

AFRICAN AMERICAN GUBERNATORIAL FORUM COALITION

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Gubernatorial Forum Questions

[Allyson Schwartz answers to questionnaire.](#)

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? 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? How will you assure equal employment and contracting opportunities in state government, and especially among your cabinet and staff. What is the minority diversity on your campaign staff?

Throughout my career in public service, I have fought to ensure that workers are paid a decent wage. In Congress, I successfully worked with fellow Democrats to increase the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour in 2007. I currently am a cosponsor of the Fair Minimum Wage Act to increase the minimum wage nationwide to \$10.10 and index it to inflation.

As governor, I will increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$10.10 and index it to inflation. This will lift wages for an estimated 721,000 workers and benefit businesses by putting more money in the pockets of their customers.

We cannot address poverty and grow the middle-class without family-sustaining jobs; and now, more than ever, those jobs require graduates with good skills and life-long learning ability. We must provide safe schools, with up-to-date technical equipment, materials, supplies, and curricula. We must support teachers and other school professionals, while fairly holding them accountable. And, above all, we must focus on our students. The Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, in endorsing me for governor, understands my commitment to this.

As governor, I will protect and support programs that help people gain a leg up. The Pennsylvania press reported just this week that the Corbett administration has been denying welfare benefits to 75 percent of applicants for cash assistance. That is unacceptable, and it is the sort of misguided policy that will end in a Schwartz administration.

I will have a diverse administration, from my Cabinet on down. Our departments and agencies will reflect the talents of all our people and communities. I will increase opportunities for minority- and women-owned firms to obtain state contracts. And I will improve transparency

and public disclosure of business practices, including numbers of minorities and women on boards of directors.

Diversity on my campaign staff starts at the top: My campaign manager, Corey Dukes, is an African-American male. I also have African-Americans and other racial minorities in positions of leadership in my Communications, Finance and Field departments. Throughout my career in public service I have valued diversity because it is a moral imperative, but also because an administration that seeks to be effective must reflect the communities that it represents.

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?

Decades of research proves that quality preschool narrows the achievement gap, increases high school graduation rates, decreases the need for special education, helps prepare children to succeed in today's economy, and reduces health care and social welfare costs over time.

To ensure that students start school ready to learn, I will make a transformational commitment to early education. I will launch Keystone Kids, an initiative to provide universal access to voluntary prekindergarten for 4-year-olds. I will provide other support for early education, and I will make sure that all school districts are able to offer full-day kindergarten. I will undo Corbett's \$1 billion in education cuts by the end of my first term. I will establish a transparent funding formula that recognizes student and school district characteristics, considers local effort, and provides sustained, adequate, and fair funding to every school in the state.

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?

Nothing is more fundamental in a democracy than fair and open access to the ballot box, which is why I am committed to ensuring that all citizens are assured of their right to vote.

In 2012, citing supposed voter fraud, Corbett enacted a “Voter ID” law that deliberately created significant obstacles to voting. These changes were particularly harmful to seniors, the poor, young people, residents of urban areas, and anyone who might not hold a current driver’s license. After two years in court, the Corbett law was ruled unconstitutional “on its face.”

As governor, I will work to enact sensible reforms to build a 21st century voting system, including mail voting and same-day registration. If Corbett’s Voter ID law is revived in court, I will repeal it. No political leader or party should be working to disenfranchise Americans.

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? What is your position on the decriminalization of marijuana with lesser penalties for possession of small amounts of the drug? What is your position on Ban the Box and other initiatives to help formerly incarcerated persons gain employment, and live in public housing?

You can count on me to stand up for every Pennsylvanian. I am a social worker by training, and served proudly in the administration of the first African American mayor of Philadelphia, W. Wilson Goode, by heading the Department of Human Services. One of my first acts was to remove from my office a photo of Philadelphia prisons. As Acting Commissioner, I oversaw juvenile justice, and I believed then, as I do now, that we need to give all kids a good start in life. A picture of a prison sent exactly the wrong message.

As governor, I will reexamine Pennsylvania's sentencing guideless, which have become a factor in over-incarceration. In 1995, as a state senator, I voted against the automatic transfer of juveniles convicted of certain violent crimes to adult court. I said at the time on the Senate floor: "The question, Mr. President, is whether this is the best step we can take to assure that juveniles who commit violent crimes are punished ... and where possible given a chance to be more productive citizens when they re-enter the community."

Right now, far too many individuals – disproportionately minority – land in prison or get criminal records because of possession of small amounts of marijuana. This is devastating communities, hurting families, negatively impacting our state budget, and doing little to make our communities safer. As governor, I will push for reducing or eliminating penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana.

As governor, I will strongly support Pennsylvania's job training programs, including seeking innovative ways to integrate them with our community colleges, and improve coordination between businesses and schools to meet regional employment needs. I will streamline these programs, publicize them, and bring them under one section of the state Department of Labor and Industry. I will make a push to ensure that these workforce programs work with the long-term unemployed, ex-offenders, and high school dropouts.

Being eliminated from even a chance to make your case for a job is all too common due to check-off boxes, and, as governor, I will work with all stakeholders, including business, labor, clergy, minority advocacy organizations, and civil justice groups, to address this very serious issue to ensure that qualified individuals don't have harmful roadblocks stand in their way of employment.

I am proud to have a strong record on standing up on gun violence. I am committed to building a Pennsylvania where citizens can feel safe in their homes, schools, and communities. I have been one of Pennsylvania's strongest champions for commonsense gun measures, first as a state senator and currently as a member of the U.S. House Democratic Gun Violence Prevention Task Force in Congress. CeaseFirePA, a statewide coalition, gave me a "100 percent" rating for my stance on preventing gun violence.

As governor, I will make gun-violence prevention a priority in Pennsylvania. I will:

- Ban military-style assault rifles and large-magazine clips.
- Limit handgun purchases to one a month, to control straw purchases.
- Eliminate the background-check loophole for private gun sales.
- Expand background checks to include rifles and shotguns, not just handguns.
- Require background checks for gun shop employees.
- Require the reporting of lost and stolen guns.
- Allow Pennsylvania cities to enact local gun-violence measures.
- Require a Pennsylvania permit to carry a concealed handgun in Pennsylvania.

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?

Pennsylvania's natural gas resources, buried under our soil for millennia, belong to everyone. Last September, I was the first candidate for governor to announce that I will seek to enact a Marcellus Shale natural gas severance tax. My proposed 5 percent tax, similar to our neighbor West Virginia's, would raise \$13.2 billion for the people of Pennsylvania over the course of a

decade. I will use the revenue to transform public education, relieve pressure on school property taxes, rebuild our roads and bridges, and support other critical priorities.

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?

Economic development dollars need to be targeted at older, often-struggling communities. Some of the most successful efforts have been affiliated with the Main Street program, aimed at business districts. While some of these are in our boroughs and smaller cities, many are in the neighborhoods of Pennsylvania's biggest cities, including Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Corbett cut funding for these efforts and allowed the Department of Community and Economic Development to become so understaffed that it can barely manage the programs.

I will reinvigorate these initiatives. I will follow best practices in revitalization and sustainability to create environments that attract businesses and jobs, and improve quality of life.

I will also enhance the neighborhood assistance tax credit, and implement the Historic Preservation Tax Credit. Both of these programs can make big differences in reviving corridors in our cities.

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?

In my campaign and public-service career, I have been a regular visitor to Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. You need have no worries that I will forget the region when I am governor.