



Local Voters Guide

2024 General Election

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

7 AM to 8 PM

Visit www.Vote411.org for more information:



About this *Voters' Guide*

This guide is brought to you by the League of Women Voters, an inclusive group of volunteers dedicated to educating people about elections since 1920. Created to help voters get to know the candidates running in the General Election on November 5, 2024, this guide aims to provide unbiased information without endorsing any candidates or political parties.

The League asks every candidate a set of questions based on the office they seek and we publish their answers word-for-word to help you make informed decisions. What the candidates wrote is exactly what you see here; nothing was changed or corrected, not even spelling mistakes. The League has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information provided but does not assume responsibility for any errors or omissions.

For insights into candidates running for higher offices, additional candidate information, or details on voter registration and polling places, we encourage you to visit www.VOTE411.org.

Table of Contents

Voting	3
In Person	3
Election Day	3
Early Voting	3
Vote by Mail	3
President of the United States	4
Statewide Offices	4
U.S. Senator	4
U.S. Representative in Congress District 6	5
Washington County Judge of the Circuit Court - Circuit 4.....	5
Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland, Appellate Circuit 3	6
Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland At Large	7
Nonpartisan Offices	7
Hagerstown City Council.....	7
Hagerstown Mayor	12
Washington County Board of Education	13
Maryland Question 1	17

Get to Know the League of Women Voters of Washington County (www.lwvwashco.org)

The League works hard to help voters and protect democracy. Here's how you can join in:

Join: Your support helps us keep providing important tools like the Voters' Guide. Everyone is welcome to join.

Sponsor the Voters' Guide: Consider donating to sponsor the guide to help us provide this valuable resource to more voters ahead of the general election on November 5, 2024. *All amounts are welcome!*

Volunteer: Help out at voter registration events or by sharing voting information.

Tell Others: Talk about the guide and why every race on the ballot is important with people you know.

Your vote matters! Every single vote counts, from the top of the ballot to the bottom. By voting, you can help bring about real change at every level. Let's get ready to make a big impact this May. Your community, your rules—join in, speak up, and help us push for progress!

Print your ballot selections for election day at Vote411.org.

You can find Vote411 on your phone, but Maryland law does NOT allow voters to look at phones in the voting booth.

Voting

In Person

Election Day

There will be 40 Precinct Polling Places in 2024. Election Day is Tuesday, November 5, 2024, from 7 AM to 8 PM. If you vote on Election Day, you must go to your assigned polling place to vote a regular ballot. If you go to any other polling place on Election Day, you will be required to vote a provisional ballot. Go to Voter Services, type in your name, date of birth and zip code, and click on the "Voting Center Information" to see what your assigned polling place is and precinct information.

Early Voting

Early Voting for the General Election will be from Thursday, October 24, 2024 to Thursday, October 31, 2024, 7 AM to 8 PM. The locations will be:

Early Voting Center #1

Washington County Board of Elections
17718 Virginia Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Early Voting Center #2

Washington County Free Library, Smithsburg Branch
66 West Water Street
Smithsburg, MD 21783

Early Voting Center #3

Boonsboro American Legion
710 North Main Street
Boonsboro, MD 21713

Washington County Early Voting Centers will be open 7am to 8pm, Thursday, October 24 to Thursday, October 31, 2024..

Vote by mail

If you received your mail in ballot, make sure to mark and return it by Tuesday, November 5, 2024. If your ballot is postmarked by November 5, 2024, it will be considered received timely and will be counted.

There are eight **ballot drop boxes** located throughout the county to receive your ballot. The drop boxes will be closed down precisely at 8pm on Election Day, November 5, 2024, and will be unable to receive any ballots after that. The eight ballot drop box locations will be:

- **Washington County Election Center**, 17718 Virginia Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21740
- **Williamsport Town Hall**, 2 N. Conococheague Street, Williamsport, MD 21795
- **Washington County Free Library**, 100 S. Potomac Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740
- **Clear Spring Town Hall**, 146 Cumberland Street, Clear Spring, MD 21722
- **Hancock Town Hall** (parking lot entrance), 126 West High Street, Hancock, MD 21750
- **Boonsboro Town Hall** (parking lot entrance), 21 North Main Street, Boonsboro, MD 21713
- **Smithsburg Town Hall**, 21 West Water Street, Smithsburg, MD 21783
- **Keedysville Town Hall**, 19 S. Main Street, Keedysville, MD 21756

President of the United States

DUTIES: The President is: the head of state of the United States of America; the Chief Executive Officer; and, the Commander in Chief of all military forces. The powers of the President are prescribed in the Constitution and federal law. The President appoints the members of the Cabinet, ambassadors to other nations and the United Nations, Supreme Court Justices, and federal judges, subject to Senate approval. The President, along with the Cabinet and its agencies, is responsible for carrying out and enforcing the laws of the United States. The President may also recommend legislation to the United States Congress.

BASE SALARY: \$400,000 per year.

TERM: Four years. Limit of two terms.

Questions

COST OF LIVING: What steps should be taken to address the high cost of living and depressed wages in America, including for families, people with disabilities, and people that are economically disadvantaged?

HEALTH CARE: What steps will you take to ensure all Americans have access to quality and affordable health care, including reproductive care and prescription drug coverage?

ECONOMY: What will you do to support an economy and job market that are strong and inclusive of all people?

CITIZENSHIP: What are the most important steps you will take to create an accessible path to citizenship, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients?

ELECTIONS: What measures do you support to expand voter access and restore trust in our elections?

Candidates



Kamala D. Harris	Democratic
Donald J. Trump	Republican
Chase Oliver	Libertarian
Jill Ellen Stein	Green
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.	Unaffiliated

See responses online at Vote411.org

Statewide Offices

U.S. Senator

DUTIES: U.S. Senators make laws along with the members of the U.S. House of Representatives, ratify treaties, and conduct investigations on issues of national importance. The Senate confirms presidential appointments, including Supreme Court justices.

TERM: Six years. No term limit.

SALARY: \$174,000.

HOW ELECTED: Elected statewide. In 2024, Maryland voters will elect one of our two Senators. About one-third of the 100 members of the Senate are elected every two years.

WEBSITE: www.senate.gov

Questions

QUALIFICATIONS: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of United States Senator?

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY: What actions should the United States government take to protect voting rights and ensure the security of elections?

ENVIRONMENT: How would you address problems such as climate change and pollution?

IMMIGRATION: What changes would you propose in immigration policy?

FIREARMS: Please provide your position on national gun safety legislation.



