

## **Democracy for Pittsburgh**

Responses by: **Dan Onorato**, Democratic Candidate for Governor

Staff contact: Ian Rosenblum, Policy Director  
412-281-5678 or [ianrosenblum@voteonorato.com](mailto:ianrosenblum@voteonorato.com)

**1. Health care: what version(s) of public option and/or single payer do you support? Please be specific as to structure, funding, and who should administer the program. (Gubernatorial candidates: answer this presuming that a pre-empting national health program will not be passed, or that it will allow latitude for state-specific options. Senatorial candidates, please answer this question presuming that the issue will not be answered before the winner takes, or returns to, office.)**

Ensuring access to quality affordable health care is incredibly important and it must be a top priority of the next Governor. We need to fix our nation's broken health care system in order to preserve the middle class and to improve the viability of our small businesses.

The best solution to America's health care challenge is through national health care reform. I am carefully following the health care debate in Congress, and I hope that a meaningful reform package ultimately reaches the President's desk and is signed into law. Tackling this issue at the federal level will have the greatest impact on improving the well-being of our citizens and enhancing our nation's economic competitiveness.

If the federal government fails to act or passes the buck to the states, I will be prepared to lead the charge for health care reform. My main interest is in addressing health care affordability, access and quality – both for those who currently have health insurance and those who do not. In October, I issued a press release – alone among the Gubernatorial candidates as far as I can tell – announcing that if a national health care reform law gave states the ability to opt-out of offering a public option, I would veto any attempt to take that option away from Pennsylvanians.

**2. Do we need to reform regulations controlling the provider end of health care delivery? As with the question above, please assume that these issues will still be in play at the state and / or national level. Please address some or all of the following: geographical limits to access; auxiliary costs such as ambulances, lab fees, doctors who impose “minimum visit” requirements (additional visits, services, or tests); group drug buying agreements; for-profit liability insurance; clinics.**

Regardless of what the federal government does or does not do, I am committed to improving access to care and the quality of care – both of which will result in more affordable health care for Pennsylvanians.

We know that Pennsylvanians who do not have a primary care provider frequently end up in the emergency room – receiving high-cost care – when their problems could have been prevented or

treated through non-urgent care more comfortably for the patient and at a far lower cost. This challenge is particularly acute for inner-city and rural populations, and I will work to expand their access to primary care providers through affordable health insurance, clinics and other solutions.

We also know that chronic illnesses and hospital-acquired infections cause Pennsylvanians significant suffering and even death and cost the health care system billions of dollars a year. But if they are addressed up-front, we can improve the quality of care our residents receive while also driving down health care costs.

**3. We and our friends want to start businesses, but can't get loans. How will you ensure that "economic stimulus" will allow new, innovative businesses to sprout, instead of primarily encouraging the spread of large multinationals, to the detriment of locally-owned businesses? Do you believe existing tax and incentive structures are about right or is there a built in bias for larger or smaller businesses? If elected, what changes, if any, would you seek, to adjust that balance?**

Creating new jobs and encouraging start-up businesses are the most important challenge facing the next Governor and with my track record of economic development in Allegheny County, I am uniquely qualified to lead the way in growing Pennsylvania's economy.

I believe that Pennsylvania's economic development strategy should focus on the establishment and expansion of companies in key occupational clusters that can constitute a competitive advantage for each region of the state. This policy will move Pennsylvania to the forefront in creating high-tech jobs in the Green and knowledge-based economies while building on our existing strengths in manufacturing, education, life sciences and other sectors.

That is why as Governor I will spearhead a focus on Pennsylvania's new and fast-growing firms. Specifically, I will:

- *Help new businesses invest in their own growth.* I will create a tax incentive that enables small high-growth companies to retain more of their initial earnings to be used as a reinvestment in working capital through a tradable tax credit or exemption. The size and scope of this High-Growth Investment Tax Incentive will be based on economic conditions and be developed in partnership with industry and workforce stakeholders.
- *Ensure access to working capital.* I will partner with lending institutions to help make loans available to new and growing companies. This strategy will include a focus on community financial institutions and outreach in order to reach the minority- and women-owned businesses that represent a sizeable share of new company owners.
- *Encourage the next generation of manufacturing success.* As Pennsylvania's role in energy continues to expand, so will the opportunities for firms that develop and produce components in alternative energy production and energy conservation strategies – such as wind and solar components, Green buildings, grid management and battery technology. Just as I worked to bring a plant to Allegheny County that will manufacture mirrors for solar panels, I will increase Pennsylvania's focus on the supply chains for the energy economy.

- *Provide support to help businesses grow.* I will collaborate with economic development agencies and other partners that work directly with businesses to create individualized growth plans and then link those businesses to state and other funding sources in order to finance the growth strategies. Adequate funding for Small Business Development Centers and economic development organizations is essential to achieving this goal. In addition, I will engage local Chambers of Commerce in identifying and convening firms in need of assistance.
- *Provide access to technical assistance for management and administrative skills.* Fast-growing companies often face unique management challenges as they move from a 2- or 3-person operation to one that is 10 or 20 times larger in size. I will ensure access to technical assistance in helping firms plan for and overcome this hurdle, working with the Small Business Development Centers and other partners. I will also expand the use of business coaches who can provide expertise in targeted fields through the Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program, known as PennTAP, which hires experienced industry experts to work as business coaches with interested companies.

**4. All of us are downwind, downstream, occupationally exposed to, or “up the food chain” from toxic wastes. What can you do--what do you intend to do--to strengthen the rights and broaden the legal options of affected populations across county, state, and even national lines?**

Protecting the environment is an absolute necessity, and I will stand up for policies that preserve the health of Pennsylvanians while enhancing our quality of life. As Allegheny County Executive, I cleaned up 1,500 acres of brownfields and returned them to productive use. I believe strongly that environmental and economic development priorities can and must go hand-in-hand; my experience eliminating the blight of brownfields demonstrates that approach, and it is a commitment that I will bring to Harrisburg if elected Governor.

The recent state budget crisis led to drastic cuts to the Departments of Environmental Protection and Conservation & Natural Resources. These agencies are responsible for monitoring and enforcement of many of our environmental regulations, and I am deeply concerned that under-funding their operation leaves Pennsylvanians unprotected. I have therefore proposed a severance tax on natural gas extraction and would use a portion of the revenue to restore the cuts to environmental oversight programs.

In addition, funding for the package of state programs that support environmental conservation and protection is running out. I want to dedicate a portion of the severance tax revenue to launch the next phase of Growing Greener, which would include:

- Farmland preservation and other green space preservation – with the goal of 700,000 acres covered by 2015 – a two-thirds increase;
- Addressing watershed needs and cleaning up rivers and streams;
- Cleaning up brownfields and abandoned mines so that they can be returned to productive use or maintained as green space for community use;
- Improving state parks and other recreational resources;

- Supporting the infrastructure needs of the Game Commission and Fish & Boat Commission;
- Expanding recycling;
- Supporting community development and historic preservation; and
- Advanced energy deployment.

Finally, we need to have provisions in place so that we can benefit from the Marcellus shale natural gas reserves while preserving our water resources. As Governor, I will ensure that Pennsylvania has adequate laws, regulations, policies and staffing to protect water levels and water quality following Marcellus shale extraction. We cannot allow natural gas drilling to come at the expense of our priceless water, and I am confident that we can find a way to make this a win-win for the economy and the environment.