

Know Before You Go: PA-16 District Primer

September 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!

After Republican gerrymandering of the district was ruled illegal by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, PA-16 is more Blue! With your help, we're going to win this seat in 2018.

About the Incumbent:

Introduction: Republican Mike Kelly was born in Pittsburgh and raised in Butler, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Butler High School in 1966, Kelly attended the University of Notre Dame on an academic and football scholarship. After graduating, Kelly returned home to work at the family business, Kelly Chevrolet-Cadillac. Prior to being elected to Congress in 2010, Kelly served on various local boards. He and his wife live in Butler where they raised their four children and have ten grandchildren.

Issues: Kelly opposes a woman's right to choose and has a 100% voting record for anti-abortion legislation. He supported a bill that would make abortions illegal after 20 weeks regardless of medical advice. He strongly supported the Trump tax plan and supports a bill to make the tax cuts permanent. He voted to repeal and replace Obamacare. Kelly's disastrous 0% rating from the League of Conservation Voters reflects his history of voting to eliminate environmental regulations and to thwart climate change solutions such as reducing methane pollution. Kelly has a 100% rating from the NRA.

Committees: Kelly sits on the Ways and Means Committee and the Select Revenue Measures, Social Security, and Oversight subcommittees.

Strengths: As of June 30, Kelly's war chest was three times larger than DiNicola's, with \$1 million dollars, mostly all from corporate contributors. While supporting Trump's agenda, Kelly has also managed to propose some bipartisan legislation.

Potential Weaknesses: Kelly votes with Trump and the GOP's agenda 96.7% of the time. Over 65% of his campaign finances come from corporations to whose interests he is now likely to be beholden. His support for Trump's tax cuts has earned criticism for dramatically increasing the federal deficit and the national debt.

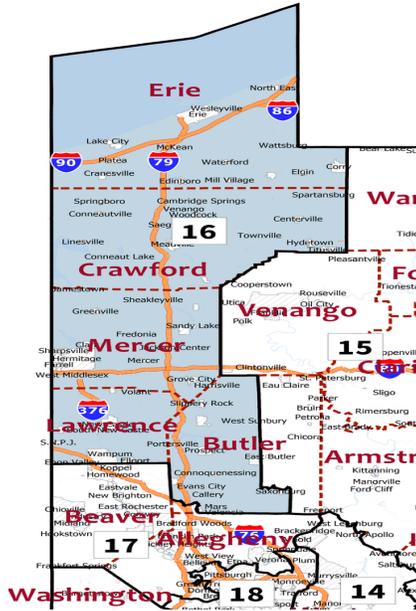
About the Challenger:

Introduction: Democrat Ronald DiNicola grew up on Erie's west side in a house built by his father, an immigrant bricklayer. After high school, he joined the Marines and was awarded the Leatherneck Magazine Award for Leadership. Trained in boxing as a youngster, DiNicola went on to win the All-Marine boxing title and several state Golden Gloves titles. After serving his country, DiNicola received a BA from Harvard University on the GI Bill and a law degree from Georgetown University. He's served as a law clerk to a US District Judge and as Erie County solicitor. He and his wife have three daughters.

Issues: Reducing the role of special interests is a top priority for DiNicola, who will not accept corporate campaign contributions. He is committed to tackling the opioid epidemic by investing federal resources to increase access to drug treatment and expand prevention programs. DiNicola supports taking on the drug companies who profited from and fueled this epidemic by passing legislation to ensure they're held accountable. DiNicola co-chaired an organization that advocated for pre-K programs throughout PA, and if elected, will continue this fight on a national level. DiNicola believes access to health care is a right and will support legislation that fixes the Affordable Care Act to increase access and keep insurance costs down. He will oppose any attempt to cut or privatize Social Security and Medicare. DiNicola will fight to protect the rights of workers to organize and join a union so they can collectively bargain for better wages and benefits.

Strengths: In 2014, DiNicola successfully represented 1,000 GE employees in PA-16 as they fought for benefits after being laid off. DiNicola received the 2012 NAACP Spirit of the Community Award and the 2015 "Voice for Children Vision Award" of the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children. He is endorsed by the Human Rights Campaign and End Citizens United.

PA-16: Better Know the District



Geography

PA-16 is located in northwestern Pennsylvania including all of Crawford, Erie, Lawrence, and Mercer counties and the western half of Butler county. It borders Ohio to the west and Lake Erie to the north. PA-16 lies east of the Allegheny Mountains and within the Appalachian Plateaus Province, an area of high hills, steep valleys, lakes, forests, and streams. Abundant reserves of coal, oil, and natural gas are located the southeast corner of PA-16 and have contributed to the region's historic steel and manufacturing industries. Major interstate highways, including I-90, I-80 and I-79, run through the district. The Pittsburgh metropolitan area provides an economic hub to the south and the district's rich history continues to attract tourists.

Citizenry

The population of 705,687 is mostly white and somewhat older than the US population as a whole. 91.8% of residents are white and 4.4% are African-American. About 2.2% identify as Hispanic. Unemployment ranges from 4.1% to 5%, compared to 3.9% for the US overall. Median household income range from \$47,094 to \$63,345, compared to \$55,322 for the US. The district's poverty rate (13.7% for individuals and 9.6% for families) is lower than the US average. About 58.7% of households receive Social Security, compared to 48.5% for the US; 25.4% receive public assistance, compared to 21.1% for the US. Opioid addiction is a serious problem throughout PA-16. In Erie County, one person dies of an overdose every week, while Mercer County has seen a 120% increase in drug-related deaths in the last 2 years.

Elections

In February 2018, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court declared that gerrymandered districts must be redrawn. PA-16 is a newly drawn district and the election in November of 2018 will be its first. PA-16 encompasses large parts of the former district PA-03, represented by Mike Kelly, who is now the Republican candidate for PA-16. Ron DiNicola won the first Democratic primary for the new PA-16 in May 2018. Erie County voted for Democratic presidents from 1988-2012, as did Lawrence County from 1976-2000 and Mercer County from 1984- 2000. However, all five counties voted for President Trump in the 2016 election.

Higher Education

Almost 91% of PA-16 residents have a high school degree; 26.2% have BAs or higher degrees. The district has a number of colleges including Slippery Rock University, two Penn State campuses, and a University of Pittsburgh campus. PA-16 has community colleges and technical/vocational schools in every county.

Industries

Education, health care, and social assistance account for 25.9% of industrial activity; manufacturing for 16.4%; retail trade for 11.7%; and art, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food for 9.4%. Other sectors include professional, management, administration, and waste management (7.5%); construction (5.4%), finance, insurance, real estate (5.4%); other services (4.7%); transportation, warehouse, and utilities (4.5%); public administration (3.5%), wholesale trade (2.5%); agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining (1.6%); and IT(1.5%).

PA-16: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Erie: 101,786
- New Castle: 23,273
- Hermitage: 16,220
- Sharon: 14,038
- Butler: 13,757
- Meadville: 13,388

2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 130,409 (36.7%)
- Trump: 206,454 (58.1%)
- Third Party: 18,036 (5%)

2016 House Results

Kelly ran unopposed

2014 House Results

- Kelly (R) 60.6%
- LaVallee (D) 39.4%