

## **Gubernatorial Candidate Survey Responses: Tom Wolf (D)**

### **State Budget**

***Pennsylvania has recently found itself in limbo with our state budget and future deficit problems. In the 2015-2016 Fiscal Year budget, there was an impasse that impacted thousands of nonprofits throughout the commonwealth. United Way of Pennsylvania, along with other organizations, took a survey of how the impasse impacted the nonprofit sector. From this survey, 60 percent of respondents needed to secure a loan to cover their expenses and 28 percent expected to curtail services by August. State government relies on these nonprofits to deliver services to Pennsylvanians and every budget impasse is devastating to the service delivery system. Not only are these disruptions due to state funding being delayed, but also federal funds not passing through the state during an impasse.***

- (1) If elected Governor, would you support amendments to state law which protect Pennsylvania's service recipients and service providers by assuring that federal dollars allocated to the Commonwealth, and state dollars for essential services that directly impact the health and safety of Pennsylvanians, continue to be paid during a budget impasse? What steps would you take to work with the legislature to avoid a state budget impasse?**

I know how important it is to protect Pennsylvania's service recipients and service providers during a budget impasse. I have supported measures to ensure the state would help to pay interest on loans taken by service providers during a budget impasse.

As part of my recently introduced "Citizens First" ethics reform plan, I've called for "No Budget, No Pay" legislation. This means that if a complete budget is not passed on time, legislators, their top staff, the governor, and top officials in the executive branch will stop receiving pay until it is passed. This plan will decrease the influence of special interests in Harrisburg who have crippled the budget process in recent years.

### **Financial Stability**

***Pennsylvania faces work force shortages in several sectors, including the science and technology, health care and accounting fields. And as Pennsylvania's population ages,***

***our population is at risk of decline which will impact the economic health and competitiveness of the commonwealth.***

- (1) If elected Governor, please describe your economic development and workforce investment strategies to address these workforce shortages and create more career pipelines for Pennsylvania's future work force?**

My goal is to increase the number of Pennsylvania workers with postsecondary training from 47% today to 60% by 2025. To reach this goal, I've called for a first-of-its-kind \$50 million strategic invest in job training and the launch of PAsmart– a realignment of workforce development from K-12 education through career programs so students and workers gain the 21st Century skills to get good jobs that employers demand.

PAsmart includes investments in STEM and computer science education, apprenticeships, Industry Partnerships, Career and Technical Education and STEM career pathways, and employer partnerships with colleges and universities. The initiative also includes the launch of a new website to help people access information about pursuing an education and career in Pennsylvania.

***Tax credits, such as the Earned income Tax Credit, are an important tax policy which keeps thousands of working Pennsylvania families out of poverty and helps them pay essential bills. In 2016, over 900,000 Pennsylvanians claimed the federal EITC, which allowed for \$2.1 billion to be spent in Pennsylvania communities.***

- (2) If elected Governor, would you support a state Earned Income Tax Credit, which is currently offered by twenty-six other states?**

Here in Pennsylvania, millionaires pay exactly the same tax rate as their secretaries. The result is that millionaires have a much lower tax burden, while in comparison, Pennsylvania's middle class has a higher burden. I believe there is a better way to move the economy forward and want to reform Pennsylvania's tax code to make it more fair. We need a fairer system in Pennsylvania so that millionaires pay their fair share and middle-class families have the resources to send their kids to college and save for retirement.

In addition to exploring a constitutional amendment to make our tax system fair for hard working families in Pennsylvania, I will explore other potential changes, like an EITC program, as part of a comprehensive tax reform initiative.

***Pennsylvania is a state with some of the strongest predatory lending laws, which prohibit predatory lenders from taking advantage of individuals with limited to no income. In recent legislative sessions, there has been some push to change these laws, which would make it easier for predatory lenders to sell products to low-income individuals perpetuating their cycle of debt and thus prevent their advancement out of poverty. You can learn more about predatory lending here.***

**(3) If elected Governor, how would your administration respond to proposals of more lenient predatory lending laws in Pennsylvania?**

I will not support proposals for more lenient predatory lending laws in Pennsylvania. We must hold predatory lenders accountable and work to protect consumers from being taken advantage of by them. In 2015, I announced my Consumer Financial Protection Initiative as a means to educate the public about financial protection and best practices in a concise, efficient way. As part of this initiative, we aim to protect consumers from predatory loans through a collaboration between PennDOT and the Department of Banking and Securities to share information from trusted sources who are at risk of losing their cars to companies offering "easy money" loans using car titles as collateral.

