SwingLeft

Know Before You Go: PA-17 District Primer

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It's a new day and a new district with new demographics that make it much more blue!
With your help, we're going to win this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

About the Republican Candidate

Introduction: Republican **Keith Rothfus** was born in 1962 in Endicott, NY and earned his J.D. at the University of Notre Dame in 1994. He worked as a corporate attorney and was the first director of the Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives for the Department of Homeland Security. He currently represents the 12th District and is married with five children.

Issues: In 2018, Rothfus proposed the SENSE ACT to loosen air pollution standards. The act would circumvent EPA regulations on five coal plants in Pennsylvania and West Virginia that have not adopted technologies to bring them into compliance. In 2017, he refused to meet with constituents to discuss his efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act. He also introduced a bill intended to weaken consumer financial protections championed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He voted in favor of HR 3003 No Sanctuary for Criminals Act that withholds federal funding from state and local governments who "choose not to follow immigration law." Rothfus voted against reauthorizing the Women Against Violence Act.

Recent Elections: Rothfus defeated Mark Critz in the 2012 general election 52% to 48%. In 2014, Rothfus defeated Democrat Erin McClelland, 59% to 41%. In 2016, he defeated McClelland 62% to 38%.

Strengths: As of October 2017, Rothfus had more than $1 million in his campaign coffers (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*).
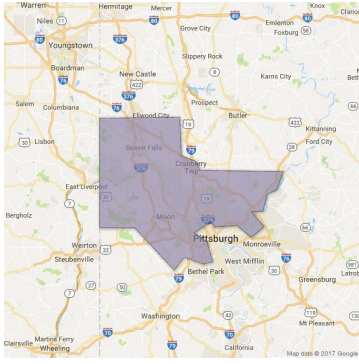
Potential Weaknesses: Under the new map, Rothfus' district went from a strong pro-Trump district to one where Mr. Trump won by under 3 percentage points." (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*).

About The Democratic Candidate

Introduction: Democrat **Conor Lamb** won the special election for the state's 18th Congressional District seat in March 2018. Because of the court-ordered redistricting that changed the boundaries of the state's congressional districts, Lamb is running in a different district than the one he was elected to represent in March. Lamb was born in Washington DC in 1984. He has a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Lamb has served as an assistant U.S. attorney in Pittsburgh, as a Judge Advocate General in the U.S. Marine Corps, and in the Marine Corps Reserves. His grandfather was a Democratic majority leader in the Pennsylvania State Senate.

Issues: Relative to the opioid epidemic and heroin crisis, Lamb supports investment in prevention, expansion of access to treatment and rehabilitation, and a crackdown on "the people who are fueling and profiting from this crisis." Lamb advocates allowing people to refinance their student loans or to pay some portion of their loans with pre-tax dollars. He also supports programs that help people pay back their loans when they take important public service jobs in underserved communities and under-populated professions. Lamb supports "robust and responsible energy development," including natural gas extraction. He supports the Affordable Care Act as well as endorsing efforts to "help people with pre-existing conditions, improve the quality of care, and reduce premiums, out-of-pocket costs, and prescription drug prices. "

Other issues Lamb supports include infrastructure and job training investment, protecting Medicare and Social Security, and support for unions.

Learn more at **swingleft.org/resources/PA-17**

PA-17: Facts & Stats

Population Centers

- Franklin Park (13,470)
- Aliquippa (9,415)
- Economy (9,069)
- Beaver Falls (8,897)
- Ellwood City (7,735)
- Ambridge (7,023)
- New Brighton (5,992)
- Sewickley (3,827)

PA-17: Better Know the District

Geography

The district contains all of Beaver County (444 square miles). The Ohio and the Beaver rivers flow through the county. The district also contains western Allegheny County, including suburban areas to the north and west of Pittsburgh.

Citizenry

PA-17's breakdown of race/ethnicity is as follows: 81.6% White, 11% Black, 6.4% Hispanic/Latino, 3.1 % Asian. The district's high school graduation rate of 89% is slightly higher than the national average (87%). Median household income ($53,599) is almost exactly equivalent to the national average. However, the district's percentage of persons below the poverty level of 16% is higher than the national average of 11%.

Elections

Democrats won the approximate district in every presidential election from 2000-2012. In 2016, however, Donald Trump beat Hillary Clinton in the district by a margin of 0.7%. In the last six Senate races, the district voted for the Republican four out of six times. While Democrat Bob Casey won the district's vote in 2012, voters in 2016 chose Republican Patrick Toomey by a margin of 1.5%.

Higher Education

There are four institutions of higher education in the district: Beaver County Community College, Geneva College, Penn State (Beaver Campus), and Robert Morris University. CCBC reportedly has the "best air traffic control program in the entire country." Geneva College is a 160-year-old Christian college that grants four-year Bachelor degrees (40 majors) as well as six graduate degrees. Penn State Beaver offers two- and four-year degrees. Students may complete two years of study in almost any major and then transfer to another Penn State campus. Robert Morris University is a private university founded in 1921 that offers Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD programs.