Candidates

Angela Alsobrooks	Democratic
Larry Hogan	Republican
Mike Scott	Libertarian

See responses online at Vote411.org

U.S. Representative in Congress District 6

DUTIES: Representatives make laws along with the members of the Senate and may conduct investigations on issues of national importance. Laws that impose taxes always begin in the House of Representatives. Representatives can recommend that the Senate remove from office a public official accused of a crime.

TERM: Two years. No term limit.

SALARY: \$174,000.

HOW ELECTED: Elected by voters in each congressional district. Maryland has eight of the 435 Representatives, based on the state's population in the 2020 Census.

WEBSITE: www.house.gov

Questions

QUALIFICATIONS: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of United States Representative?

PROTECTING DEMOCRACY: What actions should the United States government take to protect voting rights and ensure the security of elections?

ENVIRONMENT: How would you address problems such as climate change and pollution?

IMMIGRATION: What changes would you propose in immigration policy?

FIREARMS: Please provide your position on national gun safety legislation.



Candidates

April McClain Delaney	Democratic
Neil Parrott	Republican

See responses online at Vote411.org

Washington County Judge of the Circuit Court - Circuit 4

DUTIES: Judges preside over trials in the Circuit Court, which is a court that hears major civil cases and serious criminal cases, such as those requiring a jury trial. Circuit Courts may decide appeals from the District Court and certain administrative agencies. The Sixth Circuit Court serves Montgomery County.

HOW ELECTED: Elected countywide. The state is divided into eight Judicial Circuits. When there is a vacancy, a nominating commission reviews the qualifications of applicants for the judgeship and recommends several names to the Governor, who appoints a person from that list to fill the office. Each newly appointed judge must run for office at the first election that occurs at least one year after the vacancy occurred. Sitting judges must also run for re-election after serving for 15 years. Attorneys who are members of the Maryland Bar may also run to challenge a newly appointed or sitting judge.

TERM: Fifteen years. No term limit. Mandatory retirement age of 70 years.

SALARY: \$194,433 per year

WEBSITE: www.courts.state.md.us/circuit

Questions

QUALIFICATIONS: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of this judgeship?

JUVENILE JUSTICE: How would you address the problem of large numbers of minority youth being imprisoned?

DIVERSION PROGRAMS: What are your views on diversion programs for behavioral problems and substance abuse?

CHALLENGES: What are the greatest challenges facing Maryland's Circuit Courts and how should they be addressed?

Candidate

Kirk C. Downey

Campaign Phone: 240-850-3103

QUALIFICATIONS: I have been a practicing attorney in Washington County for 27 years, most recently serving as the County Attorney. I have experience in many legal areas, including civil litigation, criminal law, and municipal law. I have also been deeply involved in this community and know it well. I will bring that knowledge to the bench.

JUVENILE JUSTICE: All people are entitled to fair, impartial, and equal justice under the law. I will strictly follow the law and am committed to dispensing justice equally to all individuals appearing before the court.

DIVERSION PROGRAMS: Diversion programs for behavioral problems and substance abuse programs should be used as an alternative to incarceration when the facts and circumstances indicate that the program would be beneficial to the individual and when there is no risk to society.

CHALLENGES: Maryland's Circuit Courts strive to dispense justice fairly, impartially, and efficiently. When litigants appear before the court, they should be heard, and the court should apply the law, as it is written, to the facts before it. Justice should be dispensed with strict fidelity to the law and with respect for those appearing before the court.

Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland, Appellate Circuit 3

DUTIES: Justices in the Supreme Court of Maryland review appeals from the Appellate Court of Maryland and certain decisions of the Circuit Courts. The Court decides if the trial judge followed the law and legal precedent. The Court is composed of 7 justices, one from each of the seven appellate judicial districts.

NOTE: In 2022, voters approved an amendment to the Maryland constitution that changed the name of this court from the "Court of Appeals" to the "Supreme Court of Maryland" and also provided that the "judges" of the court would be termed "justices."

SALARY: \$216,433 annual base.

TERM: Ten years, no term limit. Mandatory retirement age of 70 years.

HOW ELECTED: When there is a vacancy on the Supreme Court, a nominating commission reviews the qualifications of applicants for the judgeship and recommends several names to the Governor, who appoints a person from that list to fill the office, who must then be confirmed by the State Senate. Once appointed, the justice holds the office until the first election that occurs at least one year after the vacancy happened. At that time, the justice runs for an uncontested election for a ten-year term on their record (yes or no for continuance in office). No one is permitted to file against them. If the incumbent justice is approved, the judge faces another "retention election" every ten years to continue in office. If the incumbent justice is rejected by the voters, the post becomes vacant, and the governor makes a new appointment.

Questions

CHALLENGES: What are the greatest challenges facing Maryland's courts and how should they be addressed?

DISCRIMINATION: How can the courts prevent prejudices based on race, gender, age, or sexuality from affecting the fairness of court proceedings?

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: What actions would you support to provide individuals with more access to the judicial system and legal assistance?

Candidate

Matthew J. Fader - No response received by deadline.

Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland At Large

DUTIES: Judges of the Appellate Court of Maryland review the actions and decisions of the Circuit Court and of the Orphans' Court in cases brought before it. The Court, usually sitting in panels of three judges, decides if the trial judge followed the law and legal precedent. The Court is composed of 15 judges: eight at large and one each from seven appellate judicial districts.

NOTE: In 2022, voters approved an amendment to the Maryland constitution that changed the name of this court from "Court of Special Appeals" to "Appellate Court of Maryland."

SALARY: \$203,633 annual base.

TERM: Ten years, no term limit. Mandatory retirement age of 70 years.

HOW ELECTED: When there is a vacancy on the Appellate Court, a nominating commission reviews the qualifications of applicants for the judgeship and recommends several names to the Governor, who appoints a person from that list to fill the office, who must then be confirmed by the State Senate. Once appointed, the appellate judge holds the office until the first election that occurs at least one year after the vacancy happened. At that time, the judge runs for an uncontested election for a ten-year term on their record (yes or no for continuance in office). No one is permitted to file against them. If the incumbent judge is approved, the judge faces another "retention election" every ten years to continue in office. If the incumbent judge is rejected by the voters, the post becomes vacant, and the governor makes a new appointment.

Questions

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: What actions would you support to provide individuals with more access to the judicial system and legal assistance?

DISCRIMINATION: How can the courts prevent prejudices based on race, gender, age, or sexuality from affecting the fairness of court proceedings?

CHALLENGES: What are the greatest challenges facing Maryland's courts and how should they be addressed?

Candidates

Anne K. Albright - No response received by deadline.

Kevin F. Arthur - No response received by deadline.

