



Still, only 3 of these Kids will Learn to Read

Only 41% of Students at Brandywine Schools can read at grade level!



Less than a year after the referendum raised property taxes, Brandywine School may use Assessment to raise taxes by 10% more.

Brandywine Hundred residents approved a school tax increase less than a year ago, aiming to improve education. However, recent testing shows only 41% of students are reading at grade level, raising doubts about progress. Now, the school district plans to use Delaware's statewide property tax reassessment to raise taxes by another 10%.

The reassessment, the first in over 40 years, updates property values to reflect current market conditions and address inequities in the outdated tax system. It follows a 2020 Chancery Court ruling deeming the system unconstitutional. New property values will be applied in the 2025 tax year.

Although designed to be revenue-neutral, state law allows school districts is considering increasing revenue by up to 10% now or in the future. Residents question whether more taxes will translate into better education outcomes, as concerns grow over accountability and the effectiveness of recent funding increases.

Brandywine Schools Make Little Progress in Teaching Students to Read with 25% more money and less Students!

Standardized testing reveals that only 41% of students in the Brandywine School District can read at grade level, sparking concerns about the state of education in the area. This troubling statistic persists despite lowered academic standards in recent years, which were intended to increase the number

of students testing as proficient. Over the past three years, however, proficiency rates have shown little improvement. The lack of progress raises questions about the effectiveness of increased school funding. Brandywine residents approved a tax hike less than a year ago, expecting it to boost educational outcomes. Yet, the data suggests that additional resources have not translated into better reading skills for most students. Educators and parents worry that poor reading proficiency has broader impli-

cations beyond academics. Students who struggle to read often face frustration in the classroom, contributing to behavioral issues and discipline problems. Additionally, these challenges can lead to increased absenteeism and, in many cases, students dropping out of school altogether. As the district evaluates its strategies, many are calling for a renewed focus on fundamental skills like reading to ensure students are equipped for future success. The pressing question remains: how can the district close the gap and better serve its students?

State Budget to Grows Faster Inflation Again

Democrats Have Proposed the Another 9% Budget Increase

WILMINGTON, DE – While still Governor, John Carney unveiled his FY 2026 and recommended budget this month, proposing \$6.6 billion in General Fund spending, marking a nearly 9% increase from last year's \$6.07 billion. While the budget focuses on public education, healthcare, and housing, critics warn it could lead to new taxes on Delaware's working families. Senate Candidate Brent Burdge voiced his concerns, stating, "State Government should not grow faster than inflation. Delaware families are already struggling with rising costs. We need fiscal restraint, not unchecked government expansion." Governor Carney defended the budget, highlighting achievements like bolstering the Budget Stabilization Fund to over \$450 million since 2017, increasing educator salaries, and investing in affordable housing. Major allocations includes \$85.5 million for Medicaid growth and \$40.5 million for housing, Critics argue the rapid spending growth risks placing undue financial strain on working families. Concerns over potential tax increases and future budget pressures loom as Medicaid and state employee costs rise. As Governor Carney's term ends, he leaves behind a legacy of fiscal growth paired with ambitious investments. The next administration faces the challenge of sustaining these commitments while safeguarding Delaware's economic future.

Special Elections Set for Feb. 15 to Fill Two Senate Seats in Brandywine & North Wilmington.

North Wilmington voters will head to the polls on Saturday, Feb. 15, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. to fill two vacant State Senate seats. The vacancies arose after Sarah McBride was elected to the U.S. Congress and Kyle Evans Gay assumed the role of Lieutenant Governor.



In the 1st District (Wilmington area), Democrat Dan Cruce, COO of the United Way of Delaware and administrator of Christina School District, will face Republican Steve Washington, a retired Brandywine School District special education teacher and mentor for neighborhood kids. In the 5th District (Talleyville area), former Democratic State Representative and Christiana Care Executive Ray Seigfried will compete against Republican Brent Burdge, a community leader and retired executive.

Day-of voting will take place at normal polling locations, except for three changes in the 5th District:

- 07-05: Forwood Elementary School, 1900 Westminster Dr.
- 07-13: Forwood Elementary School, 1900 Westminster Dr.
- 12-02: Brandywine High School, 1400 Foulk Rd.

Polling places can be found at de.gov/voteplaces.

Early voting runs Feb. 4–13 at the Claymont Community Center and the Police Athletic League of Wilmington. Detailed times are available by scanning this code.



Special Election on February 15 for Brandywine Hundred & North Wilmington.

READ ALL ABOUT THE CANDIDATES. YOUR VOTE MATTERS!



Meet the Two Familiar Candidates for Brandywine/Claymont

Brent Burdge: Citizen from the Community.

