

## 30th District Candidates Respond

The Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce encourages everyone to vote in the May 15 primary election and want you to be aware of where the candidates stand on issues important to us. Knowledge is power and we want you to have the power to make a difference by being an informed voter.

We asked candidates for Senate District 30 to answer three questions. Emily Best (Democrat), Daniel Kiss (Republican) and Judy Ward (Republican) were instructed to limit their answers to 250 words each. No changes have been made to the answers submitted.

Question # 1. The current PA permitting process stifles economic growth. How would you promote regulatory reform across all departments?

Emily Best: I would address regulatory reform in several ways. First of all, our government agencies must be fully and competently staffed. The DEP has been understaffed for years, leading to backlogs and long wait times. Second, the regulatory language and instructions must be clear so there is not the risk of different offices interpreting instructions in a different way, which leads to delays and denials. Third, our permitting process needs to be updated for the 21st century by allowing more electronic filing and tracking of permits. Additionally, I would advocate for a simple or "lean" bureaucratic system that is efficient for both the filer and the reviewer.



Daniel Kiss: One of the largest complaints that I hear in speaking with individuals involved in municipal government is the mountains of red tape involved with the permit process in Pennsylvania. The issue begins with the "bidding process". On paper bids are thought to encourage competition and drive costs to the lowest level however bids take capitalism and market forces directly out of the front end of any project – materials. If a company bids a job and puts the cost of materials at \$10.00 but the municipality can go and buy those same materials at \$5.00 under current law that is not permitted and the municipality must pay the extra cost. The next problem is the requirement to utilize "approved contractors". I was speaking with a supervisor from Quincy Township in Franklin County who had a job bid with "approved contractors" at just over \$500,000 to build a bridge on a township road to last 3 months. Quincy Township refused all bids and worked with their own municipal workers and local "non-approved" contractors and built a bridge that met all requirements of the state in 20 working days and for less than \$175,000 for the total cost. We must permit local municipalities to source the best price and not be subject to state approved contractors. Finally, for individuals, municipalities, and businesses looking to have work done on their land the permit process must be immediately streamlined. ONE comprehensive application should be completed that is sent to all applicable state agencies for review and follow up rather than a million applications sent to a million regulatory agencies. These three steps alone would save millions of dollars a year and encourage growth.

Judy Ward: There is no question that our permitting process stifles economic growth. There certainly needs to be a process to review permits but it needs to be transparent and expedited. The fact that many permits take every bit of 2 years is simply unacceptable. Time is money, let's face it. Several years ago, myself and Sen. Eichelberger spoke with the previous

DEP Secretary and asked to rework their process in the Southcentral region to help with the backlog of permits. They did that temporarily but they continue to have a backlog of permits today.

I recently signed on to a bill that would make the process more transparent online so individuals would know where their permit is in the process. This would be somewhat helpful.

Question # 2. Four lane highways and broadband are important to businesses considering locating in Huntingdon County. Both are lacking in the county. What would you do to improve the state of Huntingdon County's infrastructure?

Emily Best: I am fully in favor of a broadband program to reach all corners of Huntingdon County. The business I manage, Tuscarora Organic Growers, is located in Springfield Township in southern Huntingdon County, and we are paying out more for our internet and phone services because we are not able to upgrade to the latest technologies to the lack of modern cables in our region. On a similar note, I am also interested in pursuing the development of better cell phone coverage as the county is still not fully covered. Huntingdon County has beautiful winding roads through our towns and villages, but those roadways can make it difficult for businesses to operate. I want to see more information regarding where and why four lane highways are needed for the county, as I would not want to inadvertently change our rural way of life in the county. I would not want property owners to lose homes or land to expand the roadways, nor would I want the character of our small towns to change to make way for heavy truck traffic.

Daniel Kiss: It is absolutely imperative that infrastructure be improved within the County. Route 22 should be a four lane highway from I99 to Route 322. It is imperative for the growth of local businesses and attracting new business that there be a modern highway to transport goods across the County. This should not be on a "10 year" PennDot plan but should have planning and surveys conducted in the immediate future to bring this about. Further, congested points along Route 26 near Raystown Lake should be expanded to three lanes where possible so as to enhance the tourism and economic benefit to the area. Finally, the portions of Route 522 between Route 22 to the PA Turnpike should be expanded to four lanes in those areas that are not directly within Orbsonia, Shade Gap, Shirleysburg, and Allensport.



Access to broadband internet is vital to the economic and educational interests of the community. Expanded use of cell phone hot spots as well as incentives for fiber optic or traditional broadband expansion to smaller communities within the County are necessary to ensure Huntingdon County keep pace with the more urban areas.

To this end I will support legislation and fight for grant money and private-public partnership money to expand broadband access within the County and further push PennDot to make modern four lane highways in Huntingdon County a reality.

Judy Ward: As State Senator, I would work to help secure any funding needed to improve the infrastructure of Huntingdon County.

Rural broadband service is a growing issue in the State. I recently signed onto a letter to the Chairman of U.S. Federal Communication Commission to bring to light the need for broadband for all rural counties in the Commonwealth. Rural communities deserve to be on a level playing field with all the other counties in the State. There is an upcoming House Policy Committee on this very issue because it is an issue across the State.



Question # 3. What is your position on economic development incentives offered through the state and what specific actions will you take or endorse relative to your stated position?

Emily Best

First of all, the state should be better able to track the effectiveness of development incentives and I will be advocating that the state verify that companies granted incentives are creating jobs and economic benefits for their communities. I am in favor of economic development incentives but they must be smart, targeted, and appropriate. Huntingdon County has a lot to offer in terms of agribusiness, tourism, outdoor sports, and manufacturing, among other sectors. Any economic development incentives should target companies interested in bringing jobs and dollars in sectors that are suited to our beautiful geography and natural resources. At the same time, we don't want to sell out these resources for a quick dollar - we need to be thinking long term about the development of the county. I also want to be clear that any economic incentives must be tracked and verified - we do not want to be giving away precious tax dollars to companies which will spirited away our money to their corporate HQ or offshore accounts. Companies must create real, lasting, long term economic benefit for the people of Huntingdon County and the jobs they create must be better than low wage, part-time jobs.

Daniel Kiss

We must not forego economic incentives that are available and apply for those on projects that will make sense economically and culturally to Huntingdon County. This is not a John Murtha pork barrel issue but simply fighting to help our local businesses and municipalities grow and provide the best opportunities for our residents. Failure to fight for these incentives does not mean the money is not spent, it will simply go somewhere else (Philadelphia or Pittsburgh) instead. Oftentimes all a deserving project needs is a small boost or helping hand and that is the job of an elected official – to fight to help their communities. I will work tirelessly to secure our share and to improve the daily lives of Huntingdon County citizens and I will not take no for answer from Harrisburg or anywhere else if the project is a worthy one for our communities.

Judy Ward: I have been a supporter of economic development incentives as long as it is transparent and can show the potential for job creation. I believe that economic growth helps not only our communities with jobs but also helps the Commonwealth with their budget. Incentives to help businesses invest in our communities is extremely helpful.