Andrea M. Leahy - No response received by deadline.

Nonpartisan Offices

Hagerstown City Council

DUTIES: Legislative powers of the City are vested in a five-member Council. The Council has the power to pass ordinances to assure the good government of the city. Meetings are held on Tuesdays. The first, second and third Tuesday are typically Work Sessions, beginning at 4:00 p.m. The Regular Session is held on the fourth Tuesday, beginning at 7:00 p.m. All meetings, except Executive Sessions, are open to the public.

QUALIFICATIONS: Members of the City Council must be at least 21 years old, have resided in the corporate limits of the City for at least one year and be a qualified voter in City elections. Council members must continue to reside in the City during their term.

SALARY: \$8,000 annually

TERM: 4 years

HOW ELECTED: Elected at-large.

Questions

QUALIFICATIONS: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of this office?

PRIORITIES: What are your priorities for the of the City of Hagerstown?

COOPERATION: What actions will you personally take to foster more cooperation between the City and County government?

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Much of the plan for revitalization of downtown has been focused on the recommendations of the study done by Urban Partners. What are your ideas for revitalization?

SAFETY: There is a perception that downtown is not safe. What is your downtown safety program going to look like?

Candidates

Kristin B. Aleshire

Campaign Email: kidkris09@hotmail.com

Campaign Phone: 3019921861

QUALIFICATIONS: Citizens are best served by individuals with a broad knowledge base and open listening skills to develop comprehensive approaches to responsibly navigate issues ranging from daily operations to major community initiatives. I will continue to apply this approach to honestly, openly and fairly represent the long term best interests of our citizens.

PRIORITIES: There is no single priority in City governance as the dynamics of our community are ever evolving. However, most decisions relate to funding, and for me, the greatest priority is the responsible management of fiscal resources to ensure investment and expense works to the benefit of our citizens.

COOPERATION: Direct and open communication between all local governments is the most productive method in improving relationships. I will promote this type of setting as the best avenue to discuss major issues we all share and to find reasonable compromise to develop agreeable plans that work for our citizens.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: I would promote the City's 1st Third program, which provides seed funding for private investment in fixing up empty homes, restoring older apartments, giving small business a jumpstart and bringing large buildings back to marketable life. It is truly a "lift all ships" approach that no single shot in the arm project can compete with. I would add a strategic demolition component to remove blight that often creates visible contention and quality of life frustration for our citizens.

SAFETY: This perception, long the monopoly storyline of local news media, continues to improve through direct public communication and active investment in the downtown. Coupled with these efforts and the application of repeated positive community engagement. the City needs to apply every technological advantage available to improve the efficiency of public safety operations to constantly reaffirm the presence of a safe environment for our visitors and citizens.

Caroline Anderson

Campaign Facebook: www.facebook.com/carolineandersonforcitycouncil?mibextid=LQQJ4d

Campaign Email: c.adoado@icloud.com

Campaign Phone: 301-908-8331

Campaign Instagram: [@carolineandersonforcitycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/carolineandersonforcitycouncil)

QUALIFICATIONS: My background in leadership, people development, and business management allows me to foster collaboration, drive sustainable growth, and advocate for policies that prioritize the well being of our city's residents.

PRIORITIES: * Neighborhoods Revitalization & Sustainability * Public Safety * Economic development * Public Facilities and Infrastructure * Parks & Recreation for Active/Healthy Living * Neighborhoods Revitalization &

COOPERATION: Prioritizing the need for open communication and collaboration between city and county would be my first step in establishing a partnership, and it begins with designating individuals to serve as key points of contact. Challenges exist in any partnership, including the one between city and county, these challenges can be overcome with collaborative working relationships that address and meet community needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: 1. Lots of green space with ponds, fountains and indoor atriums with gardens. 2. Child-friendly areas. 3. Affordable living. 4. Accessibility to medical services. 5. Aesthetically pleasing buildings. 6. Few tall buildings. 7. Family-friendly amusement areas such as water parks, skating rinks, good public swimming pools, arts and craft areas, nice libraries and public art. 8. Easy, affordable transportation, including lots of bike paths. 9. Lots of light-fare gathering spots with cafe-style seat

SAFETY: Building a comprehensive community initiative process that includes key activities engaging with residents, creating a plan, implementing that blueprint for change, communicating with residents and other stakeholders, leading a coalition of partners, and evaluating the results. Building trust and relationships while creating a safe and welcoming environment seven days a week to ensure that the Downtown experience is a remarkable one for visiting or living in Hagerstown.

Erika T. Bell – No responses received by deadline.

Campaign Email: erikabell-ray@hotmail.com

Mark Bell - No responses received by deadline.

Campaign Email: mark@bellforhagerstown.com

Tiara R. Burnett

Campaign Email: tiaraforcc@gmail.com

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/Councilwoman Tiara Burnett-Hagerstown MD

Campaign Website: www.tiaraburnettforcitycouncil.com

Campaign Phone: 2403109192

QUALIFICATIONS: As a current Councilmember, I've gained a deeper understanding of how local government works. I believe progress comes from collaboration, listening to citizens, and transparency. My experience has enabled me to lead initiatives such as the Wheaton Park Project revitalization, advocating for public safety, and supporting housing and infrastructure. I'm actively involved in youth-focused non-profit organizations and serve on various committees as the City liaison.

PRIORITIES: My focus is to continue the strategic plan set forth by the current administration, emphasizing revitalization, sustainability, and infrastructure support. As our community grows, the demand for water supply will grow, impacting fire hydrant pressure. To address this, I will prioritize the City's initiatives to evaluate its water infrastructure. I will continue to advocate for economic development, public safety, and youth programs.

COOPERATION: To enhance cooperation between the City and County government, I propose reinstating the 2-by-2 meetings involving two Councilmembers and two Commissioners to discuss collaboration. I fully support the ongoing working relationships amongst City and County staff for joining forces to develop strategies for water distribution outside the City limits and HFD responding to calls beyond City limits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Most of the recommendations outlined in the study by Urban Partners have been successfully implemented. However, I remain committed to supporting the expansion of Downtown Arts/Entertainment initiatives for which I provided approvals as a Councilmember. My vision for revitalization extends beyond Downtown to encompass the entirety of the City. I will also continue to advocate for funding for the Invest Hagerstown Grants, which play a crucial role in supporting economic development plans.

SAFETY: As a current Councilmember, I've noticed an increase in feedback indicating that downtown is safer. The perception of downtown being unsafe will soon be a thing of the past. Data from HPD reveals a decrease in crime in 2023. I'll continue to support ideas aimed at making the City safer. I approved several measures to enhance safety, including the purchase of drones, streetlights, and cameras, projects to address blight, and the expansion of recruitment and retention efforts for public safety.

