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News Release

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Rep. Santarsiero Meets with BCWAC and Pennswood Residents

The Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition (BCWAC) and Pennswood Village are nonpartisan and do not endorse candidates. We invited both Rep. Steve Santarsiero and Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick to attend two separate gatherings to answer the same questions on basic needs, environment & energy, health & safety, and jobs & education.

After both candidates postponed the meeting at the last minute last Thursday (Mr. Fitzpatrick for a "family medical emergency" and Rep. Santarsiero for an extended PA House session day), on Wednesday, Nov 2, only Rep Santarsiero rearranged his schedule to meet with 75 constituents from the 8th congressional district who are interested in going beyond campaign ads to be informed voters.

We regret that we cannot give opinions and positions from both candidates for this important open Congressional seat.

Each question, which had not been seen by the candidate before, was introduced with background and researched data. They were drawn from suggestions submitted by residents of the Pennswood Community and Partners of the BCWAC based on the Coalition's Principles. The questions were designed to establish position, solutions, and governance philosophy of the candidate. Attached is a summary of PA Rep. Santarsiero's response to our 35 tough and specific questions.

General questions:

- In response to a question about working with members of the opposite political party, Rep. Santarsiero said we have to work across the aisle. "There is no idea that can't be improved by getting input from those across the aisle."
- In partnering with Bucks County organizations and municipalities, he would establish within his district office a community office that would be dedicated to working on

community issues such as economics and jobs and the Warminster water pollution problem.

- He agreed that there is a role for the federal government to play setting policies from evidence-based research.
- He also mentioned that he would co-sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment.

Basic Needs:

- In response to the need to expand the national supply of affordable housing, Rep Santarsiero said one solution is “finding incentives for developers to build affordable housing. Block grants can be a useful tool to influence how communities respond to housing issues.”
- Rep. Santarsiero mentioned that he helped advocate, while a law student at Penn, for individuals who were denied food stamps (SNAP), and he mentioned that many neighborhoods don't have supermarkets to buy fresh produce and quality food.
- Responding to the statistic that one in five Pennsylvanians who qualify don't get SNAP, he said, “more education needs to be done to promote access to those who do qualify. Two ways to reach them is through the schools and PSAs [public service announcements].”

Energy & Environment:

- Rep. Santarsiero absolutely agrees that climate change is a big issue. “When the history of our era is written, climate change will be the most important issue. The consequences to our planet will be significant including rising seas and areas where we grow food, that won't be sustainable and will result in starvation. This generation has a moral responsibility to address climate change.”
- It is important for the international community to come together to utilize the UN framework as a forum to discuss the range of global issues. The Federal Government has an important role to play in setting environmental policy that allows states to develop their own response based on their regional needs.

Health & Safety:

- Regarding the future of the Affordable Care Act, Rep. Santarsiero would support the basic ACA framework but acknowledges that there need to be some changes made.
- He thought that Medicaid Expansion helped the working poor and was great in states that adopted it.

- He highlighted the benefits of the ACA like covering those with pre-existing conditions, kids staying on parents insurance to age 26, and eliminating the disparity for women.
- He supports allowing Medicare to negotiate prescription drug costs.
- He supports the public option that would bring down costs mentioning that Speaker of the House Paul Ryan supported the public option as well.
- We do need to address the rising costs and high deductibles.
- When asked about reproductive health and the national priority to reduce unintended pregnancies, would it not make sense to support publicly funded family planning services provided by Title X which are needed by 20 million women? Representative Santasiero responded, "You bet! It is irresponsible to defund Title X."
- He thought we should put more funds into Planned Parenthood, which also provides many other health-screening services.
- On the topic of gun control and funding research by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), he said, "You can't have it both ways. Those who oppose gun control often sight no proof of the impact of gun violence but also oppose research by the CDC. We need to fund research to create the best policies."
- He didn't think we needed to create a national database of all gun owners, but the current database of those who have been convicted of crimes and those with mental health problems needs to be more accurate.

Jobs & Education:

- Rep. Santarsiero is willing to raise the minimum wage and supported the Pennsylvania bill to raise it to \$10.10 from the current \$7.25/hr. The amount beyond that would be part of the compromise in Congress. "We can't let the perfect be an enemy of the good."
- He added, "The long-term focus needs to be to create more jobs with livable wages. Wages have been going down for the 90% and up for only the top 10%." Technological changes mean we need to have training for jobs of the future.
- On the pay gap between men and women, "We have to pass equal pay for equal work. It's 2016, we should be past this by now. There is no excuse for it."
- He supports the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Equal Pay Act.

- On Social Security he said, “We have to make sure that the gap is equaled out which is particularly important for older women who have the biggest gap when their income is connected to that of their spouse. Elderly women are the fastest growing poverty group. Whatever we do, bipartisan support is essential.”
- On paid sick leave he said, “We need to provide incentives for employers to offer paid leave for families on both sides of the spectrum. We talk about family values in this country but we don’t support them for child care and elder care. You can count on me to work on these bills. I see this as both a family issue and fiscal issue.”
- On Child Care, he looks forward to talking to members on the other side of the aisle. “Children with good quality child care will more likely have good paying jobs in the future that will help our economy and also avoid social problems which cost us money. I absolutely will seek to work with members of the opposition party to craft a comprehensive national child care policy.”
- College affordability: “We need to make sure we are lowering interest rates on college loans and bringing down the cost of tuition.”

Poverty:

“Early childhood education is one of the best ways to break the cycle of poverty,” Rep. Santarsiero said. He supports job training for adults to get out of poverty.

“If I am elected I will be here [at Pennswood] again. These were the most thorough list of questions today. Many of these issues have been missing from the campaign. I am grateful for this opportunity to address these issues.”

The **Bucks County Women’s Advocacy Coalition** (BCWAC) is a non-partisan coalition of more than 150 individual and 37 organization partners that serve women and girls and includes the League of Women Voters of Bucks County and American Association of University Women who helped plan this event. The BCWAC educates and advocates on behalf of women to promote systemic change to achieve gender equity and economic security for all.

Pennswood Village Social Justice Committee co-hosted this event in Penn Hall with the BCWAC. Nancy Morrill, President Emerita of the BCWAC and resident of Pennswood Village, was the interviewer.

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