## **Education**

***Research shows children who attended high-quality pre-k are more likely to read proficiently in third grade, graduate from high school, attend post-secondary education and become successful in the workplace. Additionally, investments in high-quality pre-k have a high return on investment, leading to savings in K-12 resulting from reductions in the need for special education and grade repetition as well as savings in criminal justice involvement and incarceration. A recent analysis on pre-k investments shows every dollar invested in high-quality pre-k returns at least \$4 in savings and benefits. Despite these savings and benefits to the state, approximately 113,000 eligible three-and-four-year-olds lack access to publicly funded high-quality pre-k this year in the commonwealth. To learn more about the state of pre-k throughout the commonwealth and how Pennsylvania compares to other states, please refer to the Pre-K for PA site and these numerous reports highlighting pre-k benefits.***

**(1) As Governor, what would you do to make sure all of Pennsylvania's at-risk 3- and 4-year olds have access to high quality pre-k and Head Start programs? What are your plans to secure the resources needed, and what is your timeline to achieve your goals for pre-k access?**

When I was elected governor, my Republican predecessor had cut one billion dollars in education funding. The first thing I did when I came to Harrisburg was draw a line in the sand. I refused to balance the budget on the backs of our children and I stood up to Harrisburg politicians who were used to doing things a certain way.

And now, together, we've restored Governor Corbett's one billion dollar cut to education and passed a fair funding formula to take politics out of school funding once and for all. Through these investments, we have increased the number of children attending pre-kindergarten by nearly 50 percent.

But there is still more work to be done. That's why I've called for an additional \$185 million dollar investment in public education, including a \$40 million increase in Pre-K Counts and Head Start in my 2018-2019 budget proposal. I'm confident that continued investments in early childhood education will have long lasting positive impacts for Pennsylvania's children and communities.

***Students who participate in high quality out-of-school time programs have better grades and conduct in school, more academic enrichment opportunities, improved emotional adjustment and fewer incidences of drug use and pregnancy. Unequal access to summer learning programs accounts for about two-thirds of the overall achievement gap between students from low- and middle-income families. Students from low-income families fall about two months behind their middle-income classmates over the course of the summer, also known as the summer slide. You can learn more about the benefits of out-of-school time programs in this brief here.***

**(2) What strategies would your administration support or promote to close the achievement gap between low and middle/high income students?**

When I became governor, Pennsylvania was one of only three states in the nation without a fair funding formula. I signed House Bill 1552 into law, which established a fair funding formula to take the politics out of education funding and provided emergency funds to two of Pennsylvania's financially distressed school districts. The formula accounts for factors such as the wealth of the district, the district's current tax effort, the ability of the district to raise revenue, the number of children in the

district who live in poverty, the number of children enrolled in charter schools, and the number of children who are English language learners. I will continue to fight to make sure that low income districts are getting their fair share of funding to help them succeed.

Not everyone wants to go to college, but people want the skills to get a job and advance their careers. At the same time, businesses are growing and need a pipeline of talented people for emerging industries.

My 2018-2019 budget included a first-of-its-kind \$50 million strategic investment in job training and the launch of PAsmart, a realignment of workforce development from K-12 education through career programs so students and workers gain the 21st century skills to get good jobs that employers demand.

My administration also piloted two summer youth employment programs focused on low-income youth. These pilots helped youth age 16 and older in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions learn about the world of work and the myriad education and career opportunities available to them in Pennsylvania as they leave high school in a few short years.

***High quality child care programs across the state provide care and education to low income families using government subsidies for which rates have not increased in 10 years. Today only 30 percent of subsidized children are accessing high-quality STAR 3 and 4 care, families are waiting almost 25 days to access subsidies they need to work, 43 percent of child care staff are receiving public assistance and child care subsidy reimbursements do not cover the cost of quality care.***

**(3) If elected Governor, what would you propose the Commonwealth do to address these issues and ensure high-quality child care programs are available for working Pennsylvanians and their families?**

It's critical that we improve access to child care for all Pennsylvanians. I am committed to protecting the children of Pennsylvania and making it easier for working families to access care.