Sean Flaherty

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554669437638

Campaign Email: flaherty4council@gmail.com

Campaign Website: flaherty4council.com

QUALIFICATIONS: I have served at the Pentagon for the last several years, and I have worked for the Secretary of Defense in Legislative Affairs. I've served in the Army National Guard, and I ran my Neighborhood's 1st group, Dewey Central in the North End. I also currently serve on the Hagerstown Planning Commission. I feel that with my unique background and experience I can serve on the Hagerstown City Council.

PRIORITIES: So my 2 main priorities are: 1.) Public Safety that encompasses Law Enforcement, Crime, Drug addiction, and homelessness and my second issue, 2.) Economic Development and Investment. I believe that both issues go hand in hand, and are key to making Hagerstown a safer, more desirable place to buy a home, open a business and thrive as a city. I support hiring more law enforcement, pass new ordinances to tackle the homelessness, drug addiction and support shotspotter technology for HPD.

COOPERATION: I believe that communication is key. I see a lot of bickering and egos on both ends of the City and County government. Voters don't care what you can't do, but what you CAN. You are a public official elected by the voters to have the city's interests at heart. I believe in being the adult in the room, fostering constructive dialogue and have staff work behind the scenes to hash out issues between the county and city. We are in this together.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: I believe we need to reuse and repurpose blighted buildings. Cut any red tape in opening a business and give incentives for people to want to locate downtown to give it even more life. I believe the stadium coming will give us much needed life, but we still have a lot of work to do in the coming years. I also believe partnering with businesses downtown to hear their concerns, and public safety is number one from the owners I have

talked to. If they feel safe, they will come.

SAFETY: Downtown is not safe. Hagerstown now ranks number 2 in homicides in the state of MD behind Baltimore City. Had a group of kids try to break in my house, and I witnessed a couple get jumped in front of Schmankerl Stube in broad daylight. My plan is to hire more police officers, buy better technology, and if I am elected craft ordinances to tackle homelessness, drug addiction and clean up downtown like what Frederick did. We need to get back to common sense and good governance.

Stacy L. Michael

Campaign Email: stacylmichael2024@gmail.com

Campaign Facebook: [facebook.com/stacymichaelforcycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/stacymichaelforcycouncil)

Campaign Website: <https://stacylmichaelforcycouncil.squarespace.com>

Campaign Phone: 2406750162

Campaign Instagram: [stacylmichael4cycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/stacylmichael4cycouncil)

QUALIFICATIONS: Initially, my experience as a Project Manager has prepared me to manage intricate projects and overcome challenges, allowing me to discover practical solutions. This role has also exposed me to collaborating with a wide range of people. Additionally, my engagement with different community organizations has granted me firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by our community. As well as resources to partner with when needed.

PRIORITIES: Youth Programs: We must ensure that our existing programs receive adequate support and provide assistance to new programs, especially those catering to individuals from violent or abusive backgrounds environments. Infrastructure: It is vital to guarantee that as we move forward, the essential infrastructure is established to maintain this progress to ensure Economic Growth. Economic Growth: Strengthening economic growth will support challenges we face will preparing for future growth.

COOPERATION: First, being open to conversations with the County. Second, asking for regular cadences between the City and County (and any other municipalities). Third, mutual goal setting for issues which effect both the County and the City. Finally, ask for Leadership from both the City and the County to make a commitment of collaboration and cooperation, out of the gate so we can set the tone for fostering better relations between the two entities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Revitalizing downtown areas requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique characteristics and needs of the community. We need to ensure we continue to support our small businesses to help them grow with grants and knowledge of available help. We need to make sure we are pedestrian friendly and offer culture & art events . We also need to offer inclusivity & have community forums. We must review infrastructure and partner with our local non-profits and government agencies.

SAFETY: First, I would lead by example, frequenting downtown businesses and publishing videos or photos to publicize that downtown is safe. Educate the community on the surveillance technology and the presence of foot patrols. Ensure that the lighting is working properly and work with business owners on ways to improve the perception of downtown or improve security or surveillance. Utilize data driven information to determine hot spots or trends to help address any crime areas.

Rich Owens

Campaign Facebook: [facebook.com/richowens](https://www.facebook.com/richowens)

Campaign Email: richowenscitycouncil@gmail.com

Campaign Website: www.richowenscitycouncil.com

QUALIFICATIONS: My work as a home improvement contractor and in healthcare as a Radiation Therapist has provided valuable insight to customer relations and skills in creative problem solving. I am a business owner in the historic district of Hagerstown. I renovated and revitalized a dilapidated building to create an elegant Inn for guest accommodations. Along with my wife, I work to provide a distinctive place for people to stay while here in the city. I care about people and quality of life.

PRIORITIES: I want to be a part of making Hagerstown an even more vibrant city with its excellent Entertainment District, great dining choices, as well as education and housing opportunities. Vibrancy is established by including people of all ethnicities. I believe that we can accomplish more by listening to and being open to new ideas. Taking into account the successes and failures of the past, we should work together to promote a better life for all of Hagerstown's citizens. We can do this... Together

COOPERATION: I want to stress the importance of listening to each other more. Constituents and leaders alike need to be able to communicate using the free exchange of ideas in a non confrontational environment. Let's make this be the basis for our decision making going forward so that all who are concerned or affected have a voice. I will work hard so that everyone who is interested in positive government, its benefits, and the general goodwill it produces, has the opportunity to see it come to fruition.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: I will use the Urban Partners model to expand on the things that were successful. I will visit the areas that did not succeed or that are struggling to troubleshoot them as to determine their viability. The city has been doing a lot to improve its image. I will continue to seek ways to do this as well. I will work with all city departments to ensure that they have the tools necessary to complete their desired tasks. I want to see a thriving, enjoyable city for all our residents and visitors.

SAFETY: Safety and security are paramount to living in a society. We have the responsibility to ensure that our police departments are fully staffed and trained to do their job. We must look at creative and resourceful ways to maintain our ranks. Job satisfaction and workload need to be monitored so as to prevent burnout. I'll work hard to see that funding is targeted to protect our existing police as well as hiring more officers. Fire and Rescue are Safety, I will be there to help them as well.

Peter E. Perini, Sr.

Campaign Email: peter.perini@msn.com

Campaign Facebook: www.facebook.com/CouncilmanPerini

Campaign Website: peterperini.org

1. QUALIFICATIONS: As a sitting Councilman, I have brought to the City the perspective of a businessman and entrepreneur. I look for practical solutions that will actually help people, not just political jargon. All the while, I work hard to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. Currently, there are five excellent members of the Hagerstown City Council, We all get along well and we lean into each other's strengths. It is an honor for me to serve on the City Council and I hope to continue for the next term.

