



Lebanon County Farm Bureau

769 Ono Road Annville, PA 17003

Taking note of the contested races for the office of Representative to the Pa General Assembly from Lebanon County, your Lebanon County Farm Bureau Board has given the candidates an opportunity to answer some questions we believed are important to the farming community. As a nonpartisan organization, we do not endorse any candidates but will give each one an equal platform to explain their positions to our membership. Below are the questions we presented and the responses received. The questions were sent by E-mail and regular mail to the candidates listed below.

101st District

Mauree Gingrich
John Dissinger

102nd District

Russ Diamond
Wanda Bechtold
Joe Eisenhauer

Question #1

Farm Bureau members believe agriculture is a vital part of the Lebanon County economy and culture. Do you agree? As our Representative, how would you envision assisting and strengthening agriculture and what experiences and qualities do you possess to accomplish this?

Russ Diamond

I do agree with this statement, and I believe maintaining the vitality of family farms is critical to the stability and prosperity of our region. As your Representative, I see my role as bridging the gap between your needs and state policy. In order to carry out this function, my job will be to meet with you, listen to you, and to involve you directly in the crafting of any new state policy that impacts your operations.

Mauree Gingrich

Lebanon County has a rich heritage in farming and a strong economic base. It has been my privilege to work directly with the Lebanon County Farm Bureau for the past 12 years. Over those years we have worked together to address the Ag issues that challenge our farming professionals in the Lebanon Valley as well as across the Commonwealth. I was committed to navigating the inheritance relief bill that FINALLY allows an affordable transfer of our treasured family farms. I am proud of enhancing and expanding the Farm Preservation Program, as well as navigating a number of vehicle code improvements. I value the enlightened insights of our farming professionals.

Question #2

Real estate property taxes are a constant concern for farmers, as most are depending on the land they own for their livelihoods. What plan do you envision that would prevent the costs of the State and public school employee pension crisis, being thrust on landowners?

Russ Diamond

I intend to introduce a joint resolution for a constitutional amendment that would eliminate property taxes altogether in Pennsylvania within five years of voter approval. Acquiring, possessing, and defending property is one of the most basic of inherent rights in Pennsylvania, as declared in Article I Section 1 of our state constitution. While I will also support any other legislative plan that seeks to move away from reliance on this unfair and archaic method of taxation, I believe a constitutional amendment is the only sure way to protect our property rights.

Mauree Gingrich

Real Estate Taxes are the key revenue source for education funding and are the largest expense and burden for PA homeowners. Farms are often most affected due to land acreage and land values. Since teacher pensions are part of school district's liability, Pension Reform must be a priority for the Legislature so that

debt doesn't spiral beyond affordability for property owners. The liability must be managed and changes made to convert all state pension plans to a Defined Contribution Plan to replace the current and antiquated Defined Benefit Plan.

Question #3

As an elected official, what principles guide your decision making? Do you believe you are primarily responsible to reflect the views of a majority of your constituents as opposed to expressing your personal convictions?

Russ Diamond

I will be primarily responsible to upholding and defending the tenets of our state constitution. I believe the primary role of government is to protect individual rights and to serve as an unbiased arbiter when the rights of individuals clash. While my personal convictions and those of the majority of my constituents will certainly weigh in my decision making process, they can never trump constitutional principles.

Mauree Gingrich

My decisions as a Legislator are based on my own personal moral code and what is in the best interest of the people I represent. It is my practice to conduct absolute due diligence on every initiative that comes before the General Assembly. I solicit and value constituent input and welcome opinions from all.