Brent Burdge, a retired chemical engineer and 35-year Delaware resident, is running for State Senate to restore balance and meaningful debate to the legislature, ensuring that the people of Brandywine Hundred have a voice in Dover. Frustrated by the lack of responsiveness to local concerns, Brent is stepping forward to bring common sense and a focus on community priorities to state government.

Brent built a successful career at DuPont and later Axalta Coating Systems, working in engineering, operations, IT, and supply chain. Since retiring, he has dedicated his time to analyzing legislative



activities in Delaware's General Assembly, providing insights and support to Republican leaders and lawmakers.

Brent Burdge Vs. Ray Siegfried

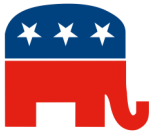
Brent Burdge:

- Community Leader
- Citizen Politician
- Seeking to Return Balance to Senate
- Seeks Civil Debate vs. Party Politics
- New to State Government

Ray Siegfried:

- Healthcare Executive, Christiana Care
- Former State Rep for one term
- Democratic Party Veteran

Brent and his wife, Carole, have been active in church, civic associations, and local political groups throughout their time in Delaware. As a committed community member and avid runner, Brent participates in local races, including



completing the Broad Street 10-Miler with his daughter.

As a candidate, Brent pledges to prioritize the needs and concerns of Brandywine Hundred residents over partisan politics. He seeks to ensure that their voices are heard and to bring accountability and transparency back to the legislative process.

Ray Siegfried: A Health Care Administrator Focused on Christiana Care's Interests vs. Delaware Families?

Ray Siegfried, a former Delaware State Representative, is seeking a return to the legislature with a bid for the State Senate. After winning his initial seat in 2018 in a crowded primary, he lost decisively in a one-on-one rematch against Larry Lambert in 2020, capturing just 41% of the vote. Now, four years later, Siegfried is positioning himself for a promotion to the higher chamber. Siegfried's career has been defined by his long tenure as Senior Vice President of Administration at Christiana

na Care Health System, where he oversaw operations at one of Delaware's largest healthcare institutions. However, critics point to rising healthcare costs during his time there and question his commitment to containing costs for patients. In addition to his healthcare administration career, Siegfried has served as a visiting professor at Arcadia University and as a board member of the Wilmington HOPE Commission.

Citizen groups and healthcare advocates question whether Siegfried's legislative ambitions align more with protecting the interests of Christiana Care and bolstering his professional legacy rather than delivering cost-saving solutions for Delaware families struggling with rising healthcare expenses.



The Battle the First Senate District: Who is the People's Candidate?

Steve Washington: Working for Delaware's Kids

Steve Washington, a lifelong resident of Delaware, is running for State Senate to bring fresh ideas and a strong commitment to his community. Born and raised in Delaware, Steve's roots

run deep in the First State, where he learned the value of hard work, integrity, and the importance of giving back to the place he has always called home.



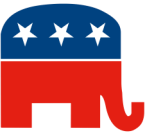
Steve has spent his life focused on building relationships and helping others. As a proud member of his community, he has dedicated countless hours to local initiatives, mentoring programs, and efforts to uplift those around him. Steve's passion for service stems from his firm belief that when we work together, we can overcome challenges and create opportunities for everyone.

Education is at the heart of Steve's campaign. He is a vocal advocate for improving Delaware's schools by focusing on teaching fundamental skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics. Steve believes that a strong educational foundation is the key to unlocking every child's potential and preparing them for lifelong success. He is committed to ensuring that schools are equipped to provide students with the tools they need to excel in the classroom and beyond.

Steve Washington's campaign is grounded in the principle that a stronger Delaware begins with investing in its people. Whether it's improving education, supporting families, or fostering economic

growth, Steve is determined to make a positive impact. He is running for State Senate not just as a candidate, but as a neighbor and friend who understands the challenges facing Delawareans and is ready to fight for solutions.

Steve Washington's vision for Delaware is one where every resident has the opportunity to thrive. With his deep connection to the community and unwavering dedication to making a difference, Steve is the leader Delaware needs to build a brighter future.



About This Paper

For more information about this publication, please feel free to call George D. Rotsch 302-354-5730.



This publication is a cooperative effort between DispatchDE LLC. Send comments, suggestions and resumes to publisher@DispatchDE.com.

Advertising Space is Available. Call 302-354-5730

Note: this Newspaper was edited with the assistance of ChatGPT.

Dan Cruce, Political Insider and School Administrator

Dan Cruce's professional background paints of an educator and citizen concerned about our schools.

However, he is also a political insider whose career has been largely spent within the circles of power and influence that create our current school system in North Wilmington.

Cruce's resume includes time as Education Vice President at the Hope Street Group, a national policy nonprofit that supports the status quo in our schools, and as Deputy Secretary/Chief of Staff at the Delaware Department of Education, overseeing the policies that

resulted in 41% of Students being able to read at grade level.