2. PRIORITIES: My top priority for Hagerstown is well-paying jobs. An earned income is the key to giving folks a hand up. By creating more opportunities, we can move those who are in poverty to a higher quality of life. It is also the path to building generational wealth, something of which so many have been deprived.

3. COOPERATION: I do not agree with the premise of this question. I will answer this question: "Why is there a lack of cooperation between the City and County?". The City Council has bent over backward to foster cooperation with the County, but certain County Commissioners have decided to politicize that relationship by spreading lies about public safety, filing frivolous lawsuits against the City, and so on. I am not able to fully explain this in 500 characters, but I am happy to expose those at fault.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: The City is about to embark on a new economic strategic plan for Hagerstown. I do not believe that it is up to one Councilman to set the agenda. Consequently, I look forward to working collaboratively with the other Council members to develop a new five-year plan. Having said that, there are infrastructure improvements and development that I would like to see happen, as well as an effort to create a better housing scenario in Hagerstown.

5. SAFETY: Again, I do not agree with the premise of this question. I will answer this question: "Is Hagerstown a safe community?" YES, Hagerstown is safe. I know that there have been some highly sensationalized criminal acts recently, but those have been targeted, isolated events. Meaning that those were situations between parties who were known to each other. While any crime, especially violent crime is unacceptable, statistics show that Hagerstown is a safe city. HPD does an excellent job.

Matthew J. Schindler

Campaign Twitter: @schindlertweets

Campaign Email: schindlerforhagerstown@gmail.com

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/schindlerforhagerstown

Campaign Website: www.schindlerforhagerstown.com

Campaign Phone: 2404525155

Campaign Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/matthewjschindler/>

QUALIFICATIONS: I was appointed to fill a vacant seat on the Hagerstown City Council in March of 2023. This time on the Council has allowed me to learn the dynamics, process, create positive relationships with city staff and community leaders, and identify current successes and struggles. This short amount of time in the position has only strengthened my knowledge, resolve, and passion for change. I am a lifelong resident of Hagerstown, a father, a coach, and bring fresh perspective with practical experience.

PRIORITIES: Tackling blighted and vacant properties. Supporting innovative public safety initiatives to fight crime and fill the gap in nationwide policing shortage / retain officers. Substance abuse and mental health awareness. Education, awareness, and connecting citizens with available services is paramount as we work with community partners on to address homelessness and drug crises. Community involvement. The only way any initiatives succeed are with the support and involvement of our community.

COOPERATION: As I've been learning firsthand, the symbiotic relationship between Hagerstown City and Washington

County government is very complicated. I personally believe that we can disagree about how to solve issues, but still serve together with a mutual respect and friendship even if we disagree how to reach the same result. My personal goal is to meet with County counterparts more frequently to try and strengthen that relationship, whether formal meetings with elected bodies, or a just a cup of coffee.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: The Urban Partners plan from 10 years ago, offered 8 initiatives. Some of those have come to fruition and interest and investment in Downtown Hagerstown is at an all-time high. I think Downtown revitalization is on the right track, but economic development is a multi-tier approach. Economic development means not just supporting and growing business in downtown, but bringing in higher wage jobs, providing housing for the expanding workforce, and drawing more foot traffic to the downtown area.

SAFETY: Crime statistics do not support that there is any bigger issue downtown than other areas of town. However, there are several things we can do to help with the perception that exists. First continuing the effort to draw people regularly downtown. Creating consistent healthy foot traffic downtown will not only build business, create a better perception, and deter any unwanted activity that comes from vacancy. Second is helping solve the broken window effect from litter, boarded-up windows, etc.

Hagerstown Mayor

DUTIES: The Mayor is the chief elected executive officer of the City and is charged with seeing that the Ordinances of the City, the policies and resolutions of the City Council and the provisions of the City Charter are faithfully executed. The Mayor annually reports on the condition of municipal affairs and makes recommendations for the public good and welfare of the City to the Council.

QUALIFICATIONS: The Mayor must be at least 25 years old, have resided in the corporate limits of the City for at least one year and be a qualified voter in City elections. The Mayor must continue to reside in the City during her or his term.

SALARY: \$28,000 annually

TERM: 4 years

HOW ELECTED: Elected citywide.

Questions

QUALIFICATIONS: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of this office?

PRIORITIES: What are your priorities for the of the City of Hagerstown?

COOPERATION: What actions will you personally take to foster more cooperation between the City and County government?

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Much of the plan for revitalization of downtown has been focused on the recommendations of the study done by Urban Partners. What are your ideas for revitalization?

SAFETY: There is a perception that downtown is not safe. What is your downtown safety program going to look like?

Candidates

Bill McIntire

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/mcintireformayor

Campaign Email: bill@mcintireformayor.com

Campaign Website: www.mcintireformayor.com

QUALIFICATIONS: With 14 years of successful business ownership in the city, active contributions to various organizations, lifelong residency, and experience as an elected member of the Washington County Republican Central Committee, I possess an intimate understanding of our community's needs, potential, and how to effectively navigate its challenges.

PRIORITIES: My priorities for Hagerstown include enhancing public safety, fostering sustainable economic growth, and improving processes and procedures for efficient governance. These pillars ensure a thriving and resilient community for all residents.

COOPERATION: I will leverage my strong relationship with the county commissioners to initiate open dialogue and collaborative efforts between the City and County government. By facilitating communication and understanding, we can streamline processes and maximize efficiency for the benefit of our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Revitalizing downtown requires a holistic approach. Beyond Urban Partners' recommendations, my business mindset emphasizes city-wide growth. Engaging with businesses to understand their challenges is crucial for collective success and ensuring thriving communities citywide.

SAFETY: My vision: The downtown safety program will focus on enhancing police presence, implementing community policing initiatives, and collaborating closely with the county sheriff. By increasing patrols, engaging in community

outreach, and fostering partnerships, we aim to address safety concerns and create a vibrant, secure downtown environment.

Stephen S. Schutte - Withdrawn

Washington County Board of Education

The Washington County Board of Education maintains a reasonably uniform system of public schools. Working with the Superintendent, the Board determines educational policies of the school system and establishes rules for the education system. The Board is composed of seven members elected at large for four-year staggered terms. Board members earn a salary of \$13,500 and the Board Chair earns a salary of \$14,000. Regular 7 p.m. meetings of the Board are held twice each month. Work sessions are held afternoons at the central office as needed. Several times during the school year, meetings are held in the afternoon at schools throughout the county. All meetings, except executive sessions, are announced in advance and open to the public. Three seats will be open in 2022.

