



Montgomery County Democrats

The Newsletter of the Montgomery County Democratic Committee

MCDC Endorses Candidates for County-wide Office



(l-r) State Representative Josh Shapiro and Whitmarsh Supervisor Leslie Richards, endorsed candidates for Montgomery County Commissioner, and MCDC Chairman Marcel Groen.

Plymouth Meeting, 17 February. For the first time in recent memory, the Montgomery County Democratic Committee held its annual endorsement convention just two days after the start of the petition period. Over 300 Democratic committee people and proxies (the credential count was 314 with at least two late arrivals pushing the number to 316) and approximately 50 guests, volunteers, candidates, and state and local elected officials turned out for the convention held at the Colonial Elementary School in Plymouth Township.

Candidates, committee people, volunteers, and elected officials mingled during the check-in process, signing petitions and generating excitement for the 2011 Election Cycle. Thank you to the Montgomery County Young Democrats for helping to circulate and manage the petition process.

"Convention" continued on page 3

Shapiro Richards Endorsed for County Commissioner

Plymouth Meeting, 17 February. In an overwhelming show of unity from its committee people, MCDC endorsed State Representative Josh Shapiro and Whitmarsh Supervisor Leslie Richards for county commissioner.

"We were honored to receive the endorsement of the Democratic party to be the next County Commissioners from Montgomery county," stated Shapiro and Richards. The over 300 committee people in attendance voted by a strong "aye" voice vote to endorse the pair and a slate of candidates for county row office (see opposite article). "We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm in the room for our unified ticket," declared the commissioner candidates.

Both candidates were nominated by current County Commissioner Joe Hoeffel, who praised them for their integrity and vision for Montgomery County. Hoeffel received a standing ovation from the members of the committee. The nomination was seconded by Area 11 Leader Olivia Brady and closed by State Representative Mike Gerber.

Richards spoke at length at the convention of both her accomplishments in Whitmarsh Township and her dedication to infrastructure improvements and the minutia of managing and operating government efficiently and effectively. Equally, Shapiro, who touted his running mate's skills, discussed his dedication to creating jobs and economic opportunities for all Montgomery County residents.

The two bring fresh eyes to county government and as MCDC Chairman Marcel Groen noted, "[w]e have two great candidates, who have the issues on their side and have proven to be successful in reaching across party lines. This is a ticket," he continued, "that

"Shapiro/Richards" continued on page 3

Municipal Elections Loom Large This Year

Norristown, 24 February. Of Montgomery County's 62 municipal boards, Democrats control only 15 such governments, 7 boroughs, 7 townships, and 1 municipality (Norristown). Yet, those Democratic seats represent 37.68 percent of all county registered voters, and 45 percent of all registered Democrats. In addition, 11 of those local governments are in the eastern half of the county (Hatboro, Upper Dublin, Jenkintown, Norristown, Plymouth, Whitemarsh, Springfield, Cheltenham, Conshohocken, Lower Merion, and Narberth), while two are north-central (Hatfield Twp., Lansdale), and two more are farther west (Schwenksville, Pottstown).

Not all municipalities are alike: of the county's 23 boroughs, all have mayors and councils, 8 of whom have council members elected by wards, while the remaining 15 borough councils are elected at-large. Typically, borough governments have weak executives and strong legislatures; nonetheless, 8 of the 23 mayors are Democratic. Of the county's 38 townships, 1 elects a township council at-large, 1 elects a council by ward (with one councilor at-large), 6 elect commissioners at-large, 7 elect commissioners by ward, and 23 elect supervisors at-large. Finally, the county's sole municipality is Norristown, consisting of 7 supervisors, 4 of whom are elected by ward and the remaining 3 are elected at-large. In any event, the election of board members is staggered, with approximately 168 seats out of 379, or 44%, to be filled this November at the General Election.

Although local municipal elections are not typically prone to dramatic electoral upheavals, this year holds interesting speculations. Thirteen of the 15 Democratic boards will have their majorities on the line, while 12 Republican majorities are also, in theory, at stake, though again, few expect to see dramatic turnovers in these elections. Still, with the prospect of a very competitive race for county commissioners and row offices, local elections will undoubtedly be affected, particularly if there is higher than normal turnout for this off-year cycle.



