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2010 State Candidate Questionnaire

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Jack Wagner

Office Sought: Governor

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please complete, sign and return this form via mail to:

Neighborhood Networks
c/o John Hogan and Kathy Quinn, Co-Chairs, Elections Committee
7511 Germantown Avenue • Philadelphia, PA 19119

If returning via email, please send to kathymquinn@verizon.net and sign and return this first page with the candidate signature by mail or fax to 215-751-0658.

BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?

Auditor General, Jan. 2005-Present

State Senator (Allegheny County), May 1994-Jan. 2005

City Councilman (Pittsburgh), 1984-1993 (Council President, 1990-93)

**RESPONSE OF JACK WAGNER
FEB. 8, 2010**

2. If you have previously held a government office:

a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?

Government reform, early childhood education, reducing the cost of higher education, expanded prescription drug coverage for seniors, economic development, and veterans' issues.

b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

As a State Senator, I served as Democratic Caucus Chairman, the third highest leadership position, and as the Democratic Chairman of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee. I also served on the Appropriations, Judiciary, Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness, Rules and Executive Nominations, and Policy Committees. I was also a member of the Pennsylvania Firefighters and Emergency Services Legislative Caucus, the Pennsylvania Coal Caucus, the Legislative Arthritis and Osteoporosis Caucus, the Pennsylvania Veterans Memorial Commission, and the Task Force on Adoption Law.

3. If you have not previously held a government office, what community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)

N/A

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

See attached.

I have been focusing on building a campaign organization and raising money, in addition to continuing to be the best Auditor General that I can be. As this campaign proceeds, I will pursue and welcome the endorsement and financial support of any individual or organization that is interested in having a Governor with a demonstrated record of real reform. I have been grateful for the past support of individuals, community leaders, public officials, labor unions, veterans, and organizations that represent the interests of Pennsylvania workers, families, and taxpayers. I will continue to look to these groups for support for my campaign for Governor. In my two successful campaigns for Auditor General in 2004 and 2008, I was endorsed by nearly every major newspaper, union, and other organization that made an endorsement. I will aggressively pursue their support again.

Pennsylvania will receive national attention for both the Governor and Senate races in 2010. My opponent and the entire Republican ticket will have greater financial support. As in my successful campaigns for Auditor General in 2004 and 2008, I intend to raise as much money as it takes to wage a winning campaign. I received more votes and spent less money than other statewide candidates in those races. I also believe that campaigns are won based on leadership and ideas, not money. We have a great track record as Auditor General.

ISSUES

1. Would you support legislation to provide public financing for state and local election campaigns?
No. The taxpayers should not bear the cost of political campaigns. Instead, I support meaningful campaign finance reform. Pennsylvania is one of only a handful of states with no campaign contribution limits. We should enact contribution limits and there should be greater disclosure of all sources of campaign funds.
2. What limitations, if any, do you think should be placed on the rights of Pennsylvania citizens (including former prisoners) to vote?
I support the current state law, which prohibits only incarcerated felons and individuals who have been recently convicted of election law violations from voting.
- 2a. Would you support legislation allowing for a verified paper ballot receipt?
Yes.
- 2b. Would you support legislation providing for same day registration and unrestricted voting by absentee ballot?
Yes.
3. Would you support any limitations, including waiting periods, on a woman's access to abortion?
I support the current state law.
- 3a. Would you support repeal of existing restrictions on a woman's right to choose?
I am a pro-life Democrat. If the U.S. Supreme Court were to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and the issue returned to the states, any change that the General Assembly would make to Pennsylvania's Abortion Control Act would likely include exceptions for rape and incest and to protect the life of the mother. I would support those exceptions.
- 3b. Would you support any limitations on a woman's access to contraception, including emergency contraception?
I oppose public funding and access to family and contraceptive services that include abortion.
- 3c. If yes to either, what limitations do you support?
I oppose the use of public funds to provide, refer, or promote abortion. However, I support public funding and access to family planning and contraceptive services that do not include abortion.
4. Do you believe that same-sex couples in committed relationships should have the right to marry?
I believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. However, same-sex couples in committed relationships should be granted the same basic legal rights as other families, such as access to hospital visitation, bereavement leave, health insurance, etc.
- 4a. If no, do you support the right to domestic partnership rights?
Yes.

5. Would you support legislation to limit the purchases of handguns to one a month?

No. While it is essential that we reduce the number of violent crimes in Pennsylvania, it has not been demonstrated that a one-gun-per-month law would do so.

5a. What other legislation, if any, would you sponsor or support to reduce the number of handguns in circulation in Philadelphia?