He also served as Assistant Superintendent/Chief of Staff in Delaware's Christina School District—roles often supporting the bureaucracy and teachers union

over the benefits of parent and students. As Chief Operating Officer of the United Way of Delaware, Cruce

oversees a prominent non-profit but serves a president of non-profit groups he funds. He has spent much of his career in administrative roles that highlight his experience making deals for who is funded and who is not.



Steve Washington vs. Dan Cruce

Steve Washington

- Educator - Teacher, Advocate
- Experience: New to Office
- First Move is defending Constitution, Freedom & Individual Rights
- Change: Consistent with Ramone

Dan Cruce

- Political Insider
- Partially responsible for the current state of our public schools.
- Experience: Bureaucrat/Administrator

Educated at James Madison University and Delaware Law School, Cruce boasts impressive academic credentials but may lack the firsthand experience needed to connect with working families. His extensive board memberships, including leadership roles at arts and philanthropy organizations, further underscore his alignment with elite circles rather than grassroots needs.


While his background demonstrates expertise in administration, critics argue that Cruce's career trajectory suggests a focus on political networks and institutional priorities, leaving questions about his ability to truly understand and address the challenges faced by everyday Delawareans.

Opinions and Perspectives


Your Vote, Your Voice: The Power of Special Elections

By Cathy Cloutier
Former State Senator,
Brandywine Hundred

As a former State Senator who had the honor of serving this community for 20 years, I've always believed in the power of people to shape their own future through the ballot box. Special elections, in particular, offer a unique opportunity to have an outsized impact. With fewer voters typically participating, every vote carries greater weight- your voice



can truly be the deciding factor. These elections often address issues that touch our daily lives—funding for education, infrastructure improvements, and policies that affect working families. For women, who have fought tirelessly for the right to vote and to have their voices heard, participating in special elections is an act of empowerment and responsibility. I've spent decades working alongside the people of this community, and I've seen how deeply you care about your families, your neighbors, and the future of our state. That's why it's so important to show up and vote, especially now. Your vote is a reflection of the values we hold dear: fairness, opportunity, and a commitment to improving the lives of everyone in our community especially the children. So, as someone who loves this community deeply, I urge you to vote in the upcoming special election. Together, we can make a real difference.



Cathy Cloutier served in the House and Senate for over 20 years and loves this community.

The Agenda in the General Assembly

2025 Legislative Update:
Key Bills on the Docket in
Dover

By Brent Burdge,
Candidate 5th Senate District

The 2025 session of the 153rd General Assembly in Delaware will focus on an array of pressing issues, with education and gender-related policies taking center stage. Here's a comprehensive list of initial filings and anticipated discussions:

Key Legislation

- HB13 (Amend Personal Income Tax Brackets) – Proposes new tax brackets at higher income levels with increased rates.
- Constitutional Amendments (SB2/SB3) – Seeks to enshrine early voting and no-excuse absentee voting in the Delaware Constitution.
- Zero-Emission Vehicle Regulations – Plans to phase out combustion engine vehicles by 2035, following California's model.
- HB35 (Abolishing the DeathPenalty) – First-leg of a constitutional amendment to eliminate capital punishment.
- HB33 “Relaxing Marijuana Laws in Newark”– Allows civil violations for cannabis use by persons 18-20 and hearings initially at the Alderman’s Court or in the Court of Common Pleas.

Education-Focused Legislation

1. HB29 (School Performance Card) – Reintroduced to provide transparent and accessible performance reports on all schools, including proficiency rates. Passed the House unanimously last year but stalled in the Senate.

2. HB32 (Funding for School Resource Officers) – Proposes at least one resource officer per school, with additional officers for larger schools. Reintroduced after failing in committee previously.

3. HCR2 (Public Education Funding Commission) – Aims to re-establish a commission for a comprehensive review of education funding and develop a roadmap for reform.

4. Single-Digit Proficiency Bills – Expected legislation to address alarmingly low proficiency rates in core subjects like reading and math.

5. Financial Literacy in High Schools – High-priority bills anticipated to mandate financial literacy courses for graduation.

6. SB48 (School Bus Safety) – Expands disorderly conduct laws to cover intentional interference with school bus operations.

Gender and Social Issues

1. HB140 (Physician-Assisted Suicide/Euthanasia) – Reintroduced by Eric Morrison after a gubernatorial veto.

2. HB346 (Gender Transition Surgery on Minors) – Expected to be reintroduced; previously aimed to shield medical professionals from liability related to gender transition procedures for minors.

3. Protections for Asexual and

Pansexual Individuals (HB275) – Codified into Delaware law in 2024 but may see expansions or clarifications.

4. Medical Experimentation and Sterilization Protections – Anticipated new legislation to address concerns over medical experimentation and irreversible procedures for minors.