Chairman's Corner

By Marcel Groen, Chairman
Montgomery County Democratic Committee

Last week's Democratic endorsement convention produced an amalgam of excitement, confidence, unity and happiness. While positive vibes ruled the evening as our Democratic committee persons endorsed their strongest county-wide ticket in history led by Josh Shapiro and Leslie Richards, there was also the realization that eight-plus months of hard work face us if we are to bring those positive feelings to fruition on November 8.

There is no denying that 2011 is a critical election year in Montgomery County, at both the county and municipal levels. Democrats have never held the majority on the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners. Hopes were high in 2007, but we fell just short of the majority, although we did win five row offices – clerk of courts, controller, coroner, prothonotary and register of wills.

This year, those five incumbents (Ann Weiss, Diane Morgan, Walter Hofman, Mark Levy and D. Bruce Hanes), buoyed by three years of excellent service to the residents of Montgomery County, will be joined by a group of strong row office candidates including Jason Salus for Treasurer, Linda Hee for Recorder of Deeds and Will Holt for Sheriff. Of course, Richard Haaz and Cheryl Austin will also be on the ticket as they run for judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

The clear leaders of the ticket, however, are Josh Shapiro and Leslie Richards. Their candidacies were assured when Commissioner Joe Hoeffel decided not to seek re-election. Joe has been a leader and Montgomery County's most visible Democrat for more than three decades as he served with distinction as a state representative, congressman and county commissioner. Joe's decision and his energetic nomination of Josh and Leslie as our standardbearers contributed greatly to the positive feelings last Thursday.

Now, the hard work begins. Petitions. Door-knocking. Fundraising. Talking to our friends and neighbors, Democrat and Republican. GOTV. Working the polls. We have the best candidates. We know how to govern. We have consistently proven to the people of Montgomery County and its municipalities that Democrats don't they just win elections, they make their communities better places to live and work.

That's the message we must take to our friends and neighbors. It's a message of hope; a message of competence; a message of professionalism; a message of trust; and, most importantly, it is not just a message, it is the truth.

So, let's get busy and take those feelings of excitement, confidence, unity and happiness and turn them into the biggest victory in the history of the Democratic Party in Montgomery County on November 8.

“Convention” continued from page 1

Once the convention was called to order, and after the pledge of allegiance led by State Committee member **Andrea Baptiste**, the program began with remarks from MCDC Chairman **Marcel Groen**, who welcomed everyone to the Convention and introduced elected officials in attendance, including Pennsylvania State Treasurer **Rob McCord**, State Representatives **Mike Gerber**, **Tim Briggs**, and **Matt Bradford**, and County Commissioner **Joe Hoeffel**. Also introduced was PA Democratic Party Vice Chair **Penny Gerber**.

Groen devoted much of his opening remarks to thanking and honoring Hoeffel for his years of service to the party and his constituents. “Joe is, has been, and always will be my friend,” said Groen. “For 35 years he has served the people of this County and the Commonwealth well. He has made us proud to be Democrats. Without Joe,” he continued, “this party would not be where we are today.”

Groen also talked about the current incumbent row officers and the outstanding job they have done in the courthouse. He mentioned the candidates who had put their names forward for endorsement for row offices and then discussed the “energy, exuberance, and fresh ideas,” that State Representative **Josh Shapiro** and Whitmarsh Supervisor **Leslie Richards** will bring to the ticket. “This year,” Groen declared, “this party wins the Court House - something we have never done in the history of the county.”

MCDC was joined by candidates for state-wide judicial offices, **Kathryn Boockvar** (Commonwealth Court) and **David Wecht** (Superior Court), both of whom briefly addressed the crowd. Having already won endorsement by the Democratic State Committee, Boockvar and Wecht thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak and ask for the support of Montgomery County Democrats.



2011 Row Office Slate

The candidates for county court of common pleas retention, Judges **Arthur Tilson** and **Thomas Branca**, also received support of the committee. Those judges were nominated for endorsement by **Richard Haaz** and **Cheryl Austin**, who received the MCDC endorsement for their candidacy for county court of common pleas.

Groen then asked for nominations for County Row Office positions. Committee person **Kelly Devine** stepped to the microphone and nominated a slate of candidates: Clerk of Courts **Ann Thornburg Weiss** (I), Controller **Diane Morgan** (I), Coroner **Walter I. Hof-**

man (I), Prothonotary **Mark Levy** (I), **Linda Hee** for recorder of deeds, Register of Wills **D. Bruce Hanes** (I), **William A. Holt, Jr.** for sheriff, and **Jason Salus** for treasurer. The nomination of the slate was seconded by **Gary Simpson** and **Ed Cheri**. With a resounded “aye” voice vote the slate was endorsed.

