

# Democrat Tom Wolf and the Pennsylvania gubernatorial race

Douglas Lyons  
24 October 2014

Pennsylvania voters are faced with no real choices for governor in either re-electing the disliked incumbent, Republican Governor Tom Corbett, or selecting Democrat Tom Wolf in the November 4 elections. Polls have shown Corbett greatly trailing Wolf, but one thing is certain for workers in Pennsylvania, Wolf has no solutions for them in the Keystone state.

Demonstrating the mistrust felt for both big business parties, neither candidate has been able to muster enthusiasm from residents throughout the state. With less than two weeks to go before the elections, nowhere do you see lawn signs or buttons or bumper stickers for the candidates. Voter turnout is expected to be at an all-time low.

Wolf, a millionaire businessman from York, Pennsylvania, is running his first campaign for elective office, which he initially financed with \$10 million of his own funds. In 2007-2008, he served as secretary for the Department of Revenue under Democratic Governor Ed Rendell. Before that he served on the Business Tax Reform Commission, which, in Rendell's words, made taxes for business "fairer, simpler and more competitive with other states."

Wolf is leading in the polls by double digit amounts primarily because of the hatred felt by most Pennsylvania residents for Corbett's massive cuts to education, attacks on state workers and funneling of hundreds of millions of dollars to the gas drilling industry.

However, if elected, Wolf will continue the same basic policies of the Corbett administration, including continuing the cuts to education and other social programs and tax breaks for businesses, with little or no spending on jobs or other programs to benefit the working class.

While Wolf has repeatedly denounced Corbett for his

brutal cuts to education, in fact, Corbett only accelerated cuts in education under the Democrat Rendell before him, exacerbated by the Obama administration cuts of federal support to education.

Wolf's proposal is to institute a 5 percent severance tax on the gas drilling industry, something which, if implemented, would provide only a fraction of the funds that have been cut. Up to now the industry has been virtually tax-free.

Wolf is not a defender of the public school system and continues the tactic of blaming teachers for the problems in education. He seeks to expand and encourage the growth of charter schools. On his campaign web page, he states that he plans to "encourage the replication of high performing charter schools, including expanding effective practices to public schools ... reforms should be made to prioritize the replication of those charter schools that continuously exceed the set standards and the replication of effective techniques in district-run public schools."

Taking a page out of Obama's playbook in his public-private partnerships, Tom Wolf insists on developing "district-charter collaboratives." That would turn entire districts over to for-profit schools.

Tom Wolf has released a statement regarding the Philadelphia School Reform Commission's action (see: State authorities revoke labor contract for 15,000 Philadelphia teachers). Wolf again demagogically attacked Corbett's cuts to education, but did not oppose the action by the SRC which ripped up the contract for the 15,000 teachers and imposed cuts to health care.

Rather than providing adequate funds for public education or reducing inequality that stymies educational learning for youth, Wolf supports turning the public school system into a profit-making

enterprise.

Wolf also plans to cut pensions and health benefits for government employees and teachers. During the campaign Wolf said, “I’m not going to kick the can [pension debt problem] down the road anymore.”

“As to how I plug the hole that has been created over the past 10, 14 years,” he continued, “I will work with the Legislature and those interested parties to come up with a solution that is fair to beneficiaries but also doesn’t swamp the taxpayer.” All of the bills being discussed in the legislature will curtail or eliminate benefits for existing employees or new hires.

Wolf has been endorsed by the Pennsylvania State AFL-CIO, the two teachers unions and the government employee unions, which have given him hundreds of thousands of dollars along with running their own TV and radio ads in which he is presented as the “progressive” candidate who is opposed to the cuts to education made by Corbett, and attacks on the environment.

The president of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, Rick Bloomingdale, said, “Tom Wolf will provide a new direction for Pennsylvania, one in which working men and women are part of the solution instead of being viewed as the cause of the problems. Tom Wolf believes as we do that the best is yet to come and by bringing people and institutions together we can recapture and regrow the good jobs and decent wages that provide economic opportunities for all workers.”

This “new direction” is a vision through which Wolf will work with the union bureaucrats to ram through concessions in wages, health care, and pensions, so that unions can ostensibly be seen as “part of the solution,” maintain their positions as overseers of labor and continue collecting union dues income.

For workers, youth, the unemployed and retirees to have a real choice requires breaking with the Democrats and building a mass independent political movement of the working class with a socialist program.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**