

Blue wave in NP School Board election

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Anissa Gardizy, Editor in Chief • November 8, 2017 •





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LANSDALE – The North Penn School Board has maintained a long and consistent republican ideology, but this year, five democratic candidates swept the board. Tina Stoll, Christian Fusco, Mark Warren, and Jonathan Kassa were all elected, beating incumbent republicans Frank O'Donnell and Josie Charnock, and their team of Patrick McGee and Thomas Mancini . Running for the two-year seat vacated by the late Carolyn Murphy, Jenna Ott rounded out the democratic slate, beating republican Michelle Rupp.

“There were a lot of Republicans that voted for us. There were a lot of Democrats who haven't voted for quite some time. For an off year election in an odd year, this is really a testament to our community's focus on what matters. It's empowering, it's inspiring, and more than anything, it represents a very bright future,” said Kassa.

The Republican slate had O'Donnell, who had been on the board for 20 years, and Charnock,

who has had a seat on the board for 4 years. The Republicans also had McGee, who was appointed to occupy the seat of the late Carolyn Murphy up until the November election.

Tina Stoll is a veteran candidate, but the rest of her slate had never run in a North Penn School Board election. Despite her party's differences, Stoll saw the diversity as an asset.

"The five of us just cliqued from the very beginning . We have a very diverse slate. I have run before and my kids already went through the district. [Christian, Jonathan, and Mark] all have kids currently in the district, and Jenna plans to raise a family here someday. We have a wide range of perspectives which I think makes our slate special," said Stoll.

The Democrats, or North Penn Neighbors for Progress, got their whole slate elected, winning in parts of the district they didn't think would come easily.

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Knowing the makeup of the North Penn School District, the democrats believed that national politics may have actually helped them in the election.

"I thought it was going to be an uphill climb. This area had not traditionally been very friendly to democratic candidates. I did however feel that we had a really good opportunity to find voters who typically are not engaged in off year elections given the national climate," said Fusco.

"We were technically the underdogs in this election because the board has been republican for so long, All of us are new except for Tina, but I knew we had a really good chance because we are all qualified, and it seemed time for a change," said Warren.

While on the campaign trail, many of the democrats were getting positive feedback from the community, but they didn't want to get ahead of themselves.

"While we were canvassing, we were hearing good things. People were excited to vote, people were telling us they were going to flip, but given the national election, we weren't taking anything for granted. People were knocking on doors up until Monday night. It was getting done, and I think the voter turnout really reflected that," said Warren.

Jonathan Kassa believes that the high turnout of voters for his party is due to his team's focus on the issues, not political division.

"

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— Jonathan Kassa

"We stand for common sense before politics. We are bipartisan. Good ideas are not political, and at the local level, party politics shouldn't matter. What matters is students, taxpayers, and the value that North Penn is to the entire community," said Kassa.

"It's not politics with us, it's the school board," said Warren.

For the youngest member of the democratic slate, Jenna Ott, she felt optimistic about the election while at the polls due to positive interactions with a wide range of voters.

"I felt optimistic throughout the day just because of the interactions I was having at the polls. Every person whose hand I shook stayed and talked with me. I had a couple hardcore republicans who came out of the polls saying, 'I voted my party, but I voted for you', and that showed me that people were voting for people, not just for a party," said Ott.

RESULTS

Tina Stoll (D) 10,710 14.22%

Christian Fusco (D) 10,649 14.14%

Mark Warren (D) 10,305 13.69%

Jonathan Kassa (D) 10,217 13.57%

Patrick A. McGee, Jr. (R) 8,441 11.21%

Frank O'Donnell (R) 8,245 10.95%

Thomas Mancini (R) 8,414 11.18%

Josephine Charnock (R) 8,302 11.03%

Jenna Ott (D) 10,516 55.89%

Michelle Rupp (R) 8,299 44.11%

For more informations about the election and election results, visit <https://electionresults.montcopa.org/#/dist?m=school>.