The convention continued with the nomination of candidates for county commissioner, and Groen called on Hoeffel, who nominated Richards and Shapiro (see article on page 1). After a second, and a call to close the nominations, the pair was unanimously endorsed and both spoke to the assembled crowd.

Groen concluded the evening with an invitation to everyone to attend an after party hosted by the Shapiro Richards campaign at the local watering hole, Brittingham’s Irish Pub. Approximately 75 people traveled the mile to Brittingham’s, where they enjoyed food and drinks, and partook in good old fashioned Democratic camaraderie.



Richards and Shapiro

Below: (l-r) Pat Parkinson and Prothonotary Mark Levy give two thumbs up to a great night.



Above, (l-r) Young Democrats: Upper Merion Supervisor Greg Waks, David Hanel, MCYD Chair Kelly Devine, Raymond Marcero, Stephen Rudman, Mike Panza (standing), and Area 12 Leader Tom Kohler.



(“Shapiro/Richards” continued from page 1)
 Democrats, independents and a significant number of Republicans will embrace.”

The Shapiro Richards team is currently working out of an office in Abington Township. Find out more about their campaign at www.shapirorichards.com or call 215-886-7376.

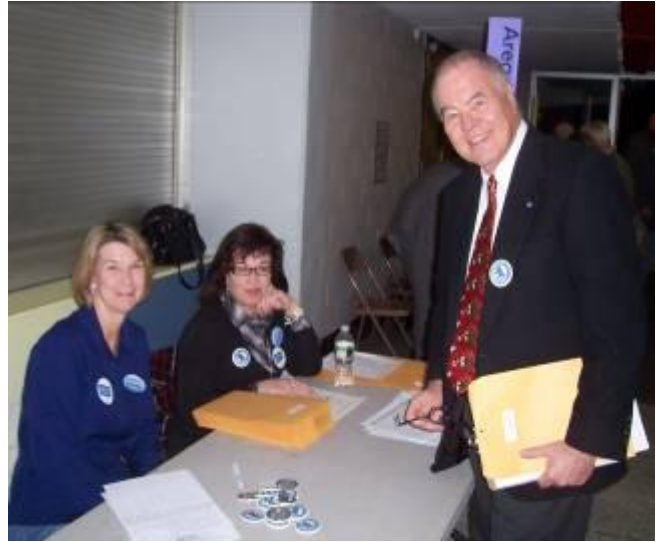


Endorsement Convention

Photo credits page 4-7: Kelly Devine



County Commissioner Joe Hoeffel and Lower Merion committee person Bill Myrtetus (11-2).



Plymouth Committee people (1-r) Kelly Isset (1-2), Kathy Kempfer (3-1), and Robert Benowitz, proxy for wife and committee person, Nancy Benowitz (4-1).



Democratic Party volunteer for Diane Morgan, Carol Bonnet, and Area 3 leader and Lower Salford 3 Committee person Bob Solomon.

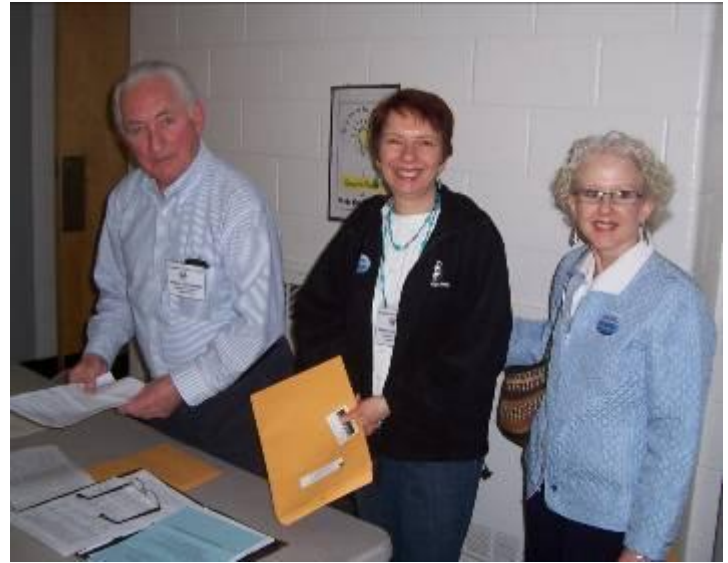


Hope and Dave Nasatir and Pennsylvania Treasurer Rob McCord.