I believe in responsible gun ownership. I support education programs to train firearms owners on how to secure their firearms in homes where children are present.

6. Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union?

Yes. I will continue to stand up for working men and women, just as I have throughout my career. After graduating from high school, I worked at Duquesne Light Company in Pittsburgh as a meter reader, draftsman, and payroll clerk, and was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. I am proud to be an honorary member of the union today and to have received significant support from organized labor as a candidate and elected official.

As Auditor General, I have spoken out publicly on this important issue, met with labor leaders and prospective union members, and sent warning letters to employers that were interfering with employees' rights to form and join a union. I warned those employers that they are prohibited by law from using public funds to support such interference, and I reported those violations in public audit reports.

As Governor, I will continue to work to support employees' rights to form and join a union and to make their own decisions without interference by their employers. In addition, an employer's respect of its employees' right to form and join a union and the employer's general treatment of its employees should be important factors for consideration by state government when awarding public contracts. State government must also carefully consider whether outside contracts are really needed in the first place; if they are necessary, they must be awarded on a competitive basis.

7. Do you favor an automatic cost-of-living adjustment to the minimum wage?

Yes.

8. What measures, if any would you support to strengthen anti-discrimination laws?

I would continue to support efforts to strengthen state anti-discrimination laws to protect members of minority communities. As a State Senator, I introduced, co-sponsored, and voted for many such bills. For example, I sponsored legislation to amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act and the Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. I introduced an amendment to the Ethnic Intimidation Act to increase sentences for bias or hate crimes motivated by the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; such an amendment was later enacted into law. I also introduced legislation to require the Attorney General and the State Police to collect and report statistics on crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation or gender identity.

As Auditor General, I have led by example in this area by focusing my department on making special efforts to recruit, retain, promote, and contract with highly qualified and capable women and minorities. My audits have also promoted openness and responsibility in employment and contracting practices by state and local government agencies. For example, our audit of the Gaming Control Board examined whether families and communities are benefiting from the expansion of legalized gaming. It is essential that the board and licensees place a priority on hiring local residents representing the diversity of the areas where casinos are built. As Governor, my administration will lead by example in hiring and working with members of minority communities.

9. Would you support proposals to ensure that women and men working for contractors of the Commonwealth receive equal pay for equal work?

Yes.

10. Would you support an increase in the state's share of funding for public schools?

Yes. I am a graduate of a public high school and my children have attended public schools. I have always been a strong advocate and supporter of public education. I believe that the education of our people is one of the most important responsibilities of public officials and that every public school should have the resources needed to provide our children with the best possible education. The current system of funding education has clearly been the biggest weakness of our public school system, and I have fought to improve the system of funding public education in the Commonwealth in a fiscally responsible way. My audits have identified hundreds of millions of dollars that could be saved in the state budget by improving the management of various programs and services. I have also sounded the alarm on the danger of school district financing their debt with risky derivatives, which amounts to gambling with public funds. Those losses take money away from investments in educational achievement and infrastructure. As Governor, I will implement my audit recommendations and other ideas in order to generate significant savings that could be used to provide stable and sufficient funding for public education in all 500 school districts.

I have also fought hard in Harrisburg to make higher education more affordable. Our first-ever special performance audit of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency highlighted wasteful spending in the state's top agency for providing financial assistance to needy Pennsylvania students, which resulted in much-needed reforms. I also called for a sweeping overhaul of the PHEAA board by replacing half of the legislators on the board with financial and academic experts and a full-time post-secondary student.

One of my top priorities as Governor is to create a HOPE Scholarship program to make higher education affordable for Pennsylvania students who attend Pennsylvania colleges and universities. HOPE is an acronym for Helping Our Pupils to Excel. Under my program, students who graduate from high school with at least a 3.0 grade point average would have their tuition paid for at a state-owned university. Students choosing to attend a state-related institution (Penn State, Pitt, Temple, and Lincoln universities), a private institution, a community college, or a vocational-technical school would receive a scholarship valued at the average cost of a state-owned university. The program would be funded by excess profits from table games at Pennsylvania casinos.

11. What measures would you support to guarantee access for all Pennsylvanians to quality affordable healthcare?

It is my hope that comprehensive health care reform will soon finally be achieved at the federal level, but there will be a role at the state level regardless. As Auditor General, my audits have identified hundreds of millions of dollars that could be saved in the state budget by improving the management of various programs and services. For example, I have identified potential savings in the Medicaid program that can be easily achieved without reducing benefits for eligible recipients. Public funds should be paying for health care for those who need it, not going to insurance companies as part of capitation payments that are made regardless of whether or not care is provided. As Governor, I will implement my audit recommendations and other ideas in order to generate significant savings that could be used to provide access to affordable, quality health care for all Pennsylvania residents.

