

Operation Wildfire: Good Things Happen When YOU Vote

September 8, 2022

Issue 21

Race in the Spotlight: PA 82nd Legislative District

The District

The redrawn 82nd Legislative District is new to Centre County and has no incumbent. It includes parts of the State College Borough, the Townships of Boggs, Benner, Burnside, College, Curtin, Harris, Marion and Liberty, along with Howard, Milesburg, Snow Shoe and Unionville Boroughs

The Candidates

Justin Behrens (R)

www.behrensforcentrecounty.com

Paul Takac (D)

www.paultakac.com

Neither candidate has held statewide elected office, so they do not have voting records from the State Legislature.

Let's begin with Republican candidate, **Justin Behrens**

A resident of the State College Borough, Justin Behrens is the Chief Executive Officer of non-profit Keystone Mission where he advocates for those experiencing homelessness and develops programs to empower those with mental illness. Mr. Behrens has worked with community agencies as a crisis clinician and as a case manager. He has also taught addiction and counseling at City Vision University. He has served on the Board of the National Association of Social Workers-PA.

Mr. Behrens was born, raised and educated in Pennsylvania. He received his B.S. in Social Work from Misericordia University and an M.S. in Social Work from Temple University. Mr. Behrens is a decorated Army veteran. He and his wife, Liza, an Assistant Professor in Penn State's College of Nursing, have two teenage sons.

On The Issues

Education: Mr. Behrens believes that a good education has a huge impact on whether our children are able to succeed and achieve the American Dream. He is an advocate of technical and vocational training, and believes alternative education opportunities need to be available to those not wanting traditional college. Such training can lead to skilled people working in high demand, high paying jobs. He believes a voucher system is necessary for school choice – tax dollars should follow the children, putting parents in charge of their children's educational options. Charter schools need to be held to the same standards as public schools.

Economy: Mr. Behrens believes that our state continually loses business and industry as a result of wage stagnation, and that PA is less competitive than other states, e.g., taxation, inflation, resources leaving rural areas for cities. When elected, Mr Behrens will work to "reinvigorate" our state's agricultural industry and support Penn State's agriculture research and technology. The State Legislature also needs to lower the gas tax – Pennsylvania has the second highest gas tax in the U.S. Bureaucracy, through regulation and taxation, creates cost burdens to our economy – Mr. Behrens will work to control both.

Infrastructure/Energy: Safe roads and infrastructure need to work for the people – Mr. Behrens will "fight" to see that Centre County receives its fair share of tax dollars and resources to fix our roads and strengthen our bridges which would help economic expansion. Another issue which became even more apparent during the pandemic is the state of our electric grid – many of our communities lack broadband access. Mr. Behrens believes we need to treat broadband like a utility, ensuring that it is available and cost efficient for everyone. In order to do this, we must strengthen our electric grid. Mr. Behrens will work to enhance our rich energy portfolio.

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Human Rights: As a social worker and veteran, Mr. Behren's entire career has been dedicated to working with and advocating for minorities, the underprivileged, the homeless and those having mental health and addiction problems.

Endorsements

Endorsements for new, non-incumbent Republican candidates will not be announced until later in September. We'll provide updates at that time. Mr. Behrens has, however, been endorsed by Lions for Liberty.

Let's take a look at Democratic candidate, **Paul Takac**.

A resident of Lemont, Paul Takac is a Senior Account Executive with Apple (a Silicon Valley educational technology company) where he has been employed for almost 23 years. Since 2020, he has served as a College Township Supervisor. Mr. Takac also serves as Vice Chairman of the Spring Creek Watershed and Centre Region Council of Government's Public Safety Commissions.

Mr. Takac grew up in Buffalo and graduated with a B.S. from the University of Buffalo in Anthropology. He graduated from SMU with an M.S. in Anthropology/Archeology. He also holds an M.S. in Nutrition and Integrative Health from the Maryland University of Integrative Health. His wife, Regan, attended the University of Texas, majoring in Anthropology and Archeology. They have three children.

On The Issues

Education: Mr. Takac will push to revamp the Fair Funding Formula that could distribute funding in a more equitable manner; regulating charter schools to meet public school standards; funding universal preschool and childcare; and, expanding grant programs.

Economy: Mr. Takac wants to increase the minimum wage to \$15/hour and believes wages need to change to account for inflation. He stands against Right-to-Work laws. He supports union initiatives and the passage of HB106 (Healthcare Facilities Act/Patient Safety Act) promoted by SEIU for enforcing safe nursing staffing in hospitals.

Infrastructure/Energy: Mr. Takac agrees with investing in high-speed broadband access. He believes moving toward a renewable energy economy would begin to address the climate crisis while ensuring job security. He believes this can be done through industry partnerships, workforce development, modernizing the grid and creating new energy markets.

Human Rights: Pennsylvania is one of 29 states in which those who identify as LGBTQ+ lack full non-discrimination and civil rights protection. Mr. Takac will fight for HB300 (Fairness Act), which would amend the PA Human Relations Act of 1955 that provides for the right to freedom from discrimination in employment, housing and practicing religion.

Endorsements:

- PSEA/PACE – Political Action Committee for Education
- AFSCME Council 83
- AFL-CIO
- Moms Demand Action
- Human Rights Campaign Fund

Sources: Candidate Websites and/or LinkedIn, Facebook pages, Democratic and Republican Party Websites and/or Facebook pages, www.legislation.state.pa.us, VoteSmart, State College.com