



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Brock McCleary, President
Date: October 21, 2015
RE: Key Poll Findings – York County Survey

These days York County is the hub of political activity in Pennsylvania. Two of the state's highest profile politicians, Democratic Governor Tom Wolf and Republican Senator Scott Wagner, hail from the County. Plus, this year York County has a hotly contested Court of Common Pleas election, and a Commissioner race complicated by the drama of an incumbent running as an Independent.

Life in York County

Rating of Quality of Life: Most likely voters living in York County describe their quality of life as 'Good' (52%). An additional 6% say the quality of life is 'Excellent', for a combined 58% saying 'Excellent' or 'Good.' Thirty-four percent say the quality of life is 'Fair' and only 6% say it is 'Poor.' A majority of both Republican voters (51% Good, 56% Excellent/Good) and Democratic voters (56% Good, 63% Excellent/Good) describe the quality of life in York County as 'Good.'

Threat to Quality of Life: A majority of likely voters in York County identify "rising property taxes" (50%) as the number one threat to the quality of life in the County. This is followed distantly by "underfunded schools" (13%) and "crime and public safety" (11%). A strong majority of Republicans are most concerned about "rising property taxes" (56%) while "underfunded schools" is more of a priority for Democrats (21%, 40% rising property taxes). "Rising property taxes" generates the most concern in Senate District 28 (54%) while "underfunded schools" (26%) peaks as a concern in Senate District 33 and voters in Senate District 31 are the most likely to be concerned about "crime and public safety" (11%). "Growth and overdevelopment" reaches its high point as a concern in Senate District 33 (18%) and a "weak local economy" is highest in Senate District 48 (16%). For women, the top two concerns are "rising property taxes" (44%) and "underfunded schools" (16%) while for men they are "rising property taxes" (56%) and "crime and public safety" (11%). Concern about "underfunded schools" increases among African-American likely voters (23%).

Property Taxes: Not surprisingly after the previous data point, 76% of likely voters say property taxes in York County are "too high." Just 2% say property taxes are "too low" while 20% describe their property tax level as "about right." Voters of every demographic overwhelmingly say property taxes are too high, including both women (73%) and men (78%).

County Commissioner Ballot

First Choice: Republican incumbent Christopher Reilly (27%) and Republican challenger Susan Byrnes (25%) are the top two candidates for County Commissioner in York. Democratic incumbent Doug Hoke (20%) is in third, followed by incumbent Steve Chronister (14%), who is running as an Independent after a challenge to his petition for the Republican primary (Read about it [here](#) and [here](#)). A near majority of Democrats support incumbent Doug Hoke on the first choice ballot (47%) while Republicans are more split between Reilly (39%) and Byrnes (35%). Women evenly divide their vote between Reilly (24%), Byrnes (24%) and Hoke (23%) while men are more supportive of Reilly (30%) and Byrnes (26%). Reilly leads among Very Conservative voters (43%) while Somewhat Conservatives split between Reilly (32%) and Byrnes (32%). Christopher Reilly leads in Senate District 28 (27%, Byrnes 24%), Senate District 33 (28%, Hoke 26%) and Senate District 48 (32%, Byrnes 30%). The race is tied in

Senate District 31 between Reilly (25%), Byrnes (26%) and Hoke (25%). Reilly leads in all House Districts with the exception of 94 (Reilly 25%, Byrnes 26%), 95 (Hoke 31%, Byrnes 20%) and 196 (Hoke 27%, Byrnes 26%).

Second Choice: Reilly (24%) and Byrnes (24%) tie for first on the second choice ballot, followed by Steve Chronister (17%) and Doug Hoke (17%) who are tied for second. Democrat Henry Nixon (16%) is close behind Chronister and Hoke on the second choice ballot. Susan Byrnes is the top choice on the second choice ballot for women (27%, Reilly 21%, Nixon 21%) while Reilly is the first selection among men (27%, Chronister 21%, Hoke 20%). Although voters will only vote for two, the top three vote-getters will be elected as [County Commissioners](#). You can view sample ballots [here](#).

Court of Common Pleas Ballot

First Choice: The race for Court of Common Pleas is very tight on the first choice ballot. Chris Menges, who is running on the Republican ticket for Court of Common Pleas (31%) has a narrow lead over Kathleen Prendergast, running as a Democrat (30%) and Michael Flannelly, running on [both tickets](#) (29%). Chris Menges (45%) is the first choice among Republicans, followed by Michael Flannelly (32%). Prendergast earns 58% of Democratic support, followed by Flannelly (25%). She also has an advantage among women (34%, Flannelly 27%, Menges 27%) while Menges leads among men (35%, Flannelly 31%, Prendergast 27%). Menges has an advantage in Senate Districts 33 (39%, Prendergast 37%) and 48 (35%, Prendergast 28%) while the race is essentially tied in 28 (Prendergast 30%, Flannelly 31%, Menges 30%) and 31 (Prendergast 30%, Flannelly 29%, Menges 30%). Chris Menges leads among those who identify Fox 43 (53%), CBS 21 (39%) and PennLive.com (50%) as their primary source for local news. Prendergast has an advantage among *The York Daily Record* (38%) and *The York Dispatch* (44%) readers and Flannelly leads among those who watch WGAL News 8 (32%). The race is tied among ABC 27 viewers (29% all).

