DAILY LOCAL NEWS

Candidate Questionnaire

Justin Pak

Candidate for State Representative · District 157

01 What platform are you running on, including three goals you hope to achieve if elected and why are they your top priorities?

My top priorities are education, taxes, and energy. I would work with all education committees and departments to have our schools return to a balanced paper-and-pencil instruction through 8th grade and require teacher-prep programs to train new educators in the same evidence-based reading methods districts now pay for after hiring. I would also reform or repeal Pennsylvania's data-center sales-tax exemption, projected to cost $188.4 million this year and nearly $2 billion by 2031. Finally, Pennsylvania exports roughly 25% to 30% of the electricity it generates through PJM, which serves 13 states and DC. I would fight to ensure data centers and other states benefiting from our power pay their fair share instead of shifting grid costs onto PA families.

02 What municipality do you reside in? Describe this area in three words — or just one!

Willistown. Wonderful.

03 What is your occupation and where do you work? Why did you pursue this field? Educational degrees or key early career experiences you'd like to share?

I currently work for a medical and non-medical staffing agency, but my experience extends well beyond one industry. I earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from West Chester University, returned there to prepare as a middle-school math and science teacher, taught in Philadelphia, held a property and casualty insurance license, and grew up around my family's beer business of 25 years and the PLCB system. My qualifications are not just pieces of paper and not just in one area, but come from real experience in classrooms, staffing, insurance, business, and state regulation. I understand how government decisions affect workers, employers, teachers, families, and small businesses because I have lived and worked alongside people and workers of every stripe.

04 How long have you lived in Chester County (since what year), where else have you lived, and what do you love most about southeastern Pennsylvania?

Including my years at WCU, I have called Chester County home for 20 years. I am a first-gen Korean American, born in Philadelphia, raised in Delco, and now raising my family in Willistown. Coaching high school football and wrestling also took me throughout the county and helped me become familiar with the entire county.

05 Your age?

39 as of now but 40 on the last day to register to vote! 10/19/26

06 Any recommendations to voters when dealing with perpetual rising costs since 2020 especially?

My advice is to budget carefully and shop with math, not marketing. A “sale” is not always a deal, so compare unit prices (I do it), plan meals around weekly specials, avoid buying more than you will use, and regularly review subscriptions, insurance rates, and utility plans. Families should also contact their utility about budget billing or assistance programs if needed. (I use it). These steps will not solve rising costs, but they can help families regain some control. Budgeting, unit pricing, credit, insurance, and understanding utility bills are practical skills we should be teaching in our schools.

07 What is your political philosophy as we mark the 250th anniversary of America? And why vote for me?

As America marks its 250th anniversary, my political philosophy is a return to common sense, decency, and community over party. I believe government’s first responsibility is to keep people safe, protect the vulnerable, defend individual freedoms, and create stable communities where families can thrive. As someone who is neurodivergent, I naturally examine issues from multiple perspectives and empathize with people on both sides. I will support whichever approach best protects and serves my neighbors, regardless of which party proposed it. My moral compass is not a political agenda; it is safety, fairness, freedom, and doing what is right. That is why voters can be confident that I will always put our community ahead of politics.

CULTURAL IMPACT QUESTIONS

08 Thus far in 2026 South Coatesville and Oxford councils voted to eliminate their respective local borough police forces. What are your thoughts on local policing? If an incumbent, what funds have you secured for local police departments within your district? If a newcomer, what would you do to help fund local police departments in lieu of rising municipal costs across the board?

I have many friends and family members who serve locally in both police and fire, so our first responders will always have my support. South Coatesville disbanded its police department, while Oxford decided to join a regional force—different decisions driven by the same rising costs and staffing challenges. I would fight for more state support for recruitment, retention, equipment, and mental-health crisis training before communities reach a financial breaking point. Regional policing may make sense in some places, but residents deserve a real voice, and response times, local accountability, and community relationships cannot be sacrificed. Public safety is government's first responsibility!

09 How can the Commonwealth better support first responders in Chester County? As funds are limited, many fire companies are facing a crisis, especially those who are still all-volunteer squads.

