



2022 Legislative Interview Questions

To submit the responses, fill out the Google Form here: tinyurl.com/LWVPA OR email the form as a Word document to samantha.anthony@palwv.org.

Background Questions

Background Information

1. Name and email address of person submitting question responses
Mary Erdman maryc.erdman@gmail.com
2. Local League name: LWV Lehigh County
3. Interviewer(s) name: Mary Erdman and Barbara Williams
4. Interview date: March 17th. 2:00 PM
5. Interview method (public virtual forum, private virtual interview with one or more League members, written responses from legislator, other)
In-person

Legislator Information

1. Name – Senator Lisa Boscola
2. Party and Office (**Democrat**/Republican, Senator or Representative)
3. District #18
4. Legislative Staff Contact Info (if any) Joseph Kelly (Chief of Staff) jkelly@pasenate.com
5. Notes on relationship to LWVPA (optional)

Legislative Questions:

Environmental Policy

1. What do you see as the path forward to combating climate change in Pennsylvania?

Climate change is real. We need to be aggressive to combat its effects but aware that the shift away from fossil fuels will be disruptive. As lawmakers, we need to find an appropriate balance to secure our planet's future, while protecting our economy and security. You only need to look at what is happening in Ukraine to understand the importance of energy independence and Pennsylvania plays a tremendous role in America's energy policy.

Two areas where I think we can do more. One on the generation side of the energy business is securing and enhancing our nuclear generation capabilities. Nuclear plants are clean and reliable. They are work horses in powering our grid. As we make the shift to potentially more electric vehicles it is more important than ever to have a reliable grid and nuclear energy generation plays a significant part in that. In the end, we need a diverse energy portfolio to support our ever-expanding grid, which needs to include new renewable sources, natural gas, and nuclear energy.

Second, I mentioned it a bit above and that is expanding the availability of infrastructure to support a conversion to EV vehicles. Right now, I am working with my largest school district on funding opportunities to start to convert their diesel busses to EV busses. There is some front-end expense, and it can't happen over-night but we have to start.

We saw during the early weeks and months of shutdowns – globally – during the spring of 2020 the numbers were crazy, people weren't driving, smog and air levels cleared it was an instantaneous change almost overnight. I'm the number two sponsor on a bill, Senate Bill 435, which seeks to establish the clean transportation infrastructure act in Pennsylvania. Consumers are concerned about the availability to charge their EV vehicles. Right now, Pennsylvania does not have the infrastructure to support a large-scale conversion to EV's. We need to make charging stations widely available and need to support businesses that have been built along our interstates prepare for the changes.

Consumers need to have faith that charging stations will be easily accessible and available when they are traveling.

2. What are your plans to ensure cleaner water for all Pennsylvanians?

I'm proud to be a sponsor of Senate Bill 525, which seeks to build on the success of the Growing Greener programs by establishing a Growing Greener III program. Since its inception in 1999, the Growing Greener program has been a great success using grant funds to local governments and non-profits to conserve over 80,000 acres of threatened open space, restore hundreds of miles of streams and waterways, protect farmland, restore abandoned mine land back to natural habitat and provide drinking and wastewater treatment improvements. This program needs to be expanded. The bill was successfully reported from the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee this past fall.

There is an old saying in government, "Show me your budget and I will tell you what your priorities are." We need to make cleaner water a priority and one way to do that is expand what we know works and that is the Growing Greener Program.

Social Policy

3. What are your plans to address escalating gun violence across the state? The League is watching several pieces of gun safety legislation: [HB 235](#) (SB 88) calling for comprehensive background checks, [HB 1903](#) (SB 134) to allow for families to petition for temporary removal of guns from a person who is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others, and [HB 1846](#) (SB 855) calling for firearm safety training for first-time purchasers. Each of these bills are stuck in the judiciary committee. Do you have plans to push along these gun safety measures in the coming year?

The recent surge of gun violence in our inner cities is scary. We need to work with police and community organizations to develop programs that strike at getting illegal guns off the street. Guns that are illegally obtained either by stealing them or purchasing them on the black market are a significant issue with no easy legislative fix. We need to equip police with the tools and provide communities the resources to stop the flow of illegal guns into our neighborhoods. We need to make certain that violent criminals are put behind bars.

Finally, it is a question we will touch upon later, but funding our public schools through the Funding Formula will put more education dollars in these underserved communities. Improving our education outcomes and job opportunities in our inner cities will go a long way in reducing gun violence.

4. Currently in Pennsylvania, most schools are not receiving adequate funding, and most students do not have the resources they need to succeed. According to the state's benchmark, 277 Pennsylvania districts need more than \$2,000 more per student to adequately support their education. And the poorest districts in Pennsylvania need even more, creating vast inequities in education across the state. What will you do to make sure every student in PA has access to a high-quality public education, as granted by the State Constitution?

