

**AFRICAN AMERICAN GUBERNATORIAL FORUM COALITION**  
**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

**Gubernatorial Forum Questions**

**Poverty and Income Inequality**

**President Barack Obama and governors in several other states are progressively raising the minimum wage so that it will reach \$10.10 per hour. Will you challenge the Pennsylvania Legislature to do the same?**

*I don't think \$10.10 goes far enough. My minimum wage proposal is the boldest of all the candidates vying for the Democratic nomination. It would immediately raise the rate to \$10.70 an hour – restoring the wage to its peak purchasing power when adjusted for inflation – and it would raise the tipped minimum wage to \$5 an hour. Both wages would be increased annually so incomes do not erode over time due to inflation. My plan is the only one that immediately lifts all three-person households with only one minimum wage worker out of poverty – alleviating the burden on public assistance and health care programs.*

**As the Governor how will you use the opportunities and resources of the Commonwealth to reduce unemployment and poverty among the State's minority populations?**

*Most of the state's minority population is concentrated in core urban communities. We need to start reinvesting in these neighborhoods, as opposed to continuing subsidies for suburban development in ways that contributes to sprawl and unsustainable communities. Inner cities are the hubs of regional economies, investments in suburban communities do not translate into the same kind of growth as in urban areas.*

*Dr. Margaret Simms, a fellow at the Urban Institute, suggests we must do three things to get African Americans back to work:*

- *Attract employers to African American neighborhoods. As noted earlier, most minorities live in urban centers. These areas were decimated after the fall of manufacturing. The high-tech sectors that have replaced them have tended to locate in the suburbs. As a result, there are simply fewer jobs in minority communities, and that has had a disproportionately negative effect on minority employment. Consider that the average unemployment rate in 2013 for whites was 6.8%, but 14.4% for African Americans and 12.4% for Hispanics according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.*
- *Provide more job training opportunities. This is common sense, but we must ensure those training opportunities are aligned with the skills employers say the need. As governor, I plan on building relationships with existing and prospective employers to gauge their needs and figure out how we can meet those demands.*

- *The key to employment is education. My plan not only restores 100% of Tom Corbett's cuts in year one, it also invests an additional \$300 million, the lion's share of which (\$220 million) will go to early childhood education for poorer families. Investments in early childhood education are critical to long-term success, particularly for minorities and at-risk children. Students entering kindergarten from low-income families demonstrate as much as a 60% lower level of knowledge in reading, math, and general knowledge than those from wealthier families. And research has found that the children of professionals are exposed to 30 million more words by the age of four as compared to children in poverty, which should make it no surprise that children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds tend to come to school less prepared to learn. Early childhood education can bridge these gaps, and it can subsequently lead to higher graduation rates. That's important because the percentage of minorities without a high school diploma in 2011 was 21%, but only 9% for whites. Greater high school graduation rates may lead more minority students to go on to post-secondary education, and would help to reduce other social problems like crime and health problems.*

*Lastly, I will note that I have proposed a \$25 million micro-loan program to help more women and minority entrepreneurs. Too often minority- and women-owned businesses have trouble accessing the capital they need to create or expand their business. Helping minority and women entrepreneurs is an important part of creating economic security for both groups. According to a 2013 report from the Urban Institute, a considerable gap exists in the wealth of minorities versus whites. For every \$6 in wealth whites possess, blacks and Hispanics possess only \$1. Microfinance initiatives can help bridge that gap, as these types of loans are most commonly directed to minority- and women-owned firms, and they can be a more efficient means of producing employment gains than conventional government subsidies.*

**How will you assure equal employment and contracting opportunities in state government, and especially among your cabinet and staff.**

*I have long been a believer in the virtues and benefits of diversity. I believe that Pennsylvania is stronger when it embraces diversity and gives everyone – regardless of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation – an equal shot at happiness and success, personally and professionally. Yet today, too many Pennsylvanians are not treated fairly or equally.*