12. Do you believe that taxation should generally be progressive, so that people and businesses with higher incomes pay taxes at higher rates?

Although Pennsylvania has a flat personal income tax rate, we have made it more progressive by excluding individuals below a certain income level. I have consistently supported those exclusions.

I would be concerned about raising taxes on any individuals or businesses, especially in this economy. Instead, one of my priorities as Governor will be to maintain vital government services without raising taxes. I know firsthand where the waste, fraud, and abuse are in government programs from the thousands of audits that I have conducted as Auditor General. The taxpayers deserve a government that puts their needs first and that addresses those needs in the most cost-effective way possible, and I intend to deliver it.

12a. If yes, would you support an amendment to the state constitution allowing such taxation?

I have long supported a constitutional convention to address issues of public concern, such as reducing the size of the General Assembly. The convention should also discuss and consider reforms to the state tax system.

12b. What other measures do you support, if any, to make PA personal and business taxes more progressive?

See above.

13. What categories of state spending do you think should be significantly increased or decreased?

As stated in my previous answers, I would reduce the cost of the operation of state government and direct cost savings to other areas, such as increasing the state's contribution to public education. In addition, one of my top priorities for my first term as Governor is to provide a HOPE Scholarship Program in Pennsylvania, so that families can afford the rising cost of higher education. The program would be funded by excess profits from table games at Pennsylvania casinos.

14. What economic development strategies for Pennsylvania and Philadelphia would you seek to encourage?

As Governor, I will work with the private sector to improve the employment situation in the Commonwealth, so that all Pennsylvanians who want to work hard and pursue the American dream have the opportunity to do so. I will use my experience as Auditor General to fix the state's economic development programs and hold the recipients of state assistance accountable for creating and retaining the jobs promised. For example, our first-ever special performance audit of the Opportunity Grant Program exposed the state's lax efforts in recovering grants for jobs that were promised by businesses but never created or retained. The Department of Community and Economic Development agreed with most of our findings and recommendations, but we are keeping watch to ensure that all of our concerns are addressed.

I will also use my experience to bring transparency and competition to state government's awarding of contracts for goods and services. I am very concerned about public contracting that is neither truly competitive nor cost-effective. These are issues at the heart of my special performance audit of the state's information technology contracts, where we found over a half-billion dollars in no-bid, emergency, and sole source contracts given to a single vendor – while that same vendor received \$2.25 million in state economic development assistance to service those very same contracts. Many of the insiders who profit from the current broken system are resistant to change, but reforming that system is one of my top priorities as Governor. It is not only the right thing to do, but it will provide opportunities for businesses throughout the Commonwealth, particularly small businesses.

Finally, I will maximize the state's new Marcellus Shale energy resources to create jobs and reduce the cost of natural gas in an environmentally responsible way. The new Marcellus Shale energy resources give the Commonwealth an unparalleled opportunity in the coming years to create tens of thousands of good paying, high quality jobs to our communities and bring in much-needed revenues to state government. As Governor, I will make sure that the industry understands that these resources belong to all Pennsylvanians, that we – not outsiders – intend to reap the benefits, and that we will not tolerate any harm to our precious environment. I will insist that the costs of the increased government oversight necessary to build and monitor this new industry be borne by the industry itself.

15. Currently the state constitution mandates that revenue from the state gasoline tax be spent only on roads and bridges. Would you support an amendment allowing gas tax revenue to be spent on public transportation?

Yes, with the funds staying in the community that paid those taxes.

16. What measures would you support to ensure that Pennsylvanians have clean air and water?

I support state and local efforts to ensure that Pennsylvanians have clean air and water. As a State Senator, I voted in support of just about every environmental protection law currently on the books. In addition, as Auditor General, I have audited state agencies to ensure that they are enforcing those laws. For example, our audit of the Department of Environmental Protection found that its oversight of dam and levee safety inspections was lax. Crumbling infrastructure is particularly important given the demands that will be placed on our environment by the development of the Marcellus Shale energy resources. We must protect our natural resources in order to protect and enhance our quality of life. I reject the false choice, promoted by some, of environmental versus economic issues. Instead, they must be viewed as important complementary issues.

17. What measures would you support to preserve and provide parks and green spaces?

I support state and local efforts to ensure that Pennsylvanians have access to parks and green spaces. Again, this is not just an environmental issue. Open space preservation and urban revitalization are key components of improving quality of life and economic development opportunities.