

May 17, 2023

*The co-chairs of **Pittsburgh Works Together** – Mike Huwar, president of People's Gas and Tom Melcher, business manager of the Pittsburgh Regional Building and Construction Trades Council – today issued the following statement regarding the primary election.*

Congratulations to Democrat Sara Innamorato and Republican Joe Rockey who won their respective party's nomination for Allegheny County Executive in yesterday's primary election. Whoever wins in the November 7 general election will face unprecedented challenges that will affect the future of our region.

We encourage Allegheny County voters to go beyond the sound bites and understand the true positions of the candidates on the many issues we face. Through our "*Our County, Your Vote, Allegheny's Future*" initiative we will continue to present factual information concerning the county's most pressing issues.

Those include jobs and the economy; the region's continuing population loss; and our regional energy, manufacturing, and regulatory policies, which can greatly affect the first two.

PGH Works is a business-organized labor-economic development alliance working to grow jobs and expand the industries that are the foundation of our economy, including energy, manufacturing, and construction, to provide opportunity for all residents. We do not endorse candidates, but rather we take clear positions that our member unions and companies believe are critical to the future of the region.

Some of those issues are unique to our region but many apply more broadly to all of Pennsylvania.

Among our top concerns:

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. PGH Works research revealed that Allegheny County lost 50,000 jobs over the past five years and we are lagging far behind competing regions including Cleveland, a finding that surprised many. We must reverse that job loss and do all we can to encourage investment in energy and manufacturing alongside other industries.

The Natural Gas Industry. Shale gas is this region's greatest natural resource. Its use has helped reduce carbon emissions and air pollution. It contributes billions of dollars to the regional economy and supports thousands of families who rely on the direct and in-direct jobs the industry creates. We need to support the industry and oppose efforts to hinder it, such as increasing the required buffer zones around drilling pads.

Energy Innovation for the Future. At Pittsburgh International Airport, the microgrid project that uses on-site natural gas and solar panels to power the facility to save money and cut carbon emissions has garnered international attention. At the same time, the Pittsburgh region is competing for a multi-billion dollar project backed by the U.S. Department of Energy to convert natural gas to clean-burning hydrogen. Both initiatives should receive the full support of the entire community.

Permitting Reform. The Pittsburgh region and the state of Pennsylvania are falling behind our competitors in attracting family-sustaining jobs. We can't do anything about the hills and valleys, combined with our gray winters, which put us at a disadvantage in attracting new businesses. As a result, we must do better with everything we do control. At the top of that list is to streamline the process for new construction and new industries to receive permits. The state Department of Environmental Protection and the Allegheny County Health Department must act more quickly and fairly while applying regulations that appropriately balance environmental and economic concerns.

Population Loss. This is an issue that threatens everything we cherish about this region. Answers are not easy to come by, but the community must put this issue at the top of the civic agenda.

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