Website: <http://www.wcboe.k12.md.us>

Questions

Qualifications: How does your experience prepare you for the duties of this office?

Budget Priorities: How would you allocate the available school funding so as to implement the Blueprint for Education goals and obtain the best results for all students at the most responsible cost to taxpayers?

Standards and Testing: How should the national and state standards be used to ensure a quality education for each child in the county?

College Alternatives: What programs will you support to prepare students for employment, particularly for those not planning to attend college?

School Safety: How would you address safety issues such as disruption, fights, threats and bullying to foster a safe learning environment?

Partnerships: How would you include parent and student views in making Board decisions on curriculum, programs and policies?

Priorities: In addition to the issues you described in the other questions, what are your priorities for this office?

Candidates

Voters may vote for no more than 4.

Victoria Beachley

Campaign Email: votebeachley@gmail.com

Campaign Facebook: [Facebook.com/victoriabeachleyforBOE?mibextid=hu50Ix](https://www.facebook.com/victoriabeachleyforBOE?mibextid=hu50Ix)

Qualifications: I have a lot of experience professionally and personally meeting goals through creative and collaborative solutions. Professionally, I have experience with leadership, operations, supply chain, budgeting, and organization. I also am chair of the foundation board for a large non-profit in Washington County. Personally, I am a mother and have the joy of nurturing, caring for and teaching 2 little boys.

Budget Priorities: This is a very difficult question to answer without going through the budgets thoroughly. I'm not someone to throw out buzz words/phrases- I'm excited to dive in and learn more to help make sure we're using taxpayers dollars the most effectively and beneficially for our next generation's education. I've managed entire commodities- finding waste and reducing costs while still focusing on quality and relationships.

Standards and Testing: I think standards and testing are important but we also need to make sure we are providing individualized education. We do a disservice when we try to put everyone into the same bubble and honestly we don't want everyone to think the same or memorize the same or any of it- we want well educated, creative, unique individuals who will grow up to fill all different kinds of roles. The future scientist doesn't think the same as a future photographer or future engineer or future plumber, etc.

College Alternatives: I love our tech high and the focus on trades! We need to make sure to support all kids' future. The days of pushing everyone to college to be successful is outdated- yes college to some careers is absolutely necessary but you can also have a great career in the trades. We need to support and promote all options.

School Safety: Teachers need to be able to manage their classrooms. We have to have policies and procedures to allow teachers to be able to manage problems when they arise. Teachers should be able to do what they love and what they are there to do- teach. No teacher or student should have to deal with constant unmanaged behavior. I definitely want to get teachers feedback before coming up with specific policies; after all they are the ones with the experience and will be implementing them.

Partnerships: It's important to listen and consider all points of view when making decisions on curriculum, programs and policies. I've already asked for feedback on social media platforms and would continue to ask for feedback from parents and students.

Priorities: No response received by deadline.

Pieter Bickford

Campaign Email: pbickford@gmail.com

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/WCPSPieterBickford

Qualifications: In my two terms, we've achieved numerous state firsts: implementing universal pre-K, raising starting salaries to Maryland's highest, securing all buildings, and leading the entire state in apprenticeships.

Additionally, I've been a part of two superintendent selections, passed eight budgets, and prepared for the statewide education overhaul known as the 'Blueprint.'

Budget Priorities: With 87% of our budget allocated to salaries, any increase must be funded by County Commissioners. Our top priority is competitive compensation to retain our exceptional staff amidst widespread shortages. This encompasses teachers, support personnel, administrators, and more.

Standards and Testing: National and state standards should guide curriculum development while allowing flexibility for local needs. They should complement, not dictate, our educational approach, ensuring a well-rounded education tailored to our students' diverse needs and aspirations.

College Alternatives: I will continue championing our apprenticeship initiatives and "Grow Your Own" programs, ensuring students have practical pathways to various careers without college debt. These programs exemplify our commitment to diverse workforce readiness.

School Safety: We authorized emergency funding for security assistants and extra classroom support personnel along with strong support for our school resource officers. I have also advocated for faster response to repeat offenders who would be better served in an alternative classroom setting.

Partnerships: I would continue to support our current policies that allow parents to review curriculum and invites stakeholders from the community onto committees.

Priorities: My additional priorities include enhancing technology access, promoting mental health support, and fostering community partnerships to enrich educational experiences.

Charles A. Burkett

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/citizensforcharlesburkett

Campaign Email: servtec2@aol.com

Campaign Phone: 3013316335

Qualifications: "I have spent the last 25 years teaching 6th to 12th grades in youth ministry and have also been a successful business entrepreneur for the same duration. In addition, I spent the last two years as a substitute teacher in our local schools, listening to both teachers and students to better understand the needs of our schools. Finally, as a former Washington County Commissioner, I gained insights into our schools that most candidates do not have."

Budget Priorities: "My 25 years of business experience has given me a comprehensive understanding of how budgets work. I will diligently ensure that every dollar is allocated according to the following priorities, teachers, parents, and students. In implementing the Blueprint for Education goals, I believe in a balanced approach that prioritizes student outcomes while being fiscally responsible."

Standards and Testing: "Although society changes, the fundamentals of education do not. Therefore, we need to focus on a child's education and stop allowing societal changes to influence what we teach. Administrative accountability is crucial. If administrators are not performing their duties effectively, they need to be replaced. Merely meeting standards is not an acceptable benchmark."

College Alternatives: "Somewhere along the way, an overemphasis was placed on attending college. However, here in Washington County, we have some excellent programs in our technical school and school system. These programs prepare young men and women for lifelong career opportunities in well-paying trade jobs."

School Safety: "Once again, we need to return to the basics. A good starting point would be to hold students accountable for their behavior. It seems that accountability has been sidelined. In some schools I've been to, it was the students who ran the school. This made learning difficult for those who were genuinely interested in acquiring knowledge."

Partnerships: "Parents need to be involved in their student's education. We need to establish better avenues of communication. One possible approach could be for the board to periodically hold its meetings in a specific school. This might make parents and students feel more comfortable attending and expressing their views."

Priorities: "I strongly support the rights of parents to have a say in their student's education. For some aspects, we currently have an opt-out option, which I believe is not the right approach. Instead, we need an opt-in option, which would give parents a more direct way of influencing their child's school experience. Locally, we are growing so rapidly that we need a vision for building more schools."

Ashley McCusker - No response received by deadline.

