

2021-Primary EI End for Krasner & Judges

Over a period of several weeks, Philly Neighborhood Networks reviewed questionnaires, conducted interviews and participated in candidate forums. We also considered the endorsements of other progressive organizations and Democratic Ward Committees who likewise rigorously vetted the candidates. Based on all this, we believe we have an outstanding group of justice-oriented candidates to recommend for your support. And we also have recommendations on all the Ballot Questions at the end.

HERE ARE THE PNN ENDORSEMENTS FOR PHILLY'S MAY 2021 PRIMARY ELECTION

DISTRICT ATTORNEY — LARRY KRASNER [Ballot #30]

Larry Krasner – Our members overwhelmingly voted to endorse DA Larry Krasner in a February Poll. When Krasner ran four years ago, he promised to roll back needless incarceration, focus on more serious offenses, and institute a no-tolerance policy for corruption. He has made significant progress on all these fronts by:

- Shifting resources to solve serious crimes. Just before the pandemic effectively closed Philly courts, a greater share of homicide cases ended in convictions than in any year since 2014 and the conviction rate in shooting cases was likewise at the highest point in years.
- Decreasing the county jail population by 40% and this summer it fell to its lowest level since 1985.
- Exonerating 18 innocent individuals with his newly instituted Conviction Integrity Unit.
- Cutting more than half the number of children being charged as adults, and stopping the prosecution of low-level offenses like marijuana possession that target Black and brown communities.
- Changing the DA's policy on cash bail by not asking for cash bail in petty cases where public safety is not at issue.
- Holding police accountable by developing a database of police misconduct and charging and prosecuting police officers for abusing their power.

Equally important, Krasner launched the CARES program that provides intensive support for victims after the homicide of a family member and is committed to expanding this victim support program even further. At the same time, Krasner has taken a public health approach to drug use, expanded diversionary programs, and implemented a restorative justice program for juveniles.

Wisely, Larry Krasner understands that poverty is not a crime, but rather a condition of an unfair system. That's why we strongly endorse Larry Krasner for another four years as our City's District Attorney.

CONTROLLER — REBECCA RHYNHART [Ballot #31]

Rebecca Rhyhart – Rhyhart has been an effective fiscal watchdog, exposing waste, fraud and abuse in City budgeting and accounting, wrongdoing in construction projects, and irregularities in city procurement processes. At the same time, she has emphasized addressing issues affecting racial justice, including the diversity of the city's exempt workforce, and the intersection of gun violence and residential segregation. She deserves another term as our City Controller.

SUPREME COURT (1 OPENING) — MARIA C MCLAUGHLIN [Ballot #1]

Maria C. McLaughlin – Current Superior Court judge and Philly resident, she is highly recommended by the Pa. Bar Association. Previously she served as Assistant DA for 19 years, for many of them as Chief of its Child Support Enforcement Unit. A volunteer in many community organizations, she is running unopposed in the primary and has significant support throughout the Democratic Party. That will make her a strong candidate in the fall election as we attempt to flip a long-time Republican seat.

SUPERIOR COURT (1 OPENING) — TIMIKA R. LANE [Ballot #3]

Timika R. Lane – A Phila. Common Pleas Court judge since 2014, she presides over family and criminal matters. As an African American who grew up in W. Philly, she will bring much needed diversity to that Court. Lane previously worked in the Public Defender's Office and had a private practice in family law. The entire arc of her career demonstrates a strong commitment to public service.

COMMONWEALTH COURT (2 OPENINGS) – LORI A. DUMAS [Ballot #6] & AMANDA GREEN HAWKINS[Ballot #8]

Lori A. Dumas – A Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge since 2002 presiding over family, criminal and civil cases, she is a leader in the creation of the Juvenile Human Trafficking Court. She is intellectually gifted, was on Law Review and teaches legal courses.

Amanda Green Hawkins – Green Hawkins is a labor rights attorney with the United Steel Workers and like Dumas, will bring much needed diversity to the Court. Elected twice to Allegheny County Council, she sponsored legislation to prohibit discrimination against people because of gender identity. Her community engagement includes work with the Women’s Law Project, many community organizations, and voter protection work in every election cycle.

PHILADELPHIA COMMON PLEAS (8 OPENINGS)

Caroline Turner [Ballot #9] – She served as a New Jersey public defender for 10 years before entering private practice in 2017. In that role, she witnessed the gamut of criminal justice abuses from police lies, brutality and racial profiling to overcharging by prosecutors and defense attorneys who would rather plea their clients than fight for them at trial. She is reform-minded and committed to restorative justice, ending cash bail, capping the length of probation, and transparency in the courtroom.

Wendi Barish [Ballot #11] – Worked in the field of employment law for many years representing employees and specialized in discrimination and civil rights cases. In 2015, she became Deputy General Counsel for the Public Housing Authority concentrating in the areas of labor and employment. She is an experienced litigator and also respected lecturer on workforce issues. Growing up in a single parent household with limited income, she understands the impact that poverty can have on parties in the court system.

