

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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Philadelphia Survey Analysis

Crafting an Economic Agenda for Philadelphia's Next Mayor

Despite some guarded optimism about the city's direction, Philadelphia voters express significant economic concerns and are seeking a mayor who will take aggressive action to increase wages, stand up for workers, and fight for an economic agenda that addresses the growing pressures facing middle class families, while also strengthening public schools and tackling crime and drug problems. And they express broad support for a series of specific policy proposals to achieve these goals. Looking at who will be the next mayor charged with enacting this agenda, the Democratic primary election enters its final month in a very tight three-way race. Jim Kenney (26 percent) holds a slim 1-point lead over Anthony Hardy Williams (25 percent) and a 4-point advantage over Lynne Abraham (22 percent), with nearly 1-in-5 likely Democratic primary voters still undecided (18 percent).

Our recent survey¹ of 587 likely Democratic primary voters finds that Abraham has slipped to third place in the mayoral race despite still enjoying the highest name identification (84 percent name ID: 43 percent favorable, 26 percent unfavorable) among all candidates. Kenney (64 percent name ID: 40 percent favorable, 13 percent unfavorable) and Williams (74 percent name ID: 40 percent favorable, 17 percent unfavorable) clearly have more room to grow, as we would expect them to do as these two candidates and their allies continue to dominate the airwaves in the final month. As expected, race plays a powerful role, with Williams (39 percent) holding a large lead over Abraham (17 percent) and Kenney (13 percent) among African Americans while Kenney (43 percent) leads Abraham (30 percent) and Williams (9 percent) among white voters. Kenney clearly stands to benefit disproportionately among white voters, particularly in the Northeast and Center City, if Abraham loses her current standing in the race.

One of the greatest variables in this year's mayoral race will be turnout. Kenney leads by a wide margin (37 to 23 percent) among voters who consistently vote in city elections and can be counted on to vote, even in a low turnout scenario. Williams, on the other hand, relies on less consistent voters to bolster his standing, putting a large organizational burden on him that is particularly noteworthy given the support for Kenney among most labor unions and some key African American ward leaders.

¹ GBA Strategies conducted a survey of 587 likely Democratic primary voters on April 9-15, 2015 on behalf of AFSCME. More than 1-in-4 interviews were conducted via cell phone. This survey carries a margin of error of 4.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Philadelphia voters express mixed feelings about the city’s current direction (43 percent right direction, 39 percent wrong track) and some optimism about their own neighborhoods (54 percent right direction, 35 percent wrong track). But this guarded optimism does not disguise their deep concerns about Philadelphia schools, crime, and the economic plight of the middle class. Given these concerns, it is not surprising that Philadelphia voters embrace economic priorities focused squarely on wages and increased opportunity for those struggling to get by in an economy that rewards big corporations and the wealthy at the expense of workers and the middle class. What is most striking, instead, is how consistently popular these economic messages are across typical dividing lines in the city’s politics, including age, gender, race, and geography:

SETTING ECONOMIC PRIORITIES FOR PHILLY’S NEXT MAYOR		
<i>(% Very Convincing / % Total Convincing)</i>		
	% Very Conv	% Total Conv
No one who works full-time should live in poverty because their wages are so low. And working families in Philadelphia should be able to take care of a sick child and have a reliable enough work schedule to arrange for child-care. It's time to build an economy that works for working families.	68	89
We need to make raising the incomes of ordinary Americans our first priority. If you work hard and play by the rules in this country, you should be paid enough to live on and support your family. A strong middle class is the real engine of the economy. When average people have money in their pockets, they can support their local businesses and our economy grows.	67	91
No one is guaranteed success, but hard working families deserve a shot at getting ahead, not just getting by. If big corporations can profit off the hard work and productivity of their employees, individual workers should share in that profit, too, through better wages and benefits. It's time to give everyone the opportunity to succeed.	59	85
Working families are facing increasing financial pressures - student debt, higher health care costs, and a lack of retirement security due to pension cuts. We need an economic agenda to relieve these pressures - debt-free college instead of higher interest rates for students than Wall Street banks and retirement accounts available to everyone.	52	81

These economic messages are very aggressive in advocating for a more progressive economic agenda than the city has seen, yet voters throughout the electorate overwhelmingly embrace them. As Philadelphia celebrates the impending visit by Pope Francis and the awarding of the Democratic Convention, as well as significant investment in new development, Philadelphia residents across the city are demanding an economic agenda that ensures the city’s progress reaches the working and middle class families whose hard work is making these achievements possible. In order to make these goals a reality, they support a variety of specific policy proposals that would ensure that ‘no one who works full time should live in poverty

because their wages are so low’ and that ‘hard working families [get] a shot at getting ahead, not just getting by.’ Again, we see not just strong support overall for these proposals, but broad support across the electorate:

AN ECONOMIC AGENDA FOR PHILADELPHIA’S NEXT MAYOR		
<i>% Strongly Favor / % Total Favor</i>		
	% Strong Favor	% Total Favor
Create a paid family leave insurance program that would reimburse workers some of their lost wages when they are away from work to recover from a serious illness or to care for a new baby or ill family member.	72	92
Address the rising cost of college education and job training, so working people can afford to train for the jobs of the future, and allow people to refinance their student loans to the same rate banks pay when they borrow money.	72	88
Raise the minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour by 2018, then have it adjust for inflation annually.	70	87
Prohibit employers from requiring workers to be on call without being paid. When a worker is on call and required to remain close to their work and drop everything if needed, they should receive some compensation.	65	82
Allow workers to ask for a flexible or predictable work schedule and require employers to consider and respond to all requests in writing. Employers cannot retaliate against workers who make a request.	62	84
Create a voluntary retirement system for workers who do not have a pension or other employer-sponsored retirement account. Workers would choose the amount to be automatically deducted from their paycheck and professionally invested. The retirement account would be portable, so workers keep it if they change jobs. People could opt out of the system if they didn't want to participate.	60	85
Create a childcare fund for Philadelphia families that would be funded by a fee on large corporations that pay their employees’ wages that are so low they can't afford childcare on their own.	54	78