

Clerk of courts in 3-way race to fill seat in 98th

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Three candidates — Republican Nicky Woods, Democrat Hugh Darlington and independent Joshua Deering — are fighting to replace Republican Rep. Tom Jones in the 98th House District.

Jones won in 2022 and 2024 with a little over 60% of the vote. He announced this year he would not seek reelection, instead focusing on winning a seat in the upper chamber. Jones is trying to take back GOP control of the 36th Senate District from Democratic Sen. James Malone.

Jones is backing Woods, the Lancaster County clerk of courts, to replace him. Woods is also endorsed by the Republican Committee of Lancaster County.

Darlington, a retired arborist, ran uncontested in the Democratic primary in the 98th, which includes Mount Joy and Elizabethtown boroughs, and the southwestern corner of Lebanon County.

Deering, a Mount Joy Borough Council member, is running as an independent. Because Pennsylvania primaries are closed to independent and third-party voters, Deering had to collect hundreds of signatures to gain a spot on the November ballot.

Woods, Darlington and Deering were asked to respond to a short list of questions ahead of the general election. Below are their responses.

NICKY WOODS (R)



Nicky Woods

Age: 51.
Residence: Elizabethtown area.
Education: Bachelor's degree in accounting, Bloomsburg University.
Occupation: Lancaster County clerk of courts and small-business owner.

Family: Mother of two children.

What is your position on data center development and regulation in Pennsylvania?

Data center development must protect Pennsylvania taxpayers, ratepayers and local communities. While data centers can bring investment and economic opportunity, homeowners and existing businesses should not be forced to subsidize the significant energy and infrastructure demands they

create. I strongly believe in local control. Municipalities should have a meaningful voice over land use, zoning and the impact these projects have on their communities, while the state provides a clear and predictable framework for responsible development. Pennsylvania must also expand reliable baseload generation to meet growing electricity demand. That means utilizing our abundant natural gas resources and pursuing additional nuclear generation while protecting our farmland, water and environment.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 98th District if elected?

My priorities are making Pennsylvania more affordable, providing meaningful property-tax relief, controlling government spending, supporting education and parental choice, maintaining strong public safety, preserving our farmland and communities, and ensuring Pennsylvania has a reliable and affordable energy supply. As a small-business owner and county row officer, I see firsthand how government decisions affect families and businesses. Harrisburg must live within its means, eliminate waste and unnecessary spending, and create an environment where businesses and family farms can grow and create jobs. I will bring the same focus on fiscal responsibility, efficiency and accountability to Harrisburg that I have brought to the clerk of courts office.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in the region?

Government cannot control the price of every item at the grocery store, but state government does influence what families pay through taxes, energy costs and the cost of doing business.

I would focus on controlling state spending, opposing unnecessary tax increases, reducing burdensome regulations that increase costs, expanding Pennsylvania energy production and pursuing meaningful property-tax relief. Homeowners, particularly seniors living on fixed incomes, should not continually be asked to absorb higher property taxes because government spending continues to grow. Pennsylvania is blessed with tremendous energy resources. Expanding reliable and affordable energy production, including natural gas and nuclear power, can

help address energy costs while creating jobs and strengthening our economy.

How do you plan to address public education if elected?

Every child deserves access to a quality education, regardless of ZIP code or family income. I support strong public schools, accountability for taxpayer dollars, career and technical education and greater educational opportunities for families. I also support school choice. Parents know their children better than government does, and when a child's educational needs are not being met, parents should have options. Programs such as Pennsylvania's EITC scholarships help provide those opportunities. Supporting educational choice does not mean abandoning public education. We can support excellent public schools while recognizing that no single educational model is right for every child. My focus will always be on ensuring children have the opportunity to receive an education that prepares them to succeed.

HUGH DARLINGTON (D)



Hugh Darlington

Age: 70.
Residence: West Donegal Township.
Education: Northern Chester County Vo-Tech; Penn State University.
Occupation: Retired arborist; U.S. Navy and National Guard veteran.
Family: Husband, father and grandfather.

What is your position on data center development and regulation in Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania needs strong protections and clear rules for data center development. We have to protect our farmland and water, keep electricity affordable and make sure taxpayers aren't left paying the costs these projects create. Before approving a project, ask the hard questions. How much electricity and water will it use? How will farmland be affected? What infrastructure will be needed, who pays for it, and how many permanent local jobs will it create? Developers need to take responsibility for the costs their projects create. I spent most of my working life outdoors, working with trees and the land. You learn to respect what the land gives us and take

98TH STATE HOUSE DISTRICT

The 98th District for the House of Pennsylvania ncludes Conoy, East Donegal, Mount Joy and West Donegal townships, and Elizabethtown, Marietta and Mount Joy boroughs. The district also stretches across the Lebanon County line to include South Annville and South Londonderry townships, and Mount Gretna Borough.

