to rely on having more security guards, creating increased disciplinary issues and minority students feeling less safe rather than more.
Curriculum	School boards have control of making sure education is robust and well-rounded, while complying with state and federal standards.	School board representatives can be anti-science, causing the science curriculum to be out-of-date or even inaccurate. Technologies may not be current. History books may not reflect the whole truth of our history.
Equity	The school board decides which programs the school will offer for parental assistance.	Will there be after school help? Full time kindergarten? Free lunch programs? Training for all workers in treating students with respect? Representation of all demographics among staff? Even if not for myself, do I care that all are treated fairly?
Charter and Private Schools	On average, Chesco schools spend 9K-15K per child per year to educate them.	Every time a child is lost to a charter, the funds to educate that child are sent out of the public school system to go directly to the charter. Public school dollars also pay for transportation and health services at private schools.
School Start Times	The school board decides how to schedule classes and busses.	New research says teenagers need sleep and should not start school earliest. Young children are awake earlier, so the order really needs to be reversed.

Be Aware of Cross-Filing: Know Your Candidates!

Cross-filing is when candidates from one Party appear on the ballot of the opposing Party in the Primary.

The Primary election is when each Party picks their candidates who will appear on the ballot in the General election. Voters are given a ballot supposedly for their specific party, but the ballot can contain candidates from other parties because of cross-filing. ***School Board Directors can cross-file.*** You can find out who is running for each position on YOUR ballot by calling Chester County Voter Services for YOUR sample ballot: 610-344-6410. Then Google each Candidate’s name to find their website and Facebook page to learn what party they represent, and what their views are on the issues.

Ballot Questions

All voters can vote on these proposed changes to our Pennsylvania Constitution.

Ballot Question	What It Does	Consequences
<p><i>Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law and increase the power of the General Assembly to unilaterally terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration . . .*</i></p>	<p>Gives total control to the PA legislature to END or CONTINUE a “State of Emergency”. Removes the Governor’s veto power over their decision.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote: NO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would severely limit the Governor’s ability to keep us safe during a state of emergency • We need fast action when lives are at stake. Emergencies are no time for 253 politicians in Harrisburg to have a political debate. Disasters should not be subject to a political process in the legislature. • State agencies that coordinate their response to a disaster would be taking their “marching orders” from 253 legislators rather than the Governor and his/her cabinet. • We need the Governor, who represents ALL Pennsylvanians, to act quickly and decisively. This opens up opportunities for political or regional favoritism to influence ongoing disaster relief decisions.
<p><i>Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law so that: a disaster emergency declaration will expire automatically after 21 days, regardless of the severity of the emergency, unless the General Assembly takes action to extend the disaster emergency . . .*</i></p>	<p>Limits the Governor’s power to DECLARE a “State of Emergency” to a maximum period of 21 days (it’s currently 90 days).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote: NO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disasters do not have a predictable time limit. This law would apply to all kinds of disasters: hurricanes, blizzards, industrial accidents, pandemics, etc. • Emergency Federal aid often requires that a disaster declaration is in place. If it lapses, this could delay FEMA assistance, emergency supplies, deployment of the National Guard, implementation of emergency funding to communities. • Creates the logistical hurdle of convening the 253-member legislature for a vote every 3 weeks under disaster conditions. • Grants the sole power to manage an emergency to individual legislators elected in different regions of the state, rather than the executive elected by the entire state.
<p><i>Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended by adding a new section providing that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of an individual’s race or ethnicity?</i></p>	<p>Restricts PA government agencies and institutions from denying an individual’s equal rights because of race or ethnicity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote: No Recommendation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the Pennsylvania Constitution and the Equal Protection Clause in the U.S. Constitution already provide broad protections against discrimination by State-run agencies. • This amendment focuses on prohibiting discrimination against the <i>individual</i>, with a color-blind approach to discrimination. This would include claims of “reverse discrimination”, where a Caucasian person could sue a State-run operation, agency, or school if they felt they were discriminated against. Thus, this new law could be used to ban equal opportunity programs that consider race for the purpose of balancing out inequities. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For perspective on this complex amendment, please visit:</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5PdpMbG1Vs</p>
<p><i>Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized... for loans to volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services....to include loans to municipal fire departments or companies that provide services through paid personnel...*</i></p>	<p>Would expand the class of eligible loan applicants (volunteer organizations) to include municipal fire departments and companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vote: Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These loans may be used for establishing or modernizing firefighting facilities, or for the purchase of new firefighting apparatus, vehicles, and protective or communications equipment. • This referendum does not authorize incurring any additional debt to fund the loan program. It also does not expand the purposes for which loans may be made.

*For complete questions and more information about these ballot questions, visit <https://onyourballot.vote411.org/index.do>