*I will bring to the governor's office the same commitment to diversity and fairness that I have demonstrated during my decades as a business leader and since 2009 as state Treasurer. I've already committed to restoring the Office of Diversity Management in the Office of Administration and hiring a chief diversity officer to oversee the work there. Pennsylvania was the first state in the nation to establish such an entity within state government in 2008, but neither the office nor the position exist in the Corbett administration. Second, I intend to restore Pennsylvania's Women's and minority commissions to full independent status. Prior to Governor Corbett, Pennsylvania's commissions on Women, African American Affairs, Latino Affairs, and Asian American Affairs each benefited from a dedicated line item in the state budget –*

*indicating their respective and collective importance to the commonwealth. Corbett eliminated these line items, put each of the four commissions under the purview of the Office of Public Liaison, and substantially cut funding for their work.*

*With respect to state contracting opportunities, I want to ensure minority- and women-owned businesses are able to compete for state contracts. That is something I pride myself on based on our track record at Treasury. Since I took office, we've increased the number of MWBE vendors by 50% and the value of those contracts by more than 900%, going from only \$167,000 in 2009 to \$1.8 million last year.*

### **What is the minority diversity on your campaign staff?**

*I'm proud of the diverse team we've assembled in this campaign. In terms of minority representation, one of my two deputy campaign managers is an African-American and of the my three deputy directors, one is African-American.*

### **Education**

**The quality of schools in poor African American communities is significantly below any reasonable or acceptable standard. Academic achievement gaps abound, especially in minority and urban school districts. Equitable distribution of financial resources cannot be achieved under the current school funding formula based on property tax. What can/will you do to close racial achievement gaps and provide equitable resources so as to ensure all of Pennsylvania's children receive a quality education, enter life on a level playing field, and have opportunities to thrive?**

*The disparity between rich and poor schools in Pennsylvania is a disgrace, and it is doing a tremendous disservice to our entire state. The current system relies too heavily on property taxes and does not provide a long-term solution for what is becoming an increasingly dire situation. Instead, this system has divided our districts into two classes: winners and losers. Areas with a poor tax base or with falling property values simply cannot generate the revenue needed to maintain high quality schools.*

*We need a school funding formula that targets state dollars to challenged school districts and that takes into account the tax burden of local communities. Additionally, I want to see a funding formula that also factors in the poverty levels of each school district, as well as the number of students with learning challenges and disabilities, such as English language learners and special education students, respectively.*

*Aside from simply instituting a fair funding formula, the state also needs to step up its contributions. The commonwealth contributes only slightly more than a third of all school district funding, putting us at the bottom 20% nationally in terms of state contributions to*

*education. That is entirely irresponsible. We need to significantly raise Pennsylvania's share of the burden. Remember, our state constitution says that we have a responsibility to fund a thorough system of public education. We're not living up to that obligation today.*

*There is one last point that should not be overlooked: parental and community involvement. Students and schools perform best when families and communities come together to support learning. Students earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher-level programs. If parents want better schools for their children – and who doesn't? – they need to get involved and hold districts accountable for performance. My administration will be committed to fostering that kind of collaboration.*

## **Voter ID**

**Despite the absence of widespread voter fraud in the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania is among several states that has attempted to impose "so-called" Voter ID Laws. The courts have put a temporary halt to these efforts. If elected Governor of Pennsylvania, what would you do regarding the current Voter ID Legislation currently being considered by the courts?**

*I would abandon it entirely and push to repeal it. We should be making it easier, not harder, for people to vote. We should not be throwing up roadblocks to disenfranchise the elderly, minorities, and young people. That is exactly what the Corbett administration has done, and they've wasted millions of taxpayer dollars in the process.*

*The Commonwealth Court's ruling in January that struck down the Voter I.D. law was a huge victory for those of us who believe that we should be looking for ways to get more people to participate in our democracy. After that decision, I called for a new effort to protect the rights of every Pennsylvania resident to cast his or her vote – and to encourage more participation in our elections, not less. My Pennsylvania Voting Rights Act proposal includes a vote-by-mail program, an early vote program, an increase in the number of polling places in communities where long lines discourage voting, and a permanent end to discriminatory voter ID practices.*

## **Narcotics and Gun Trafficking and Homicides**

**Narcotics and Gun Trafficking permeate the Commonwealth's urban and suburban communities. Subsequent homicides have taken the lives of far too many Black Pennsylvanians in the prime of their lives. Jails and prisons are filled to capacity with young men, uneducated and unemployed and mostly incarcerated for drug related crimes.**