Second Choice: On the second choice ballot, Flannelly receives a majority of the vote (51%) followed by Kathleen Prendergast (24%) and Chris Menges (19%). Michael Flannelly is the top selection on the second choice ballot among both Republicans (53%, Menges 25%) and Democrats (48%, Prendergast 36%). He also leads on the second choice ballot among voters of all ideologies (Very Conservative: 51%, Somewhat Conservative: 53%, Moderate: 49%, Somewhat Liberal: 43%, Very Liberal: 53%). Two seats are open on the [York County Court of Common Pleas](#).

Hypothetical Governor- Wolf vs. Wagner

Images: Although his image is a net negative in Republican-rich York County (43% favorable, 53% unfavorable), Governor Tom Wolf continues to have a strong image among a substantial majority of Democrats (78%/17%) and Moderates (61%/32%). Likely voters who read *The York Daily Record* (62%/36%) for their local news have a far more favorable opinion of Wolf than those who identify WGAL News 8 as their primary news source (41%/54%). A majority of voters in York County have a favorable opinion of Republican Senator Scott Wagner (50%/32%). Wagner is viewed favorably by Republicans (64%/16%) as well as both women (43%/36%) and men (57%/27%). His image is more consistently favorable across news sources (Fox 43: 74%/12%, WGAL News 8: 48%/32%, YDR: 49%/35%, PennLive.com: 41%/28%).

Ballot Test: In a hard-to-resist hypothetical match-up for Governor, Scott Wagner's image advantage, along with an electorate that is favorable to a Republican, combine to give Republican Scott Wagner (53%) a lead over Democratic Governor Tom Wolf (40%). To put this in context, in 2014 former Republican Governor Tom Corbett beat Democrat Tom Wolf by a 14% margin (57-43%) in York County. Wolf receives stronger party support (Democrats: 82% Wolf) than Wagner (Republicans: 78% Wagner). Among men, Wagner leads Wolf by a nearly 2-1 margin (60-35%) while the candidates tie among women (45-45%). Following naturally from his image strength, Wolf has a commanding advantage among Moderates (56-31%). Wagner leads among those who identify WGAL News 8 (53-39%), Fox 43 (80-11%) and PennLive.com (64-36%) as their primary local news source, while Wolf leads among *The York Daily Record* (55-38%) and *The York Dispatch* (58-39%) readers. The race is the most balanced among voters who identify ABC 27 (49% Wolf, 46% Wagner) and CBS 21 (44% tie) as their news source.

Schools

Rating of Quality of Schools: A plurality of likely voters rate the quality of public schools in their school district as 'Good' (42%). A substantial 21% say public schools in their district are 'Excellent' for a combined 63% 'Excellent' or

'Good' while just 31% rate their schools as 'Fair' (24%) or 'Poor' (7%). Although both parties give positive reviews of their local schools (Republicans: 63% Excellent/Good, 30% Fair/Poor; Democrats: 67% Excellent/Good, 28% Fair/Poor), Democrats are a bit more optimistic and more likely to describe the quality as 'Excellent' (Republicans: 19%, Democrats: 26%).

Likely voters in the South Western (52%), Dallastown (40%) and York Suburban school districts (47%) are most likely to rate their public schools 'Excellent.' Most districts describe their schools as 'Good,' while voters in the West Shore district were most likely to describe their schools as 'Fair' (41%). Voters in the York City district gave their schools by far the worst review (35% Fair, 39% Poor).

Development and 'Overdevelopment'

A near-majority describe the city of York's efforts to re-develop downtown York as 'Excellent' (11%) or 'Good' (36%). About a quarter of likely voters have a 'Fair' (26%) opinion of efforts to re-develop, while 10% say these efforts have been 'Poor.'

Most voters say that, on the topic of growth and development in York County, the statement "It is important for York County to grow in order to increase our tax base and help spur our local economy" (49%) comes closer to their opinion than "Growth and overdevelopment in York County is out of control and is negatively impacting the character of our area" (35%). Voters in Senate District 48 are the most likely to say "growth is a net positive" (53%) while those in Senate District 31 are most likely to call it a "net negative" (38%). In House District 95, an area with the most growth, a strong majority of likely voters say "growth is a net positive" (69%). A similar trend appears in HD 196 (66% net positive).

METHODOLOGY:

The sample size for the survey is 582 likely voters in York County, Pennsylvania and the margin of error is +/-4.1%. Responses were gathered through land line interviews conducted using Interactive Voice Response (IVR). The survey was conducted October 18-19, 2015 by Harper Polling. The total percentages for responses may not equal 100% due to rounding.