I have fought to increase child care line items in the budget because thousands of Pennsylvanians depend on child care assistance in order to work and provide for their families.

Increasing funding for child care is important to help child care centers improve quality and serve more children. My 2018-2019 budget proposal includes:

- \$30 million in additional funding for the state's Pre-K Counts program and an additional
- \$10 million for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program. This \$40 million expansion would serve 4,400 additional young children. Currently more than 106,000 eligible three- and four-year-olds do not have access to high-quality publicly funded pre-k programs.
- An additional \$6.5 million investment in evidence-based home visiting programs expands home visiting for 800 eligible families and includes a cost of living adjustment for the two long standing home visiting models (Nurse Family Partnership and Family Centers – Parents as Teachers) who haven't had a rate increase in nearly a decade.
- Investing \$10 million more to expand access to 1,600 additional families waiting for access to the child care subsidy.
- \$10 million in state funding coupled with \$5 million in federal funding for increased tiered reimbursement rates for Keystone STAR two, three, and four child care providers.
- \$3 million for a pilot program serving infants and toddlers in high quality child care

Under my leadership, Pennsylvania became one of the first states in the nation to implement a change in our Child Care Works program. This change helps families who experience temporary disruption in employment continue to access quality child care by re-determining eligibility every 12 months instead of six.

As governor, I will continue to look for similar opportunities for expanding access to quality child care and call for increased investments in early childhood education and child care.

## **Community Strengthening**

***The PA 2-1-1 system connects 97% of Pennsylvanians with health and human services needs, as well as information during disasters. The 2-1-1 system was created in 2001 and possesses the most comprehensive database of public and private resources available in communities which can provide policymakers with data that identifies the most pressing unmet health and human service needs. The service is available to 97***

*percent of Pennsylvanians as of 2018. In 2017, over 199,000 contacts were made to PA 2-1-1, showing a need for easy access to health and human services information. The 2-1-1 system is funded by a combination of United Way support, grants and private contributions, and contracts, as well as a first-time investment by the Commonwealth in the FY 2017-18 budget, as a way to increase efficiency and save taxpayer dollars by connecting Pennsylvanians in need to the right services at the right time. You can learn more about the PA 2-1-1 system, its benefits and current work here.*

- (1) If elected Governor, would you support future investments into the PA 2-1-1 system? Additionally, would you support strengthening the public-private partnership between PA 2-1-1 through contracts and other arrangements that make it easier and more cost-effective for Pennsylvanians to access health and human services in their communities?**

I provided funding for 2-1-1 in the 2017-2018 fiscal code in order to increase efficiency, accessibility, and cost effectiveness of our health and human services industry. I am dedicated to maximizing resources for better service delivery, starting with the consolidation of the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services.

By breaking down silos and creating one health and human services agency, we will be able to provide care and assistance Pennsylvanians in a more simplified, cost-effective manner, while ensuring the delivery of high-quality services and supports.

## **Health**

**CHIP provides essential health benefits, including behavioral health services, to over 100,000 children in Pennsylvania and over 9 million children in the United States. Healthcare contributes to financial stability since an emergency for someone who does not have healthcare can push a working family into poverty.**

- (1) As Governor, what would you do to make sure working families have access to quality, affordable health care for their children through CHIP? What policy changes would you support at a state level to increase access and affordability for working adults who don't have employer-sponsored healthcare?**

Since I have taken office, Pennsylvania has increased enrollment in the Children's Health Insurance Program by 22.2 percent. The program now serves more than

180,000 Pennsylvania children. I am committed to protecting CHIP and ensuring that this critical program continues to receive the funding it needs. Last year, when Republicans in Congress failed to reauthorize CHIP, I signed legislation reauthorizing Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program and pressured Congress to reauthorize it on the federal level, until they finally passed the reauthorization.

In 2015, I signed HB 857 which reauthorizes and moves CHIP from the Insurance Department into the Department of Human Services. This move has streamlined processes and reduced bureaucracy for families throughout the commonwealth.

I am committed to protecting all Pennsylvanians' right to affordable, straightforward, accessible healthcare. One of my first acts in office was to expand Medicaid, which gave over 720,000 Pennsylvanians health care. I have also been working with a bipartisan group of governors to develop a plan to improve our nation's health system performance to make it more affordable and accessible for all.