(l-r) Area 1 Leader and Lower Pottsgrove 3 Committee person Jim Prendergast, with committee people, Kathleen Bortz (Pottstown 3), Dan Weand (Pottstown 5), and Eugene Harding (Pottstown 2-2).



(l-r) Area 15 Leader Arthur Fairclough and wife Nancy Fairclough, both committee people for Schwenksville, and Robin Bonner, committee person for Lower Frederick 2.



Area 4 Committee people Dean Wilkes (Collegetown 3) and Lisa Moore (Collegetown 1).



(l-r) Area 4 Committee people Matt Ryan (Limerick 4), Margarita Breslin (Limerick 1), and Jesse James (Limerick 4).





(l-r) Montgomery County Young Democrats John Fennell, (Committee person, Bridgeport 2) Amy Fetherolf (Committee person Lower Merion 1-3), Drew Albert (Co-Municipal Chair, Conshohocken), and Upper Dublin Democrat Stephen Rudman.



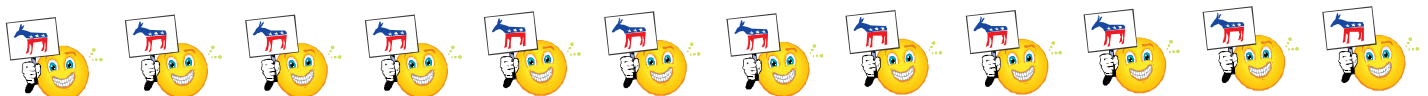
Democratic Party candidate for Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, Richard Haaz



Bob Bendig, volunteer for David Wecht (candidate for Superior Court) and Christina Walsh, volunteer for the Shapiro-Richards campaign.



(l-r) Lower Merion Committee person Harry Hannigan (5-3), Democratic State Committee member and committee person Ruth Damsker (Upper Gwynedd 7), Whitpain Democrat Valerie Burton, and Committee person Michele Minnick (Whitpain 7).





Area 13 Co-Leader and Lower Merion Committee person Bill Leopold (11-2) and Lower Merion Committee person Eva Ray (6-3).



Plymouth Committee person Sherry Marcus Milano (3-1), Montgomery County Coroner Dr. Walter Hofman (back left), and Charles Steinberger, proxy for Tom Biggar (Skeppack 4).



(l-r) East Norriton resident Angelina Focht, Joe Gordon and Sarah Gordon from Lower Pottsgrove.



(l-r) MCDC Second Vice Chair Joe Foster, candidate for county Recorder of Deeds and committee person Linda Hee (Abington 11-2), County Jury Commissioner, MCDC First Vice Chair, and committee person Joanne Olszewski (Whitpain 8), and Democratic loyalist Doug Pike.

House Bill 33 Severance Tax on Marcellus Shale Extraction

Harrisburg, 24 February. As concerns grow in the United States over our reliance on foreign sources of energy, both the Federal Government and individual states are looking at alternative means of producing energy and also at exploiting potential domestic energy sources. Such is the case with Pennsylvania and the enormous underground gas reserves beneath the Marcellus-Shale beds, which deposits sit, in part, under private properties, whose owners can either lease or sell their properties to gas companies who intend to secure drilling permits from the state, and then extract the gas.

But much of the gas also sits under 61 state parks; the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [DCNR], however, does not own underground mineral rights for about 85 percent of those lands. Because of the potentially serious environmental impact of widespread drilling, in particular the use of highly toxic "frack" water to crack the shale beds to get at the gas, former Governor Ed Rendell attempted unsuccessfully to obtain from the legislature a severance tax on gas extracted by the drilling companies, in part, to help ease the anticipated state revenue shortfall and, in part, to assist municipalities impacted by drilling. He also took steps to address concerns by environmental groups and by residents in sites affected. Thus, in October 2010 he required environmental impact assessments to be conducted by DCNR in state forests and parklands where the state lacked mineral rights beneath the land before a driller could apply for a permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection [DEP]. That decision effectively halted any new drilling activity in those sites because of the extensiveness of the review process. Rendell had also called for a moratorium on new leases on state lands where the state owned the mineral rights. The first requirement has now been rescinded by Republican Governor Tom Corbett, whose spokesman, Kevin Harley, also acknowledged that Corbett would soon lift the moratorium as well.