**As Governor how would you rally the support of federal, state and local law enforcement *and* social service agencies to eliminate this scourge?**

*Generally, we need to do a better job of keeping illegal weapons off our streets. That includes doing a better job with background checks; keeping guns out of the hands of the mentally ill and*

*those with criminal records; and allowing communities to impose reasonable measures that address the challenges they face at the local level.*

*With respect to drugs, we need to change the way we approach this issue. It is not purely a criminal justice issue; it is a health issue. We dedicate too many resources to prosecuting and incarcerating those who have been arrested or convicted of drug-related offenses, and too few dollars on treatment and prevention. That is where we should be focusing our state program funding, because treatment is a far more effective and cheaper use of public dollars.*

**What is your position on the decriminalization of marijuana with lessor penalties for possession of small amounts of the drug?**

*My view on decriminalization is more complex than just “support” or “oppose.” While my inclination is to support decriminalization, I first want to study this issue further and the effects of similar recent movements in other states. Given that my parents were both academics, I am constantly driven by the quest for knowledge and information. The move to make marijuana legal in other states is a relatively new phenomenon. I hope to learn more from their experience. I believe we must carefully evaluate the data, assess the risks and potential for revenues, and examine the possible social externalities before arriving at any decision. My instinct is that data will show improved policy around marijuana will save money on corrections, increase tax revenues, create jobs, and increase freedom.*

**What is your position on Ban the Box and other initiatives to help formerly incarcerated persons gain employment, and live in public housing?**

*I agree we need to do a better job of giving people with criminal records a shot at finding employment. Allowing prospective employers to exclude people with criminal histories – especially when a past conviction may not pose a threat to that organization – seems counterproductive, so I support the “ban the box” proposal.*

*Secondly, I support expungement proposals, such as that put forth by state Sen. Tim Solobay (SB 391) that would allow certain misdemeanor offenses to be expunged from a person’s record. This bill, which is now in the House, could provide relief to many deserving people, plus it could do a great deal to reduce recidivism rates by allowing more former offenders to secure gainful employment and support themselves.*

**Marcellus Shale**

**What would be your administration’s position on taxation of corporate profits generated by this growing sector of the economy and using the revenue to fund schools and other public needs?**

*I have proposed the most aggressive drillers' tax – a 10% levy based on the value of natural gas at the wellhead. My plan would generate as much as \$1.6 billion in the first year, rising to more than \$3.2 billion by 2020. The proceeds of this tax would be dedicated to local communities (at a rate similar to what local governments receive through the impact fee), the environment, and education.*

### **Equitable and targeted public funding**

**As Governor what policies would you support to give equitable allocation of public dollars for community and economic development? What policies would you support to prioritize social service, economic and community development monies so that they go to the targeted census tracts and communities that qualify the State to receive the funds in the first place?**

*As a business leader and former entrepreneur, I am driven by the notion of generating a return on investment. We should target dollars to those areas that will generate the greatest level of good in terms of employment, tax revenues, and a better quality of life. In this era of limited resources and tight budgets, it's incumbent on any community or region that wants to secure economic and community development dollars to develop a well-thought-out plan and to engage stakeholders to reach a consensus – or a plan that the entire community supports and can rally behind.*

*I recognize that core communities are the lifeblood of a region's economy, and that investments in these inner-city areas generate greater economic prosperity throughout the region. I intend to target state funding to municipal revitalization rather than focusing on green space development that continues to pull people out of cities and into new areas that require costly new infrastructure systems and that strains our transportation system.*

### **Meeting the Needs of Western Pennsylvania**

**There is a tendency for those in office in Harrisburg to give more attention, consideration, and resources to counties in the eastern part of the state. How will you be more cognizant of the concerns and needs of western PA counties? As Governor would you commit to meeting with the organizations sponsoring this Forum on a quarterly or biannual basis to discuss policy and legislative concerns that affect our communities?**

*My administration will have an open-door policy. I am someone who values input and believes in the importance of engaging all parties, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with me. Governor Corbett has been too standoffish with too many leaders and constituency groups. That reflects his inability to lead. A McCord administration will always be willing to meet with stakeholders to solicit their input and hear their concerns.*