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/McCuskerForSchoolBoard?mibextid=2JQ9oc

Campaign Email: mccuskerwcoe@gmail.com

Robin Merchant Spickler

Campaign Email: robinmerchantspickler@gmail.com

Campaign Phone: 301-790-0153

Qualifications: *Lifelong resident of Hagerstown/Washington County. *All my family members have attended WCPS from K-12 and now my oldest grandson attends WCPS. *Received the following degrees: AA from HCC, BS in ECE from FSU and Masters in ECE from Hood. *Taught 44 years in the WCPS system and served on numerous advisory/special WCPS committees over the years. *Served as WCTA Building Rep./WCTA B for many years. *Member of the MSEA/NEA Teachers/Retired Ass. *Lifelong parishioner of St. John's Episcopal.

Budget Priorities: *Allocate funding for teacher salaries which would increase recruitment/retain teachers. *Hire more behavioral health professionals/paraeducators to give more time for working together to individualize the needs of students. *Invest in early childhood education/students with special needs. *Expand career/technical education programs. *Ensure that each school/student has the resources they need.

Standards and Testing: *Should be used to guide, implement, and assess each student's learning. *The information would be used to track the student's performance and a plan, focused on instruction to meet the needs of those students, would be developed. *Individualized plans would address any problems where students are struggling or lagging behind in their knowledge/skills. *Standards and testing should not be the only measure of a student's learning and it should not take time away from the student's joy of school.

College Alternatives: *Vocational/Trade school that costs less than a 4-year program and focuses on training students for careers in auto mechanics, electrical work, and welding, for example. *Certificate-based Program that can be completed in a few months or weeks where a student can start a business or go into a specific job. *Online college degree gives a student the flexibility to work around a job/family from their home. *Learning with an apprenticeship can be viewed as a paid learning experience.

School Safety: *Review WCPS code of conduct and make sure that all students feel welcomed and safe. *Have preventive training/programs in place such as restorative practices/peace circles. *Positive teacher/student relationships need to be created. *School policies need to be followed for reporting/documenting the incident. *Respond to physical aggression as per the state law.

Partnerships: *Share visions with the parents and students. *Ask for input and their involvement. *Keep them updated on the progress and outcome. *Communicate and collaborate with them. *Review and reflect on the results. *Appreciate their time and effort.

Priorities: *Become more informed of the WCPS BOE policies and guidelines to better support students and staff. *Advocate for all students and staff to feel welcome and safe in their school environment. *Maintain high expectations for student achievement with quality instruction. *Develop a positive relationship with staff and the community. *Be open and creative about using current resources when it comes to the budget. *Have conversations with the County Commissioners.

Stan Stouffer

Campaign Facebook: facebook.com/Stan Stouffer for School Board

Campaign Email: sstouffer2@hotmail.com

Qualifications: My forty-two years as a WCPS educator and eight years as a WCBOE member have provided me with experiences and knowledge to serve responsibly and seek re-election to continue as a voice of reason for all WCPS stakeholders. Fifty years of my adult life have been devoted to Washington County students. Being a parent, grandparent, and great grandparent give me compelling reasons to work to preserve the integrity and excellence of WCPS. Education is all about the kids.

Budget Priorities: Each year the WCBOE approves a needs-based budget. Our request for county funding is never extravagant given the fact that WCPS has 3500 employees, maintains 47 schools, and must meet a myriad of mandated student needs and stakeholder demands. Blueprint implementation was delayed by COVID, and some Blueprint components are being updated. State and local governments have Blueprint funding responsibilities. With local government cooperation, the WCBOE will prudently implement the Blueprint.

Standards and Testing: WCPS strives to meet the needs of all children from Pre-K through Grade 12. Federal educational laws and regulations and state educational laws and regulations require certain assistance for children having learning disabilities or who need some form of accommodations. Children who do not speak English or lack English proficiency receive English language instruction. Various state tests such as MCAP and other standardized tests measure reading and math literacy and literacy in other areas.

College Alternatives: College is not for everyone. For those students, WCPS has the number one apprenticeship program in the state. Various career fields are taught at the Boyd J. Michael Technical High School. Some career programs are available at the other county high schools. Other career programs are taught at the WCPS Public Service Academy. However, maintaining career programs and establishing new ones to meet increasing economic and business needs demands require adequate funding.

School Safety: I would emphasize that these issues are societal and community issues. Learning proper behavior and

discipline starts in the family unit. There should be zero tolerance of the listed disruptive behaviors. However, there are federal laws and regulations and state laws and regulations that set parameters and standards for disciplinary guidelines. Counselors, social workers, behavior analysts, and school security assistants have been hired to assist in controlling disruptive behaviors.

Partnerships: Parents are encouraged to volunteer to serve on citizen advisory committees and other groups formed to solicit parent input. Parents can review textbooks and proposed curriculum changes posted on the board website and at the WCPS central office. Stakeholders may offer comments on proposed board policies that are posted on the WCPS website. Student views are garnered from the board's student member. Stakeholder views can be received through emails, phone, or by speaking in Public Comment.

Priorities: I want to continue to be an ardent advocate for public education in Washington County and a voice of reason, Educational decision making should result from non-partisanship and not emanate from any partisan political dogma. Educating all students by removing obstacles to achieving academic literacy. Working with all stakeholders to recruit and retain competent professional and ESP staff. Continuing to advocate for funding for needs-based budgets so WCPS can continue its drive for excellence.

Melissa Williams

Campaign Email: melissathereader@verizon.net

Campaign Website: www.electmelissawilliams.com

Campaign Phone: 3018245122

Qualifications: I was a WCPS teacher and administrator for 35 years. I've been an active and engaged Board of Education member for the past 11½ years. Since 2016 I've been serving as BOE president. I'm actively involved in the Maryland Association of Boards of Education: serving my 4th term on its Board of Directors, participating in Board Service Academies, participating in its annual conference, serving twice as co-chair of the Conference Committee, serving as a leader of several standing committees.

Budget Priorities: The BOE must continue to be a good steward of tax dollars. To meet the Blueprint requirements, establishing budget priorities and strategic planning is key. Priorities include: salary and compensation to attract and retain staff, safety & security, mental health and behavioral supports. BOE members must understand the Blueprint, work closely with the superintendent to set priorities, make funding decisions, and work with our legislators to fine-tune the Blueprint.

Standards and Testing: National and state standards are used in the development of our local curriculum. Teaching our local curriculum with fidelity and providing our students with the access, opportunity, resources, and supports they need will lead to their academic success.

