**Job Creation and the Pennsylvania Governor’s Race**

The May 20 gubernatorial primary in Pennsylvania is fast approaching, and all the candidates are talking about job creation. To hear the two parties talk, you’d think they were looking at two different states. Republicans see a gradual but steady improvement in the labor market since the recession ended in 2009. Democrats see stagnation. There’s no disagreement, however, that job creation is paramount. And polls indicate voters care about it immensely.

But, job creation is a tough issue to tackle. So this edition of Guv Race 101 outlines some of the basics, highlights the candidates’ plans and offers you places to get more information before you step into the voting booth in May.

-- April 2, 2014

**The Basics**

**So which of these folks is going to turn Pennsylvania into a jobs machine?**

Good place to start. The fact of the matter is that the issue of job creation is both enormous *and* enormously complicated. Trends in the national economy, globalization, interest rates, federal spending and tax policy all play a role in the jobs climate in every state. Even measuring the jobs climate isn’t simple. There are different numbers to consider and, in some cases, different ways to interpret those numbers. Although state policy is important, there are limits to what a governor alone can do.

**Fair enough. Can we at least see how the state weathered the recession?**Compared to the rest of the country, Pennsylvania rode out the recession fairly well. The national unemployment rate peaked around 10 percent in 2009. Our state topped out at 8.7 percent in 2010, not long after the recession ended.

**How are we doing now?**
If you want to see a cup half-full, there’s good news. The state’s unemployment rate as of February is 6.2 percent (397,000 job-seekers without jobs), versus the nation’s 6.7 percent. (Philly isn’t doing as well: As of November 2013, the city’s unemployment rate was 9.5 percent.) And Pa. has been creating jobs in the past three years, though exactly how many is debatable.

**What about the pessimists out there?**
Regardless of how you crunch numbers, Pennsylvania has a lagging job creation rate. Several estimates put Pennsylvania in the bottom fifth of all states in job creation since the recession, and things may not get better soon. According to a recent report from The Pew Charitable Trusts, projected job growth in 2014 is just 1.3 percent, 41st out of 50 states.

**Ok. So if I’m out of work, where’s my best chance of finding a job in Pa.?**
Take up drilling. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports oil and natural gas mining created more than 15,000 jobs since 2007. That’s a 259 percent increase within that burgeoning industry. Nothing else in the state comes close in job growth.

**And if I don’t want to put on a hard hat?**
Education and Health Services jobs are doing well, adding 86,200 positions since 2007, an eight percent increase. Just watch out for manufacturing. In seven years the state lost 94,800 manufacturing jobs, a 14.5 percent decline.

**So what's the final word on job creation in Pennsylvania?**
It depends who you talk to. Some, like Governor Tom Corbett, see the state holding firm. The recession didn’t slam Pennsylvania as badly as other states, so we didn’t have as much ground to make up. Generally, Democrats argue the low job growth is caused by a failure to invest more in job training, a lack of infrastructure spending and a business friendly tax structure that has led to cuts in public sector jobs.

**What the Candidates Say**

**Governor Tom Corbett’s already got the job. Let’s start with him. What is he offering?**
For now, Corbett's mostly running on his record and says decreasing taxes for small businesses, cutting regulations, and low taxes for the natural gas industry have kept the jobs market stable. He also credits his [JOBS1st PA](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1712759&parentname=ObjMgr&parentid=28&mode=2) program with boosting private sector job creation following the recession and says his 2014-2015 budget continues funding for some of its initiatives; in particular, job training and incentives for the manufacturing, life science and technology sectors.

**Anything else?**
Corbett also released an [Energy=Jobs](http://energy.newpa.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/PA-State-Energy-Plan-Web.pdf) plan in January, which mostly gives more detail on taxes, regulations and spending but also includes a few promises on ways to encourage even more cooperation between Pa. and businesses, particularly the natural gas industry.

**And the Ds?**
Democratic candidates Rob McCord, Katie McGinty, Allyson Schwartz and Tom Wolf all talk about creating jobs through more money for infrastructure improvements, job training and education, and incentives to attract more business to the state. But they are trying to distinguish themselves from one another by focusing on different aspects of the job creation picture.

**Polls say Tom Wolf’s the frontrunner now. Let’s talk about him.**
Wolf, who trumpets his experience as owner of a successful kitchen cabinet firm, talks a lot about tackling the anemic manufacturing industry. His [Made in Pennsylvania](http://www.wolfforpa.com/sections/page/made-in-pa) plan proposes, among other things, cash payments for manufacturers who create significant numbers of jobs and partnership grants to connect businesses with colleges and universities.

**And Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz?**
Two weeks ago, she followed Wolf with a proposal to spur manufacturing. Schwartz is pitching 10,000 new apprenticeships, rebuilding a training program for skilled workers, streamlining existing job development programs and more money for job training, community colleges and vocational education. Schwartz’s plan is [here](http://allysonschwartz.com/wp-content/uploads/workforce.pdf).

**What about Katie McGinty?**
McGinty is emphasizing her former job as Secretary of the state’s Department of Environmental Protection with plans to bolster the clean energy research and development industry. She has also talked about her experience with environmental cleanup as a jobs driver. Find more on McGinty’s [website](http://www.katiemcginty.com/issues/clean-energy).

**And Rob McCord?**

McCord promotes his experience in the private sector and as state treasurer. On his campaign [website](http://www.robmccord.com/issues/), he singles out agriculture and tourism as industries Pennsylvania can build around to create jobs. He also highlights training programs for displaced workers and using the state’s biomedical industry to attract workers and spur growth.

**Get More Information**

The state’s [Department of Labor and Industry](http://www.dli.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/l_i_home/5278) has a wealth of information on unemployment and job creation in Pennsylvania. Short and easy to read is their Fast Facts, a recently updated PDF which can be downloaded [here](http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/home/19890). Also worth exploring is the federal [Bureau of Labor Statistics](http://www.bls.gov) and its in-depth reports, like this one on [Pennsylvania](http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.pa.htm) which includes information about regions in the state, including Philadelphia.

Those are the numbers, but if you want to explore those different points of view we started off talking about, there are places to start. This [report](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org/policyblog/detail/a-look-at-job-growth-in-pennsylvania) by the Commonwealth Foundation, a conservative leaning think tank, argues the state’s job creation outlook is pretty good. By contrast, this [brief](http://keystoneresearch.org/publications/research/PA-lagging-economic-growth) from the liberal leaning Keystone Research Center comes to some very different conclusions.

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