In Pennsylvania, too often your zip code determines the quality of your education and that needs to stop. When you look at our total spend in Pennsylvania on education we rank near the top: that is all in spending state, local and federal. Unfortunately, when it comes to equitable spending we rank near the bottom because we are too reliant on local property taxes. Students in the Commonwealth deserve adequate and fair funding. Education funding has not been appropriated fairly for decades. We need to make sure that our education spending goes through the Fair Funding Formula. I have introduced SB 123, which would expedite the school funding to go through the formula that was approved in 2014 by the Basic Education Funding Commission. We are all watching the court action concerning the inadequacy of our funding system that just wrapped up testimony before the Commonwealth Court. The decision in that case could have a significant impact on how the General Assembly addresses this issue.

My legislation seeks to expedite the use of the funding formula incrementally over a 4-year period. Year one would establish that 25% of all education dollars would be distributed through the new Fair Funding formula, with 75% continuing to be allotted through the Basic Education Formula. Year 2 would increase to 50%/50%, year 3 to 75%/25% and ultimately by year 4 it will reach 100% through the fair funding formula. Underfunded school districts are forced to either make cuts to needed education programs and/or increase local property taxes to make up the difference. We simply can't afford to knowingly underfund our school districts in this Commonwealth.

Government / Election Policy

5. Do you believe our voting process is secure? Do you believe that there are widespread problems, and if so what are they?

Let me state unequivocally that I know our voting process is secure. Act 77 was a tremendous bipartisan effort to improve access to voting and create a system that benefits every voter. I remain proud to be the prime sponsor of the bill that brought us mail-in voting.

I think people forget that mail-in voting in Pennsylvania passed long before COVID. The system was just starting out when COVID blasted it into overdrive. There is much bipartisan support for fixing some of the kinks that have become apparent.

I was proud to be appointed to the Senate's Election Integrity and Reform Committee in 2021. It was incredibly informative and showed how we can work together to find common ground on some things that need to be fixed. This committee held hearings and heard testimony from other states and Pennsylvania's election officials.

Through the hearings it became apparent that we need to do a better job educating voters, judges of elections and election directs about changes to the Election code. It was borne out at the hearings that under tremendous pressure and too few resources our counties performed superbly during the 2020 election.

At the conclusion of the hearings, there was near universal agreement that counties need more time pre canvass mail-in-ballots. This will help counties run more efficient elections and will get more timely results. However, getting to an agreement on the nuts and bolts of the fix has proven difficult.

We heard from officials from several states (Utah, Florida and Colorado) that have robust mail-in voting systems about the safety and security protocols they have in place. There were numerous recommendations coming out of the hearings, but there are a few I would like to highlight. We should look to establish a real-time reporting system of deceased individuals to county election offices from the Department of State with voter rolls updated monthly throughout the year and on a daily basis for the two weeks prior to a primary or general election. Similar to the processes in other states, all voter rolls should be cross referenced with the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) system and all national, state and local data.

The Committee also recommended passing legislation clarifying the use of drop boxes and standardizing security measures around their use (24/7 video monitoring). Drop boxes were a hot button issue here in Pennsylvania, but in states like Colorado they actually put them in Walmarts to help with access in rural communities. We also heard that all counties should follow uniform procedures for the chain of custody of the ballots from the drop boxes to the counties' official counting centers. The mail-in ballots should also be under video surveillance at all times from when the ballots are received until they are counted.

6. Do you support voting by mail?

Yes! I was the prime sponsor of the bill that became the Vote by Mail bill. Vote by mail is a tremendous convenience to the voters of Pennsylvania it is reliable, secure, and pro-voter. So yes, I am a supporter of voting by mail. What better way to vote than to vote at your own kitchen table where you can do real-time research and discuss candidates with your family.

7. How would you make it easier for more qualified electors to vote? For example, lengthening the timeframe for early voting, or expanding voting hours at the polls.

We need to ensure that everyone that is eligible to vote is permitted to vote. One issue that seems to come up regularly is the on-going struggle of counties being able to staff existing polling places on election day. Any expansion of polling hours, especially on election day needs to take into account staffing it. The nice thing about our mail-in voting system is it has one of the longest voting periods in the country. The General Assembly needs to protect that benefit to the voters.

Also, I have been a long-time proponent of allowing Independent voters to vote in primaries. Too many elections, like school board and judicial elections are won in primaries. Currently, there are approximately 1.3 million voters in the Commonwealth who are not listed with the two largest political parties. These individuals deserve to vote during our primary elections. Moreover, allowing Independents to vote in primary elections may have the added benefit of giving party bosses, in Harrisburg, less influence.

I have also introduced legislation to permit time off for individuals to vote during their workday. This legislation would allow employees up to 2 successive hours to vote during their workday. Two other bills that I am the prime sponsor of to make it easier for individuals to vote are election day voter registration (SB 198) and (SB 336) which notifies younger Pennsylvanians of their eligibility to vote. PennDOT would be required to send voter registration materials, along with a notice, to individuals once they reach the age of eligibility to vote in the next election. The intent of these efforts is to promote and encourage voting among the 18 - 29.