



Democratic gov candidate Tom Wolf answers your questions

Tom Wolf explains why he wants a natural gas extraction tax

The Democratic gubernatorial frontrunner discussed his 5 percent extraction tax proposal Tuesday during PennLive's editorial board meeting.

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on March 25, 2014 at 4:38 PM, updated March 25, 2014 at 9:12 PM

You asked. He answered.

PennLive's readers weren't shy about sending in their questions for Democratic gubernatorial candidate **Tom Wolf**. And during Tuesday's **PennLive Editorial Board** meeting we asked as many of them as we could.

Here are a selection of your questions for **Wolf**:

Q: Do you support the statewide moratorium on fracking that was adopted by the Pennsylvania Democratic Party?

A: Wolf does not support the statewide moratorium on drilling adopted by the state Democratic Party. But he does support a continued moratorium in the **Delaware River Basin**.

"If localities don't want drilling, we need to recognize and respect that," he said. "The Delaware River Basin represents people in the [four states] who appointed them. We need to be cognizant of the fact that there are more interests involved than just Pennsylvania."

Q: How can you guarantee that the cost of your 5 percent extraction tax proposal won't be passed along to the consumer?

A: Wolf acknowledged that the impact of a tax would be "folded" into the price of natural gas. But he

argued that, because the gas is "exportable," the burden of the tax would be borne by people in other states who consume the resource. He compared the situation to gasoline customers who subsidize the "permanent fund dividend" paid to taxpayers in Alaska.

"We're basically helping to pay Alaska's tax. We're all paying for it," he said, pointing out that Pennsylvania is the only gas-producing state without a severance levy. "We, here in Pennsylvania, don't have an extraction tax, so we can't export our tax burden."

Q: What do you have to say about the \$4.2 billion deficit would created for Pennsylvania?

A: Wolf served as secretary of the state **Department of Revenue** under former **Gov. Ed Rendell** from April 2007 until November 2008.

When he took office in January 2011, Republican **Gov. Tom Corbett** said he inherited a \$4.2 billion deficit from his Democratic predecessor and used that as justification for deep spending cuts across state government.

"I don't know where that calculation came from," Wolf said. "I left in November 2008. And as far as I know, **Gov. Corbett** took office in January 2011, more than two years after that. I wasn't there for **Gov. Rendell's** final budget. [**Corbett**] says part of it was [the loss of] federal stimulus money, and it was something he was not responsible for. It was a budget deficit."

Q: Do you support the legalization of medical and/or recreational marijuana?

A: Wolf supports the legalization of medical marijuana and the decriminalization of possession of small quantities of marijuana.

"Decriminalization would stop destruction of families and lives; stop overcrowding in prison; stop distortion of our economy," he said, noting that decriminalization would extend job opportunities to people denied employment because of prior convictions.

On medical marijuana "what is motivating me is people I know with children with diseases that could be treated with medical marijuana. My goal is to create a system where they don't feel like to go to another state to make their child whole," he said.

Q: Do you support Medicaid expansion and/or single-payer for healthcare?

A: Wolf called the current Affordable Care Act "a good start," but stopped short of calling for the implementation of a single-payer system. The current law should be given time to work. He also wants full Medicaid expansion and for the state to set up its own health insurance exchange. Right now, the federal government runs Pennsylvania's exchange.

"I'm not an ideologue on this - I think we need to get to the point where our citizens have access to healthcare," he said.

Q: Do you support expanding Pennsylvania's 6 percent statewide sales tax (it's higher in Philadelphia and Allegheny County)?

A: "I haven't looked at that," he said. "In the [Rendell administration], [the governor] proposed adding some services ... but the idea was to reduce the nominal rate. I think that should be the goal -- to reduce the nominal rate."

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