5. HB8 (Recognizing Valid Marriage of First Cousins) – A controversial proposal to recognize such marriages in Delaware, currently permitted in 18 states.

Future Outlook

Education and gender-related policies are expected to dominate debates, reflecting growing concerns about school performance, equity, and healthcare ethics. Delaware lawmakers will grapple with balancing community priorities and ensuring transparency and accountability in these pivotal areas.



Building children
into Champions one
stroke at a time!

REGISTER TODAY
(302) 268-8019



Get Fit & Healthy this Summer
with an individual, couple or
family membership to D-Fit!

www.delswimfit.com

Aquatics, Pickle Ball, Spin, Karate,
Zumba, Weigh training, Yoga &
More!

POLLY DRUMMOND
SHOPPING CENTER
Pike Creek Delaware

Elect
Brent Burdge
State Senator—5th District



www.burdge4change.com

Paid for by Burdge for Change. 302-408-0530





Shawn Garvin
DNREC Secretary
Removed for Office



Chef Antimo DiMeo
Bardea Food & Wine
Semi Finalist for James Beard
Award... Again!



Sen. Laura Sturgeon
Delaware State Senate
Education Committee Chair



Kyle Evans Gay
Lt. Governor
Likes "Simba"

People Making an Impact In Delaware!

- DNREC Secretary responsible for the EV Mandate has been fired and replaced with Garry Patterson.
- Chef Antimo DiMeo from Bardea Food and Wine in Wilmington Named James Beard Award Semifinalist .
- Sen. Sturgeon still insists that Delaware's reading test for 3rd graders was too difficult and "unrealistic" for too many students. Only 41% of Delaware Students read at grade level. 45th in the US.
- Lt. Governor Kyle Evans Gay has announced her candidacy for Governor in 2032 quoting the young lion Simba. "I Just can't wait to be King".

Top 10 Signs of Spring in North Wilmington

Winter is Good in Delaware, but Spring is even better!

Here are ten reasons why being an we can't wait for warmer weather in North Wilmington:

1. Little League Baseball Season: Registration is already open for Brandywine Little League Baseball. Spring is not too far way!



10:00 on Sunday February 2. Nothing say Summer like sending the kids to Summer Camp!

4. Wilmington Flower Market: Hosted every year in Rockford Park, this event can ensure beautiful flowers, plant and entertainment for the whole family and rain... At lease two of the three days. May 8,9,10.

5. Rita's Water Ice Opens: The Wilmington area Rita's Water Ice Stores will open on March 1st. This has become a tradition start to Spring for many families.



2. Opening of the Mariano's Market The family open air market in North Wilmington reopen is time for Mothers Day every year.

3. Summer Camp Fair The Delaware Museum of Nature and Science will hold a Summer Camp Fair at

6. St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival: On March 15th, Dover will host its annual St. Patrick's Day Parade and Festival, featuring festive activities and celebrations



7. Wildflower Celebration Weekend: From April 18th to April 20th, Hockessin will celebrate the beauty of wildflowers with various activities and events

8. Bellefonte Arts Festival: On May 17th, Bellefonte will celebrate local art in its many forms .

9. Red Clay Valley Clean up: Join the crowd at Ashland Nature Center for the Red Clay Valley Cleanup. This event brings over 500 enthusiastic volunteers together to clear litter from 65 miles of roads and waterways. This fun event is a fantastic opportunity for volunteers of all ages!

10. Winterthur Point to Point A highlight of the local social calendar, Point-to-Point is an old-fashioned country race featuring horse racing, antique carriages and elegant tailgate picnicking. Adult-\$30.00, 12-20-\$15.00, Under 12-Free. Tickets go on sale starting March 1.

We can't wait for Spring this year... Can you tell?

COMMUNITY CALENDAR SPRING 2025

Special Election in North Wilmington on February for the 1st and 5th Senate Districts to replace now US Rep. Sarah Mc Bride and Lt. Gov. Kyle Evans Gay. Every vote counts, especially in a special election.

The Delaware Theatre Company will present "Tuesday's with Morrie" directed by Matt Silva opens Feb 19-March 9. Tickets are available at 302-594-1100

Candlelight Theater present "Bright Star" opening on March 15. This Steve Martin Musical will make you smile and laugh all week. More information at www.candlelighttheatrede.org.

Cowboy Bebop Live at the Queen Theatre on March 7 at 8:00pm. This 14-piece jazz ensemble showcases a completely one-of-a-kind production anime fans have never experienced before. Travel the solar system with anime's most iconic soundtrack at Cowboy Bebop LIVE!



Steve Washington
State Senate District 1

**ELECTION DAY:
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2025**

Teacher, Public Servant, Family

- Education
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- Prison Reform

www.votestevewashington.com

Paid for by the Friends to Elect Steve Washington.

PO