PA needs to treat fire and EMS funding as an essential public-safety, not something volunteer companies must constantly fundraise to provide. Current state grants generally max out at $20,000 for fire companies and $15,000 for EMS, which does not go far against today's equipment, training, insurance, and facility costs. I would fight to increase those grants, simplify the application process, and create one clear place where departments can find every state and federal funding opportunity. (SIMPLE IS SOMETIMES BETTER) I would also expand recruitment incentives, tax relief, and training support for volunteers. People will gladly donate to their local fire company, but donations alone cannot sustain a service every resident depends upon. We need to make sure every department knows what help is available and can access it.

10 How can the county address housing needs by prioritizing skilled labor and well-manufactured homes with decent property space over intensive and developer-driven, high-density residential rezoning of units — that sell or rent for inflated market prices of 2021 and far too often aren't affordable to 33-40% of all residents, and what will you do to help get people into abandoned, bank-owned properties?

I am still learning the details, but I do NOT believe every housing problem should be answered with developer-driven, mega-apartment projects that remain unaffordable. We should expand quality-

built starter homes, protect reasonable property space, and build the skilled workforce needed to construct them (union job growth). I also want to learn more about solutions for abandoned, foreclosed, and bank-owned properties, then work to streamline the system so these homes can be rehabbed and sold at an affordable price instead of sitting vacant.

11 What is your position on data centers?

My position is very clear: data centers should not be built in or around our district. East Whiteland? No. Upper Merion or KOP? Absolutely not. If they want to build elsewhere in PA, they need to supply their own power, control their emissions, protect our water supply, and use PA construction and engineering firms. The current incumbent co-sponsored the 2021 bill that created the data center sales-tax exemption, now projected to cost the state $188.4 million this year and nearly $2 billion through 2031. Clearly, many officials in Harrisburg believe billion-dollar data-center companies need taxpayer incentives. I do not. Residents should not be paying the price through higher electric bills, water concerns, or potentially higher taxes!

12 What are you currently doing to preserve treasured landscapes in your district, and what are your past land conservation wins?

I will not claim conservation wins I do not have. What I have done is stand with neighbors fighting to preserve Rock Hill Farm and support neighbors concerned about a historic property converting into a bed-and-breakfast. As an avid fisherman, I value our creeks, open space, and the green character that makes Chester County special. If elected, I will support conservation easements, open space preservation, and stronger protections for historic and environmentally sensitive land for our future generations to enjoy.

13 Is there a seemingly impossible “lost cause” you are fighting for that is vital to the world, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Chester County?

The “lost cause” I am fighting for is the belief that regular people can still stand up to the political machine and that voters can choose the person instead of the party. District 157 has been rated around D+19, and the 2024 House race ended roughly 61% to 39% Democratic. Apparently, I looked at those numbers and thought, “Yeah, that seems like a fun place to run.” But if everyone stays home because the odds are bad, nothing changes. Someone must challenge the political machine, stand up for our community, and prove that no district belongs permanently to a brand. If all else fails, at least I will have plenty of potential material for a career in stand-up comedy.

BONUS QUESTIONS

14 What are your hobbies?

I enjoy golfing with family and friends, fishing with my kids, and going to the gym with my wife. For me, the best hobbies are the ones that keep me active and give me time with the people who matter most.

15 What is the greatest book and song of all time and why?

The greatest book to me is *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen because it was the first book I read on my own as a kid, and its story of survival and self-reliance has stayed with me. The greatest song is Frank Sinatra's *My Way*, because it is about living honestly, accepting your choices, and refusing to let outside pressure define you. That is also how I intend to serve if elected.

16 What is your favorite place in Chester County and why?

My favorite place in Chester County is Longwood Gardens because it connects generations of my family. One of my earliest memories is going there with my grandfather, who passed away when I was 6. Years later, my wife and I took our twins there, and now I have memories of my daughter walking through the Rose Garden and my son exploring his favorite "secret room" beneath the fountains. It is somewhere I can slow down, remember the people I love, and find peace of mind.

17 What details or thoughts about your family life would you like to share?

My household is truly bipartisan. I am a registered Republican, and my wife is a registered Democrat. She brings a different perspective that I genuinely appreciate and respect even when we disagree. We are a yin-and-yang household built on balance, empathy, and listening. That is the same approach I will bring to Harrisburg, because government is supposed to work better when we stop arguing about brand ideas, learn from one another, and restore balance in the government world.