

29th District Candidate Offers Proposals to Create Jobs

As a current member and past board member of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, I would like to commend everyone who was involved in planning and executing the Legislative Luncheon held at Dover Downs on Tuesday, March 11th. The Chamber board and staff, as well as the staff of Dover Downs, did an outstanding job. A special thanks goes out to Representatives Thornburg, Stone, Wagner, and Carson, as well as Senator Still, who took turns answering questions from Chamber members as part of the Legislators forum.

Perhaps the most important question posed to the panel was “What are two specific things we could be doing in Kent County to create jobs and improve the economy?” Unfortunately, the answers offered by some participants on the panel were long on rhetoric and short on specific, actionable ideas. As a candidate for the Delaware House of Representatives 29th District seat, I paid particular attention to comments made by my current Representative and presumed opponent, Pamela Thornburg. Although the questioner asked for two specific ideas, Rep. Thornburg offered just **one**. Rep. Thornburg chose to reiterate an idea offered moments earlier by Representative Carson – to legalize sports book gambling at the existing three racetracks.

For the record, I too support sports book gambling at the racetracks, but I was disappointed that my Representative was not able to offer a single original idea to help grow our local economy and create jobs. Had I been a participant on the panel, I would have offered the following ideas.

Education. It is imperative that we make a commitment to education at both ends of our current system. We are competing in the global economy. In order to attract higher paying jobs and new industry, we must have a highly educated and skilled workforce. I do not want a service economy of fast food and oil changes, and I have seen too many talented, young people leave our community in search of higher paying jobs. To this end, I support continued funding of full day kindergarten and programs that will help children enter pre-K or other early childhood development programs. It is cheaper to educate a child than it is to incarcerate an adult.

We must continue to expand Delaware Technical and Community College programs and campuses. An Associates degree or some form of vocational training should be our minimum goal for each Delaware child. If we have young people with the desire and ability to pursue higher education or vocational training, their financial resources should not be a limiting factor. The State should facilitate affordable tuition, low cost student loans, and create programs in conjunction with private industry, community and charitable organizations, and churches that would allow college students to repay student loans through approved public service programs, working with children and the elderly.

Harness Racing. Dover Downs has become one of the preeminent harness racing tracks in the nation. I would argue that the Delaware harness racing industry has created more jobs and

protected more open space than any other industry in our State over the past decade, and, in the process, we have developed and attracted world-class local talent. Interestingly enough, directly across the street from Dover Downs is Delaware State University, an institution that has offered agricultural programs since it's founding in the early 1890s. Delaware State University owns the 186 acre Blendt Farm in Smyrna. The University of Delaware owns the 300 acre Paradee Farm at Downs Chapel (in the heart of the 29th District). If our fine Universities are capable of breeding and raising chickens, cows, and thistle-eating goats, it seems reasonable to me that they have the capacity and resources to breed top-quality racehorses, especially with so much local talent to draw from. We should follow the lead of the University of Kentucky, Penn State University, and other top universities across our nation to create partnerships between our local universities and private industry to develop equine breeding and research programs to strengthen and grow the industry. It would create jobs, protect open space, add to educational opportunities at our universities, be environmentally friendly, and have the capacity to be profitable. Although I do not believe students should be directly involved in the gambling end of the business, I am reasonably sure that one well-bred pacing colt will bring more at auction than an entire herd of thistle eating goats.

Alternative Energy and Agriculture. We should be aggressively pursuing partnerships with private industry, local farmers, and our farming neighbors on Eastern Shore Maryland to attract alternative energy production facilities to our region. Although there is great debate about the true efficiency of corn ethanol, we should be looking at other crop alternatives. We should be doing everything we can to facilitate the creation of markets for our farmers. Generally speaking, I support any initiatives that give farmers incentives to keep their land in agriculture and away from developers.

While on the subject of alternative energy, I must also add that it is absolutely shameful how our current legislature has handled the proposed wind power farm. We have an opportunity to attract good paying "green collar" jobs to our State. The development of alternative energy sources is the next great growth industry for our Nation. Delaware needs to get its share of these jobs by providing a business friendly environment that will attract forward thinking entrepreneurs and businesses. The wind farm is a nice start, but our State needs to do more to attract these types of businesses.

I have used this letter to detail several specific, actionable ideas to help create jobs and improve our local economy, but I have so many more ideas to offer. I look forward to sharing them with my neighbors over the next several months. Rep. Thornburg has had eight years of elected office to contemplate economic issues and develop ideas and plans, but when put on the spot, Rep. Thornburg apparently is unable offer a single original idea for the future. I hope that as the campaign season moves forward, our discussions and debates will focus on forward-looking ideas and not on the past and the status quo. We are a small but great State. We have tremendous opportunities before us, but we need local leaders who are actually willing to lead and who are willing to put forth new ideas to create jobs and keep our economy moving forward.