

# Vote411 Voters' Mini-Guide

*Primary Election April 23, 2024*

## Pennsylvania State Senator District 45 Democratic Primary

*This Voters' Mini-Guide is an excerpt of the [Vote411.org](https://Vote411.org) online Voters' Guide -- a project of the League of Women Voters. All information in Vote411 Voters' Guides is submitted by the candidates and has not been edited or altered in any way.*



***You must be registered as a Democrat to vote in this Democratic Primary contest.  
The winner of this election will be the Democratic nominee on the November ballot.***

**The 45th State Senate district contains Baldwin, Braddock, Brentwood, Castle Shannon, Clairton, Duquesne, Dravosburg, East McKeesport, East Pittsburgh, Elizabeth, Glassport, Homestead, Liberty, Lincoln, McKeesport, Monroeville, Munhall, North Braddock, North Versailles, Pitcairn, Plum, Port Vue, South Versailles, Trafford (Allegheny County Portion), Turtle Creek, Versailles, Wall, West Elizabeth, West Homestead, West Mifflin, Whitaker, White Oak, Whitehall and Wilmerding.**

***To vote in this election, you must register by April 8, 2024.***

**Description of office:** The General Assembly is the legislative branch of government in Pennsylvania. It is composed of two houses: the Senate is the upper house, and the House of Representatives is the lower house. A majority vote in both houses is necessary to pass a law. The PA Senate consists of 50 members, representing one district each, with an equal number of constituents. Senators must be at least 25 years old, have been a citizen and a resident of the state four years and a resident of their respective districts one year before their election, and shall reside in their respective districts during their terms of service. The Senate develops budget packages, makes taxation decisions, allocates spending, and passes laws (including redistricting in collaboration with the House of Representatives). In addition, the Senate tries officials impeached by the House and authorizes executive appointments. Senators serve on various policy committees that may propose legislation. There are no term limits to this office.

## **Makenzie White**

**Party:** Democratic

### **Biographical Info:**

**Occupation:** Social Worker

**Education:** Bachelors in Social Work, Masters in Social Work, Masters in Public Health

**Qualifications:** Social Worker, Community Organizer, Public Health Professional

**Campaign Website:** [makenzieforpa.com](http://makenzieforpa.com)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550904238535](https://facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550904238535)

**X Handle:** [twitter.com/Makenzieforpa](https://twitter.com/Makenzieforpa)

**Instagram URL:** [www.instagram.com/makenzieforpa/](https://www.instagram.com/makenzieforpa/)



### **Questions:**

***Q: What do you see as the most pressing issues facing Pennsylvanians, and how would you address them?***

**A:** The most pressing issues I see Pennsylvanians facing include climate and environmental justice concerns, disparities in our public education system, affordable housing, accessing quality mental and physical health services especially for those on assistance, economic inequality, protecting abortion and reproductive rights, and disability justice.

***Q: What changes would you support making to Pennsylvania's voting laws to expand access, ensure security, and support local election officials and processes?***

**A:** I support moves taken by Governor Shapiro recently on automatic voter registration as well as Allegheny County adding ballot drop off locations. I would also advocate for same day voter registration, preventing voter ID requirements, and protecting mail in ballot voting. Additionally, I would like to see the restoration of voting rights to those released from prison and even expanding voting rights where possible to more of those within prison.

***Q: What legislation would you support to comply with the Commonwealth Court's ruling that Pennsylvania's school funding system is unconstitutional and must be reformed?***

**A:** It has been clear long before this court ruling that our communities of color have suffered the most from the critical underfunding of our public education system in PA. This court ruling gives us an unprecedented opportunity to correct this imbalance, but we cannot be satisfied with simply increasing funding, we must seek to ensure we center the communities that have been disproportionately affected by the lack of funding and have been locked into underfunded school districts by racist red-lining policies. It is not enough to bring more funding into the system, we also must address the current allocation issues and change that so as we bring in more funding we ensure we don't make the same mistakes.

***Q: What changes, if any, would you support making to Pennsylvania's abortion laws?***

**A:** We must work quickly to codify and enshrine abortion rights here in PA. Abortion is healthcare, and a lack of access to abortion will only lead to unnecessary deaths as a result from unsafe abortions being performed. These deaths have also been shown to disproportionately affect rural communities and communities of color, where maternal mortality rates are already too high. The same protections should be applied in any attempts to restrict abortion access in the future. Things like mandatory waiting periods, unnecessary regulations on providers, or bans on certain types of procedures or medications only serve to harm our most vulnerable populations across the commonwealth.

## Nick Pisciotano

**Party:** Democratic

### Biographical Info:

**Occupation:** Current State Representative; Accountant

**Education:** Washington & Jefferson College - BA Accounting, BA History; Johns Hopkins University - MA Data Analytics & Policy

**Qualifications:** State Representative for HD38 since 2020; Allegheny County House Delegation Chair since 2022; Auditor at a Global Big 4 Accounting Firm 2012 - 2020

**Campaign Website:** <http://nickforpa.com>

**Facebook URL:** <http://facebook.com/nickforpa>

**X Handle:** [twitter.com/pisciottanopa](https://twitter.com/pisciottanopa)

**Instagram URL:** <http://instagram.com/nickpisciottano>



### Questions:

**Q: *What do you see as the most pressing issues facing Pennsylvanians, and how would you address them?***

**A:** Education is critical and my top priority. Our state is in the bottom quarter when it comes to per-student funding, and we pass the buck to local school boards who are forced to make up the difference. This has become such a big problem that Pennsylvania's court system has ordered a systemic evaluation of our public school system and determined that we chronically underfund our schools. In addition, I will continue to advocate for policies that result in fully funded schools, safe communities, and economic investments in Allegheny County.

**Q: *What changes would you support making to Pennsylvania's voting laws to expand access, ensure security, and support local election officials and processes?***

**A:** There are a variety of opportunities to improve election administration and to promote greater voter participation, including continuing efforts to expand early and mail-in voting, expanding ballot dropboxes, allowing for pre-canvassing efforts, and same-day voter registration. I have been supportive of omnibus legislation in Harrisburg that would modernize PA's election code to make elections secure while ensuring that the right to vote is highly accessible to everyone.

**Q: *What legislation would you support to comply with the Commonwealth Court's ruling that Pennsylvania's school funding system is unconstitutional and must be reformed?***

**A:** The first measure that must be taken is to increase the portion of funding that comes from the state—no matter how evenly distributed, if we are funding school districts at a level that means only the wealthiest districts can meet their needs using their own tax bases, that cannot be equitable. This increased funding needs to be distributed using a fair and transparent formula that takes into account the real cost of educating students across districts, as well as the individual needs of different districts, including English language learners, children with disabilities and other needs, and students in poverty. No matter how we build that system, no district should suffer or lose needed funding while we build a future system fairer to all.

**Q: *What changes, if any, would you support making to Pennsylvania's abortion laws?***

**A:** Abortion should be a safe, legal, and accessible choice in Pennsylvania. We need to do more to protect that choice, especially following the Dobbs decision.