Besides the serious environmental concerns raised by the Marcellus-Shale drilling, there is growing anger by many Pennsylvanians that a state facing serious budgetary constraints because



of revenue shortfalls has refused to join EVERY OTHER STATE in the Union where such significant gas extraction takes place to levy a severance tax on the drilling companies for such extraction. The Republican insistence at the state level on not levying any new fees for revenue purposes has led Democrats in the state house, led by Representative [Greg Vitali](#) of Delaware County (166th), to introduce House Bill 33, co-sponsored by 58 of the House's 203 members, including Montgomery County Democratic representatives [Matt Bradford](#) (70th), [Mike Gerber](#) (148th), [Tim Briggs](#) (149th), [Josh Shapiro](#) (153rd), [Lawrence Curry](#) (154th), [Brendan Boyle](#) (170th), and [Pamela DeLissio](#) (194th), with the primary goal of enacting a severance tax on the drillers. As Vitali noted when introducing the bill, "these companies are making billions in profits and . . . it's important that they pay their fair share," adding that the revenues can be used, in part, to recompense municipalities "for the stresses that drilling imposes upon their areas." The rate of tax would be similar to that of West Virginia and should raise, he estimated, \$245 million this coming fiscal year, and rise to nearly \$570 million by 2015. According to the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, had a severance tax been enacted when first introduced in October 2009, the state would have already collected about \$130 million.

State Senator [Daylin Leach](#) of Montgomery County (17th) was present when Vitali announced his bill at a press conference, and, like Vitali, having encountered bogus claims of job killing by supporters of the drillers, retorted that a severance tax, in fact, had not been a job killer in other states and

"Shale" continued on page 9



“Shale” continued from page 8

that drillers would not leave the state and go elsewhere, “If they want the gas, they’ll drill here,” Leach (pictured at left) stressed. Also present was a representative

of Montgomery County Democratic State Senator [Andy Dinniman](#) (19th). Democrats in the State Senate are expected to introduce a similar bill.

Montgomery County Representative Tim Briggs (pictured below), Vice Chair of the Democratic Policy Committee, co-hosted a hearing by the committee on 23 February at the Upper Merion Township Building to discuss House Bill 33. In announcing the meeting, Briggs echoed Vitali's sentiments: "I am committed to continuing the push for a severance

tax on natural gas drillers to ensure that drillers who are profiting from our natural resources pay their



fair share and do not allow this burden to fall on the backs of hardworking Pennsylvanians. A recent poll," he continued, "shows that 63 percent of Pennsylvanians also support a tax on drillers. . . . In Pennsylvania, we are currently the only major natural gas producing state that does not have a drilling tax or fee. I believe," Briggs concluded, "we are missing a chance to generate new revenue Pennsylvania needs during these difficult economic times when core state programs are being jeopardized by funding cuts or elimination."

The Natural Gas Severance Tax Account into which the taxes would be paid, would be distributed quarterly, providing one-third to the General Fund, one third to environmental needs, including helping to fund the extremely

popular yet near-bankrupt Greener Fund, which provides assistance primarily for preservation of farmland, for conservation, for acid-mine drainage, and for cleaning rivers and streams; and one-third to communities impacted by the drilling.

Despite public opinion polling showing strong support for the tax, however, and despite Democratic Party efforts, the likelihood of a tax being enacted is quite remote, given Governor Corbett's avowed opposition to the tax, given the Republican majorities in both chambers, and given the power and influence of the drilling lobby at the state capital.

Area 14 Hosts Breakfast Social

Ambler, 19 February. The Area 14 *W i s s a h i c k o n* Democrats hosted a Breakfast Social at the Daniel D. Dowling American Legion Post #769 in Ambler. Local committee people and their families, as



Candidate for county treasurer Jason Salus and county commissioner candidate Leslie Richards.

well as Democrats from the community attended. Several county candidates and local municipal and school board candidates were in attendance both to meet local Democrats and get their petitions signed. In addition to candidates, Area 14 Co-Leader Sibby Phiambolis and Ambler Municipal Chair Matt Cooley spoke.

Photo credits: Maureen Cooley

Below: (l-r) Area 14 Co-Leader Sibby Phiambolis with candidates for county commissioner Leslie Richards and Josh

