



# 2018 Pennsylvania CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

**Candidate Name:** Joe Webster

**Running For:** PA House

**District:** 150

**Party Affiliation:** Democrat

**Charitable nonprofits include groups like food banks, Habitat for Humanity, YMCAs, religious institutions, hospitals, museums, libraries, child care centers, and many more. What has been your personal experience with nonprofits (ex: as a board member, employee, volunteer, or donor)? How do these experiences shape your policy positions?**

In 2014, I created Convergence Music Productions as a nonprofit organization. Our mission is to host music events featuring up-and-coming local musicians and donate our proceeds to a deserving charity. In 2017, we donated 100% of our net proceeds to the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Tall Trees 2018 is scheduled for Sept 22nd and our major beneficiary this year is AMVETS' Warrior Transition Program. My wife, Laura, and I are members/donors of a good many nonprofit organizations from NPR to civil liberties and environmental organizations.

**What is your position on the following tax issues that affect charitable nonprofits:**

**Do you support preserving state and local sales and real-estate tax exemptions for charitable nonprofits?**

I support preserving these exemptions. I am also aware that they are complications in some major urban areas where large nonprofits like hospitals and universities may require some thinking about the extent of these exemptions because of the amount of public services required to serve these large campuses and communities. As a PhD in public policy, I think it's important to do the research and evaluate how to adapt good policies to changing circumstances --- and protect both the nonprofit sector and the communities they serve.

**Do you believe that nonprofits should be required to provide Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) or Services in Lieu of Taxes (SILOTS)?**

As noted above, there may need to be some threshold where PILOTS or SILOTS are required. These would be unique circumstances where very large nonprofit organizations require public services that are not otherwise easy to pay for.

**Would you support additional state tax revenues dedicated to fund nonprofits providing contracted government health and human services?** Yes. We need to make healthcare available and affordable for every Pennsylvania resident. And, currently, the nonprofit sector plays a large role in serving both low income areas and women's health. And I support that 100%.

**Additional comments about tax policies that affect nonprofits:**

**Nonprofits provide more than 720,000 jobs in Pennsylvania (15% of the state's workforce). What policies would you propose to promote continued job growth for private employers, including both nonprofit and for-profit business?**

At a top level, I think Pennsylvania has been thinking too small about business and a whole bunch of other policy issues. We've spent maybe 20 years tearing things down; the only effective message in Harrisburg has been about cutting things, eliminating things. And that's put us in the wrong century. We need a different vision.

Pennsylvania is one of the least business-friendly states. We're also 47th in state funding of public schools. 41st in basic economic growth. Ranked 44th in the nation for quality of life...

I believe Pennsylvania's employers want a compelling vision that includes modernized infrastructure, happy commutes, happy employees in communities that are growing, that induce creativity and productivity.

We can start by realizing that social issues matter to economic welfare. Healthcare, for instance. This year the increase in healthcare premiums are pretty low in PA and there's actually a second insurer entering the risk pool, even with the Trump Administration's attack on the ACA. But I would strongly endorse state-level plans to be more like Massachusetts. My experience in business leads me to believe that Pennsylvania's employers don't need healthcare costs on their books at all. Spare the small businesses as well, and the nonprofits (who are usually doing their best to provide healthcare benefits). Reduce the specialized HR departments. Wages versus benefits? Stop this. And focus organizational energies on your core service or business area.

Infrastructure. In southeastern PA, commutes can be costing your employees over 2 hours a day. That time is fatiguing, unproductive on its face value. It impacts creativity and productivity during the work day as well... And infrastructure is a bi-partisan, inherently governmental program. We can do something here.

**Would you favor legislation that would reduce the likelihood of a budget impasse in future years? If so, what type of legislation?**

Not exactly... I think our democratic, governmental institutions need to be accountable to the residents of Pennsylvania. That will happen as we create more access to voting rights, fair districting, modernized absentee balloting, etc. I do also think we need to pass legislation that would allow school districts to wait until the PA budget is set before they have to solidify their own budgets. The way it is now is fairly stupid (often forcing schools to draft their budget before they know what their state inputs will be). And school boards, parents and teachers can be one more political force that holds the legislature's and the governor's feet to the fire to avoid the budget impasse.

**Would you support regulatory changes that increase efficiencies and nonprofit-government partnerships? (Proposed regulatory changes could include reducing redundancies across state agencies - e.g. common pre-award processes, budget templates, use of a single audit, reporting template and central depository vault.)**

Yes -- it's pretty easy to support "efficiencies." As stated previously, I will evaluate each of these proposals to make sure they benefit Pennsylvanians.

**If elected, what would be your top three policy priorities?**

My highest political priority is bringing character, integrity and experience to Harrisburg. I know that sounds generic or like pie-in-the-sky stuff. But it's an important factor in assessing issues, creating substantial solutions across bi-partisan concerns, and most importantly gaining the trust of Pennsylvania residents.

Republican leadership in Harrisburg has worked hard to divide our populations, to cut and delay development rather than aspiring to

invest and build and create. As a result:

- Pennsylvania is 47th in state funding for public schools (was 46th last year)
- Pennsylvania is ranked 40th in the nation for business environment (USA Today Mar 2018)
- 41st in economic growth (USA Today) Mar 2018
- 44th out of 50 for quality of life (US News and World Report)

My number one statement is, Pennsylvania shouldn't be 47th out of 50 in anything.

And there's a long list of issues: Fair and Open Elections, Education, Health Care, Equality, Housing, Pay equity, LGBTQ rights, Taxes, Common Sense Gun Safety... Environment – Our Creeks and Rivers, Transportation, Traffic, Infrastructure, Modernizing Main Street, Quality Care & Housing for our Seniors, Quality Care & Housing for our Veterans... Childcare, Pre-K Programs, Criminal Justice Reform...

Every one of these issues impacts the economic welfare of our community.

Planning and investing in our community is a key component of good government. And we can't move Pennsylvania forward, in that regard, until we regain some trust. So it really is about character and integrity... and having the experience to plan, think ahead, and govern.