College Alternatives: Multiple pathways to success are needed for a diverse student population. I'll continue to support high quality Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs that are of interest to students and relevant to the success of our county, state, and nation. During my time on the BOE the number of CTE offerings have increased to include Diesel Mechanics, Aviation, Cyber Security, and more. I'm committed to the expansion of our current apprenticeship program which is ranked first in the state.

School Safety: I support addressing these issues by continuing to emphasize school culture and climate improvements. This is accomplished through curriculum and programming, behavioral and mental health support for students, professional development for staff, and the employment of School Resource Officers and School Security Assistants. Safety and security, mental health and behavioral supports comprise one of the Board's four priorities in the upcoming year's General Fund Budget.

Partnerships: Parents and students share their views via email, phone calls, and in-person conversations. Feedback specific to curriculum, a program, or policy is sought via survey, special meetings, and/or postings on the WCPS website. Students also have an elected representative to the BOE. Public comment is heard at all BOE business meetings. Parents and community members are encouraged to apply to serve on any of the BOE's advisory committees or task forces that may be formed.

Priorities: I'm committed to: providing each WCPS PreK-12 student with the appropriate educational rigor, opportunities, resources, and support needed for their academic success and social and emotional well-being; providing safe and secure learning environments for students and staff; hiring and retaining the best teachers, administrators, and support staff and paying them a competitive wage; working collaboratively with county and state leaders to achieve the best for our students and for our county.

April Ann Zentmeyer

Campaign Email: zentmapr@gmail.com

Qualifications: As an incumbent, I am familiar with the duties of a BOE member and Board norms. Additionally, as a thirty-year veteran in the educational field – both in the classroom and in administration, as well as a former business owner, I have had hands-on experience in curriculum and instruction, finance, facilities, human resources and policy.

Budget Priorities: The Blueprint includes early childhood education, high quality teachers and leaders, career and college readiness, resources to assure wraparound services to students, and accountability to the AIB and ERT.

Additional priorities include combatting inflation, safety and security, mental health and behavioral supports, as well as

salary and compensation to attract and retain high quality staff.

Standards and Testing: Testing is used to track student achievement and identify gaps; then to create differentiation and remediation to close those gaps and assure each student is successful.

College Alternatives: I strongly support our apprenticeship and Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs which allow students to choose from almost one hundred programs for dual completers in everything from communications, bioscience and construction to education, agriculture and transportation - and so much in between. Literally the sky is the limit with our new aviation programs. Our reading apprentices have made a difference in emerging readers and cultivate a grow your own program.

School Safety: School safety is imperative. A student's first need is to feel safe-think Maslow. As a former administrator, I know that strict adherence to our disciplinary guidelines is essential. Hiring leadership in schools who will assure that consequences are served for those students who deviate from school rules is a must. With both Antietam Academy and our online school, we can provide quality instruction in an alternative setting.

Partnerships: Providing open communication and transparency in all that we say and do is essential. Parents, guardians, grandparents and students are an integral part of our decision making including attendance at committee meetings, Board meetings, membership on committees, surveys, Smores, and reaching out to us through phone calls and email and informal meetings at community and school gatherings. Including a student as a board member also helps to assure that a student voice is heard.

Priorities: Safe schools where students are engaged. Our future is in school today. A relevant education that prepares our students for that future, includes both CTE and apprenticeship opportunities. Providing teachers with the tools to succeed is imperative, as is a teacher supported curriculum with high-quality materials delivered by a highly qualified and compensated staff who are fairly evaluated and provided professional development. Finally, transparency in all we do and heeded parental input.

Maryland Question 1

Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 245 of the 2023 Legislative Session)

Declaration of Rights-Right to Reproductive Freedom

Proposing an addition to the Maryland Constitution

Declaration of Rights

Article 48

The proposed amendment confirms an individual's fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but not limited to the ability to make and effectuate decision to prevent, continue, or end the individual's pregnancy, and provides the State may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.

Current Law: Maryland law says that the State cannot stop a woman from ending a pregnancy before the fetus can survive outside the womb. A pregnancy also may be ended at any time if needed to protect the woman's life or health, or if the fetus has a serious medical problem. Doctors, nurse practitioners, midwives, and physician assistants can perform abortions. These providers are protected from being sued or charged if they perform an abortion in good faith. Health insurers and Maryland Medicaid must cover the cost of abortion services.

Proposed Change: The ballot question would not change existing law as stated above, but would add a new Article 48 in the Maryland Constitution:

"That every person, as a central component of an individual's rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but not limited to the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy. The State may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means."

The amendment is designed to protect the entire range of reproductive decisions including birth control, in vitro fertilization, fertility treatments and abortion.

Origin of the Ballot Question: This amendment was proposed by the Maryland General Assembly in Senate Bill 798 during the 2023 session. It was prompted by the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The Dobbs decision allows states to make their own abortion laws. Neighboring jurisdictions, like West Virginia, have banned abortion, while others, like the District of Columbia, protect the right to abortion.

Arguments FOR the amendment:

- Nearly 70% of Maryland residents disagree with the *Dobbs* decision, and almost 80% support a constitutional amendment to protect abortion rights in Maryland (*Washington Post* poll, September 2022).
- Because the *Dobbs* decision removed federal constitutional protection for reproductive freedom, a provision in the Maryland Constitution would be the strongest legal protection for this right in the state. Additionally, changing this constitutional provision would require approval by three-fifths of the Maryland General Assembly and a majority of voters.
- Under this provision, abortions and other reproductive procedures would remain safe and legal in Maryland. In states where abortion is outlawed or restricted, the procedure will still take place but under potentially unsafe or deadly circumstances.

Arguments AGAINST the amendment:

- Maryland already allows abortion, so a constitutional amendment is not necessary. If passed, this amendment would restrict future legislators from making new abortion-related laws.
- The proposed amendment goes farther than existing law in that it would permit abortion at any time until birth without limitations.
- This amendment could lead to more abortions and could make Maryland a destination for out-of-state abortions.

A majority vote FOR Question 1 means the Maryland Constitution would affirm that everyone has the right to reproductive freedom, including the right to an abortion and that the state cannot limit this right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means. Maryland’s existing law regarding the right to an abortion would remain in effect but could be changed by the legislature if the change were consistent with this constitutional amendment.

A majority vote AGAINST Question 1 means the Constitution would not be changed. Maryland’s current law about abortion would remain the same but could be changed by the legislature in the future.



2024 General Election: Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024

Early Voting: Thursday, October 24, 2024 through Thursday, October 31, 2024.

Register to vote, find your polling place, and **print your ballot selections** for election day at Vote411.org. You can find Vote411 on your phone, Maryland law does NOT allow voters to look at phones in the voting booth.