

Legislative roundup



Sharing their positions: U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-1st dist.) and Democrat Christina Finello are expected to square off in three upcoming debates.

Plans have not been finalized, but it appears that U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-1st dist.) and Democrat Christina Finello will be squaring off in three debates.

WBCB (1490 AM) will host a debate in August. Bucks County Community College's Lower Bucks campus will host a debate in October. Also in October, Delaware Valley University is expected to hold a debate.

Giffords, the gun violence prevention organization founded by former Arizona Democratic Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, endorsed Brian Fitzpatrick (R-1st dist.) in his bid for re-election.

The organization is also backing Rep. Chris Smith, a New Jersey Republican.

Gabrielle Giffords said, "Brian Fitzpatrick and Chris Smith have shown the courage and bipartisan commitment to stand up for gun safety and oppose the NRA's agenda. When an overwhelming majority of Americans demanded universal background checks, they answered the call to protect our communities from the epidemic of gun violence. At a time when Washington seems more divided than ever, these champions proved it's still possible to pass real, bipartisan reform to build a stronger, safer America. Giffords is proud to support these leaders in their fight for meaningful change."

The campaign of Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick has released the results of its first poll, showing the incumbent leading Democrat Christina Finello, 53 percent to 39 percent.

Fitzpatrick has a 59 percent favorable image.

Kate Constantini, spokeswoman for the Fitzpatrick campaign, released the following statement regarding the polling results:

"For those interested in where this campaign actually stands at the moment, here you

go. Christina Finello's fake push-polls, which were solely designed to lie to donors and help her fundraising, have been exposed, and it's not going to get much better for her. Her entire campaign is focused on replacing the most independent Congressman in U.S. history with her far-left partisan agenda. First she lied to our community by breaking her pledge to refuse corporate PAC money, now she's lied to our community about her polling in order to help her fundraising. She has lost all credibility."

Republican House members from Bucks County issued a letter to House Speaker Bryan Cutler, requesting the House Government Oversight Committee conduct an investigation into the failure of the Unemployment Compensation program.

"As a result of the COVID-19 catastrophe, Pennsylvania has experienced the highest unemployment rates since the Great Depression. Our residents have been struggling not only with the impact of the virus but also with the impact of an outdated and obsolete Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation System," they wrote.

The letter was signed by Reps. Frank Farry, Wendi Thomas, Craig Staats, Meghan Schroeder, K.C. Tomlinson and Todd Polinchock.

"Our district offices have dealt with hundreds if not thousands of constituents who have applied for unemployment, and many have yet to collect benefits or receive a resolution to filing claims. Daily, constituents call to request assistance with claims dating back to March. In addition, we have had many constituents call regarding fraudulent claims, as they received checks for claims they did not apply for; they are concerned about identity theft and how this may impact their income taxes in 2020," they said in the letter.

The members also argued that while the General Assembly has designated funds in the budget for system upgrades and updates, and for adding staff to handle claims, the number of unresolved cases continue to be staggering.

"We urge (the committee) to not only look at what has caused the failure, but more importantly, what changes need to occur to better serve the people of Pennsylvania," they wrote.

State Reps. Wendi Thomas and Perry Warren announced that the Council Rock School District has been awarded a grant of \$1,641,916 from the Commonwealth Financing Authority's Alternative and Clean Energy High Performance Building program to construct and renovate portions of Hillcrest

and Richboro elementary schools to make them more energy efficient.

"This grant will help Council Rock School District create cutting-edge, environmentally smart schools that will stand as an example to others of how our schools can be energy efficient, which will benefit our environment and save our school districts money long-term," Thomas said. "This is how to best invest in our future."

Thomas served as school board director for Council Rock School District from 2008-2018 before being elected to the House of Representatives.

"Due to the gaps in the budget caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our schools will have to rely on funding at last year's budget levels to provide the same high-quality education," Warren said. "The grant money will enable renovation and construction projects that will help the schools save more than 20% in energy consumption and 30% in water consumption. The reduction in the two schools' energy costs will lead to a decrease in district spending as a whole during this critical period."

The Council Rock School District will use the funds to renovate 59,860 square feet and construct 3,650 square feet of additions to Hillcrest and Richboro, achieving USGBC LEED Gold certification. The planned energy-saving features include geothermal heating and cooling, energy-efficient lighting, automated energy control systems, low-flow water fixtures, occupancy-based temperature and lighting, an 85 kW solar PV array and an improved thermal envelope.

In both schools, the solar array will generate an additional 110,000 kWh and the low-flow water fixtures will reduce water consumption by 30% annually.

In Hillcrest, the changes will reduce energy consumption by an estimated 1,251 MMBtu, a savings of 24% annually.

In Richboro Elementary, the changes will reduce energy consumption by an estimated 1,003 MMBtu, a savings of 20% annually.

The schools each will provide matching funds.

The Alternate Energy Investment Act was signed into law in July 2008 and provides for grants and loans for clean and alternative energy projects, including buildings, equipment and land development activities; grants and loans to individuals and small businesses for high-performance, energy-efficient building projects; grants and loans for geothermal and wind energy projects; and grants and loans for alternative energy production projects involving solar technologies. A Commonwealth Financing Authority program, the High Performance Building Program

provides financial assistance in the forms of grants and loan funds to underwrite the cost premiums associated with the design and construction or major renovation of high-performance buildings in the state. The program is managed within the DCED Office of Business Financing.

U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-1st dist.) released the following statement on the Problem Solvers Caucus endorsing the Great American Outdoors Act:

"I am happy to see the Problem Solvers endorse the Great American Outdoors Act. This bipartisan, bicameral and landmark legislation will permanently preserve and protect our vital public lands. This bill would fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and work to repair maintenance issues in our national parks. This common-sense legislation is long overdue and will help meet the ever-growing demand of families and travelers looking to explore our beautiful parks and lands. Since its establishment over 50 years ago, the LWCF has promoted recreational activity, while also conserving our national parks, forests and critical wildlife areas, and boosting our economy. In my community, treasured public lands such as Nockamixon State Park, Tyler State Park, and cherished venues such as Hatfield Community Park are all just a few of the examples of the beneficiaries of this valuable fund. Today, our national parks and public lands are in rough shape. Families who travel to our public lands are often met by roads, picnic areas, trails, campgrounds and visitor centers that are damaged, rundown or closed. The tourism experience has deteriorated, and it is a detriment to our economy. The Great American Outdoors Act would address the \$12 billion maintenance backlog in our national parks and public lands. Our parks and public lands contribute to a thriving outdoor recreation economy. This backlog endangers some of our country's most iconic landmarks, and we cannot delay supporting them any longer. This landmark legislation would preserve and protect our nation's public lands for generations, and I am proud to support this legislation."

The Bucks County Commissioners will meet again on Wednesday, Aug. 12, at 10 a.m. at the Bucks County Administration Building in Doylestown.

To reserve a seat, call 215-348-6415. The meeting will be broadcast at [facebook.com/BucksCountyGovt](https://www.facebook.com/BucksCountyGovt).

Future meetings are on Sept. 2, Sept. 16, Oct. 7, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2 and Dec. 16. ●●