Cateria McCabe [Ballot #13]-Appointed to the Court of Common Pleas in 2019, her prior experience includes private practice, a stint in the City Law Department, and employment as the Director of Veterans, Kinship Care, and Tenant Rights at the Senior Law Center. She represented persons pro bono facing the loss of their homes in mortgage foreclosure cases.

Her understanding of the needs of families and her experience serving clients in need will make her an excellent addition to the court.

Nick Kamau [Ballot #14]– He is a highly experienced litigator who has practiced in many areas and settings, including as a public defender, a prosecutor, and in a number of areas of civil law. He also served during the Obama Administration where he prepared Members of Congress to defend Medicaid Expansion under the Affordable Care Act. His representation of poor and underserved individuals throughout his professional career makes him strongly aware of the myriad injustices that afflict poverty-stricken households.

Dan Sulman [Ballot #15]- A Phila Court of Common Pleas judge for the last 3 years, he was previously a Master hearing child support cases for 17 years. During his 20 years of experience in the family law area, he became acutely aware of the problems that trauma, mental health, and long term poverty cause in families. He is committed to restorative justice, pursuing alternatives to incarceration, and limiting excessive probation and parole terms.

Betsy Wahl [Ballot #18]– Wahl has served as a Juvenile Court Hearing Officer in Philadelphia since 2002 where she presides over juvenile delinquency and dependency hearings. Her prior experience includes service as a public defender and a mediator in domestic relations matters. After 35 years of public service devoted to kids and those in need, she understands well how the issues of poverty, homelessness, and mental health impact the parties that will come before her as a judge.

Michele Hangley [Ballot #19]- She has used her skills and position to work on behalf of both voting rights and criminal justice. In 2020, she successfully litigated a series of challenges to Pennsylvania's mail-in ballot and other procedures, including baseless claims by the Trump campaign, challenging drop boxes in all 67 PA counties. In 2018-19, she represented Gov Wolf and his administration in gerrymandering litigation. Her candidacy is a continuation of her life-long commitment to equality and justice which started in high school when she fought for the right of female students to attend Central High.

Christopher Hall [Ballot #22]– As a United States Attorney, he investigated and prosecuted polluters who dumped asbestos in a residential neighborhood next to Cobbs Creek, and also prosecuted predatory lenders who had tricked Hispanic homeowners into refinancing

their homes due to language barriers. In his current private practice, he represents indigent criminal defendants, and won a case in the PA Supreme Court to uphold due process rights in grand jury cases. His prior practice shows a commitment to pursuing equal justice for all.

PHILADELPHIA MUNICIPAL COURT (3 OPENINGS)

Gregory Yorgey-Girdy [Ballot #28]- He has a wide range of experience practicing first as a City Solicitor and later as Discovery and Conflicts Counsel for two large law firms. He supports diversionary programs as alternatives to incarceration, ending cash bail, and providing resources to keep families together. Being a gay and black man, he is sensitive to issues of discrimination and implicit bias and is committed to promoting equality, fairness, and justice for all who would appear before him as a judge.

BALLOT QUESTIONS

1: NO. Should the PA Constitution be amended to empower the legislature to extend or terminate an emergency declaration by resolution?

RATIONALE: The Governor currently has the executive power, granted by statute, to declare an emergency, as do many governors across the United States. This has been a point of conflict between the Republican controlled Legislature and Governor Wolf throughout the coronavirus pandemic. The power to declare an emergency should remain with the Executive Branch as the Governor is best suited to make necessary determinations and act on them expeditiously.

2: NO. Should the PA Constitution be amended to address the governor's emergency powers, including requiring legislative approval to continue beyond 21 days?

RATIONALE: This is a further attempt by the Legislature to curtail the governor's emergency powers. The governor has the statutory power to declare an emergency and define its terms and conditions. The power to declare an emergency should remain with the governor. Both this ballot question and the previous one are partisan gambits to embarrass the Democratic Governor ahead of next year's gubernatorial election.

3: YES. Should the PA Constitution be amended to prohibit denial or abridgment of rights on account of an individual's race or ethnicity?

RATIONALE: This should be part of the PA Constitution. There are some statutes currently barring discrimination on the books, but making it part of the PA Constitution will make those prohibitions permanent and guarantee the equal treatment under law to which every person, regardless of race or ethnicity, is entitled.

4: YES: Whether municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies should be eligible for the existing loan program?

RATIONALE: Volunteer fire departments are already eligible. This would expand the state loan program to fire departments with paid personnel that are in need of these loans to replace outmoded or unsafe equipment.

#5: YES: Should the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter be amended to provide for an expanded Board of License Inspection Review that can hear and decide cases in three-member panels?

RATIONALE: Currently the Board has 6 members, a majority of which must participate in all hearings. If this charter change is adopted, the Board would be able to have up to 9 members, and the Board Chair could designate panels of 3 members to decide any case, which potentially would allow the Board to hear more cases than it does now.

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