

*Democracy for Pittsburgh is the greater Pittsburgh meetup group of Democracy for America, the offspring of the "socially progressive, fiscally responsible" Howard Dean campaign. We endorse only candidates who receive ≥70% support from the voting membership. Members are encouraged to consider answers to these questions, candidate statements, newspaper interviews, and the answers you give to other groups. We try not to duplicate topics covered by other groups. Questions, answers and press materials submitted in electronic form will be posted on our website, <http://pghdfa.org/> (used almost exclusively for endorsements).*

**City and County executive, legislative and administrative offices:**

- I. Privacy, openness, and accountability: What have you done in the past to support "sunlight" laws or encourage public access to information, deliberation, and decision-making? (and/or) What existing or new ideas do you support, going forward, to encourage informed public participation? How have you / how would you protect the information of private individuals, that might otherwise be inappropriately disclosed by the push for greater public openness? From first responders (police, fire, EMT) through higher level administrative positions, what practical steps do you support to encourage professionalism and accountability?***

It is crucial that we empower our neighborhoods with more than lip service and occasional community meetings. The free exchange of information between neighborhood residents and their elected Councilmember should flow in two directions. I would like to bring the Neighborhood Councils model to Pittsburgh. Neighborhood Councils are a citywide system of independent and influential advisory entities, elected by the community and charged with maintaining the two-way exchange of information. These are town hall meetings in the most traditional sense in which all voices have a say regardless of status, income, race, creed or other factors. This model is one example of building relationships with the community, helping people to become part of the solution instead of being rescued.

- II. Several public-private partnerships have been set up in areas such as the Schenley plaza and riverside locations on the Northside. While this pseudo-public space is lovely for recreation, it is also considered private for purposes of assembly, rallies, protests, or informational / not-for-profit leafleting--effectively, off-limits, even including the adjacent city sidewalks. Moving forward, how can the city and county prevent or remedy the significant de-facto privatization of public space, without, at the same time, countenancing harassment?***

*It is imperative that we permit public discourse, particularly if we want to promote the free exchange of ideas in Pittsburgh. I believe that we can remedy this tension by using the process we have in place for any other public or private space – we rely on the Administrative branch to enforce the law. Public dollars cannot be used to deny the public their right to assemble.*

**III. What sorts of jobs best anchor and sustain a community? What role, if any, should your office play in encouraging / not hindering certain types of job development?**

*Employment opportunities is a critical issue for District 9 as well as the larger City. I applaud efforts to bring sustainable green initiatives to the region and would encourage educational entities such as CCAC to provide appropriate training so my neighbors can access these jobs.*

*As a City Councilmember, it is my role to inform and advocate. I am working with the Women & Girls Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania to learn more about the good work women are accomplishing with green initiatives. I intend to translate this to the young women and girls in my district, encouraging them to pursue this non-traditional career path and advocating among employers and decision-makers to give access to residents of District 9.*

**IV. What sorts of development, redevelopment, or blight-fighting programs best anchors and sustains a community? What could you do, within the bounds of your office, to suggest, encourage, implement or support specific responses to (e.g.) abandoned or decrepit housing, declining schools, and/or other problems that typify a community in decline?**

*Housing blight is a tremendous challenge in District 9. There are more than 1,000 abandoned buildings in Homewood alone. Meanwhile, the lack of decent affordable housing opportunities continues to erode the community. I would like to sit at the table with the Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh and the URA to consider how we can leverage these abandoned buildings into sustainable housing, perhaps revisiting the shared equity concept of home ownership.*

*One challenge in education has been the constant flux on the fate of schools in my district. We need the City School Board to make a decision about the fate of Westinghouse School as the shifting plans have increased the distrust of the community.*

**V. The 800 lb gorillas: Health care is a statewide / national level issue. So is ecological policy. However, benefits, funding, permitting and potentially funding of clinics are city and county issues (within the bounds set by Act 47). Similarly, both the city and county have some say in determining the appropriateness and location of coal and gas extraction / processing / waste product storage, from the standpoint of risks to public health and to infrastructure. In both cases, very large local employers have vested interests that may not be in line with the best interests of the citizenry. What, realistically, do you hope to do to further the best interests of the citizenry, and/or reduce the risk of inappropriate corporate influence?**

*We have had a Council recently that has not been afraid to take a stand on the larger (federal, state) issues, and who have governed from a progressive standpoint--in the best interests of those who live in the City. In office, I will continue in this vein of being an advocate for the health, safety, and economic well-being of the people in my district.*

**Judicial / Magisterial offices:**

- I. Privacy, openness, and accountability: Judicially, what tools are available to you to encourage a) greater openness in public information b) appropriate privacy of private information and c) professionalism and accountability of all city employees, most specifically police and emergency responders?***
- II. Public-private partnerships: are there legal limits to a municipality or county's ability to sign away its public space via economic partnership agreements? How does one balance the legitimate desire of groups to protest and / or inform the public, vs. the public (or an individual's) right to not be bothered / harassed? Does it make sense to have a blanket ban on approaching people on the sidewalks in Schenley plaza, but not (e.g.) the sidewalks in the vicinity of certain medical providers?***
- III. "Freedom from" vs. "freedom to": what legal issues do you expect to address in terms of Marcellus shale or other extractive industries? Are certain of these conflicting freedoms / protections more nearly absolute than others?***
- IV. Magistrates, common pleas judges and commonwealth court judges may all deal with family law issues. Insofar as it applies to your office, please address any / all of the following: a) What is your position on rights for minors with regard to issues like abuse, reproductive issues, and emancipation? b) What are your views on the court precedent of preferentially awarding majority custody to the mother? c) Do you feel step-parents should have any legal rights with regard to the step children they parent? Does this apply equally regardless of the gender of either / both parents?***
- V. Since 2007, we have been asking candidates whether the "for profit" incarceration model suffers from an intrinsic conflict of interest. (That is, the prison will do better, financially, by increasing sentence lengths and by increasing recidivism, rather than by rehabilitating inmates.) Given the highly publicized kickback scandal involving for-profit youth prisons, we are instead stating that this is an actual, not a potential problem, and we'd like to know what, if anything, you can do about it. Also, are mandatory sentencing guidelines part of the solution, or part of the problem?***

**For all offices:** Answers should be ~50-300 words, and focus on whatever aspect of the question is most relevant for your specific office. You may also submit a candidate statement / press release and/or a link to a public YouTube statement. Your response can be in the form of e-mail text or an attached .doc, .rtf, .txt or .pdf file. **You must include a statement saying who is doing the actual e-mailing, and that the answers are in their final form, as approved by the candidate.** Voting will be by absentee ballot, by active DFP members (those who have attended two or more meetups or official DFP events in the last 12 months). Answers are due by e-mail to JFSABL@GMAIL.COM by March 15, 2011. You will receive a confirmation (or reminder) on or around March 16th, 2011. There is no explicit penalty for late submission. However, voting will open on March 18th.