

# Good Schools Pennsylvania

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For Immediate Release  
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## **Good Schools Pennsylvania hosts forum for 13<sup>th</sup> District State Senate candidates; Gauge support for education reform**

**Lancaster, Pa. (April 17, 2008)** – “What will you do to support education reform in Pennsylvania?” That was the pressing question as community leaders, school district officials, educators, parents and students attended an education forum hosted by Good Schools Pennsylvania for candidates running for the 13<sup>th</sup> Senate District seat in Lancaster and York Counties on Wednesday.

Two candidates running for retiring Sen. Gibson Armstrong’s seat, including Lancaster Board of Commissioners member Paul Thibault, a republican, and Lancaster City Councilman Jose Urdaneta, a democrat, fielded questions from forum attendees.

Questions from the audience centered on solutions to address Pennsylvania’s broken and outdated school funding formula, the results of the General Assembly’s recently-released comprehensive “costing-out” study, which uncovered a \$4 billion deficit in Pennsylvania’s funding for public schools, and Governor Ed Rendell’s 2008-09 budget proposal for basic education, which outlines a six-year proposal to implement a new, more equitable school funding formula.

“As a parent of two daughters who attend schools in the Lancaster city schools, the most fulfilling thing I hear is, ‘Dad, guess what I learned today?’ said Urdaneta. “But not all students can say that. We have to make sure that all of our schools have adequate funding so all students can learn and receive an education. There are solutions to creating successful schools, and as a state senator, I see it as my job to lend an ear to constituents and professionals helping to educate us about all the problems and concerns of the community and then going to Harrisburg to use my hands and my mind to create those solutions and put them in place.”

“As a former educator myself,” responded Thibault to a question from the audience. “I know that education is about the future and it’s about helping to create a better society. But the commonwealth has walked away from its responsibility and duty to take care of our students and our children. I am committed to finding new solutions to funding public education in Pennsylvania, and to finding solutions that are fairer to our communities, citizens and students.”

Three other candidates who are in the running for Armstrong’s seat – republican Bill Neff, a Lancaster area businessman; republican Steve McDonald, Lancaster County recorder of deeds; and republican Lloyd Smucker, an area businessman – declined the invitation to participate in the forum.

Audience members who asked questions of the candidates included David Greineder, advocacy director for the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bill Zee, a school law attorney in

Lancaster, Ann Loeffler, an administrator at the Lincoln Intermediate Unit, Sue Grimm-McCoy, a teacher from the School District of Lancaster, and Rich Frerichs, school board member at Penn Manor School District, among others.

Candidates will select the successor to Sen. Armstrong's seat in the State Senate on Tuesday, April 22 during Pennsylvania's primary election.

"This is an important election for our region and this forum was an enlightening way to evaluate our candidates' positions on arguably the most important issues facing the commonwealth today," said the Reverend Dr. Bill Cluley, who served as the forum's moderator. "That, of course, is education."

"We know that the health and vitality of our region depends upon our schools having the resources they need to provide a high quality education to every student," said Dave Smith, regional field manager for Good Schools Pennsylvania. "We invited these candidates here this evening to gauge their support for reforming the way our state funds public education, especially important in light of the recent efforts by the governor and General Assembly to address this issue. We're looking forward to the primary election and hope that the citizens elect the candidate who will address education, not just in Lancaster and York Counties, but for all of the students and citizens of Pennsylvania."

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