POPULATION: 66,784

care of it. Development is coming. Listen to the people who live here, get the facts and bring their concerns into the decisions being made. Ask the hard questions before decisions are made, not afterward.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 98th District if elected?

Affordability is at the top. People work hard and want to afford groceries, gas, housing, property taxes and healthcare and still have something left for their families and future. Strong public schools and opportunities for young people are crucial. So are protecting farmland and water, supporting farmers and local businesses, creating good jobs, affordable healthcare and public safety. Our police, firefighters and EMS need the people, training and equipment to do their jobs. Our government needs to listen, and a representative needs to act on what they hear. People deserve a voice in decisions affecting their families and communities. My job is to bring those concerns to Harrisburg, ask the hard questions, work with people to find solutions and be accountable for the

decisions I make. That's what representing people means to me.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in the region?

When I knock on doors, I hear the same concerns over and over. Groceries. Gas. Housing. Property taxes. Healthcare. People work hard and want their paycheck to go further. Our state government has to focus on costs where it can make a difference and be careful with taxpayer money. Look at where the money is going, what's working and where we can do better. Large developments need to pay their fair share. If a project requires new infrastructure, determine the costs and who pays from the beginning. Lower healthcare and prescription costs. Address property tax pressure. Support good-paying jobs and our local businesses, farms and trades. And bring what people are telling me here in the 98th District to Harrisburg. People want to pay their bills, take care of their families and have something left at the end of the month. A little breathing room. That shouldn't be too much to ask.

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Newcomer faces incumbent Zimmerman in 99th

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Republican Dave Zimmerman has represented the 99th District in the Pennsylvania House for 12 years. This year, 23-year-old Democrat Ethan Gabrick, a teacher's aide, hopes to take over as an "outsider to the political establishment."

The race will be a steep climb for Gabrick. In every previous campaign, Zimmerman received over 70% of the vote, and he has never faced a challenger in a GOP primary.

The 99th District covers northeastern Lancaster County and a portion of southern Berks County, where Gabrick hails from.

Zimmerman and Gabrick were asked to respond to a short list of questions ahead of the general election. Below are their responses.

DAVE ZIMMERMAN (R)



Dave Zimmerman

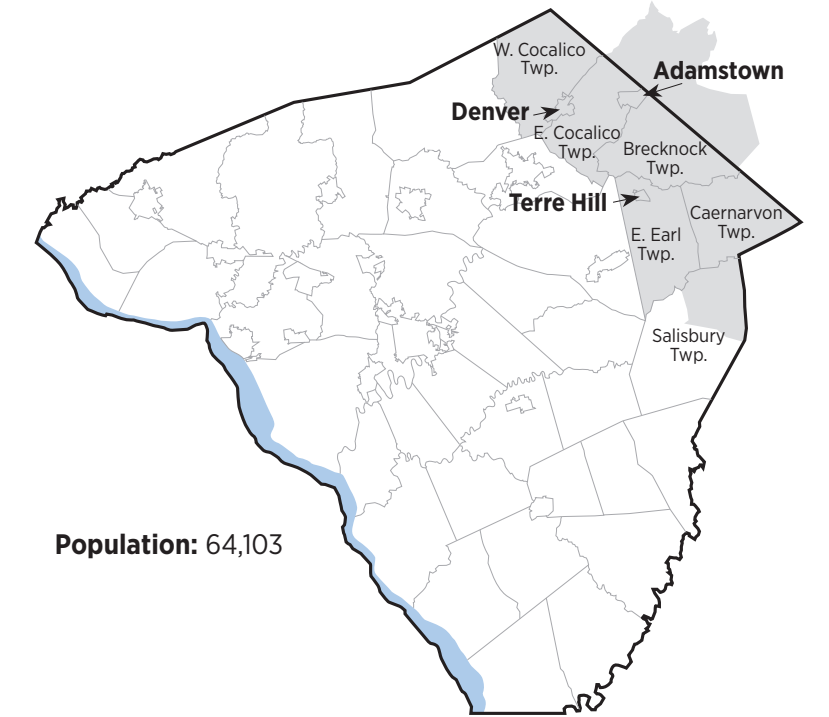
Age: 70.
Residence: Eastern Lancaster County.
Education: Not listed.
Occupation: State representative.
Family: Wife Ruth Ann, three grown children and nine grandchildren.

What is your position on data center development and regulation in Pennsylvania?

I believe we need to build the data centers in Pennsylvania and not in other states or countries. We can surely find marginal land to build them on and keep them off our good farmland. We have the technology to recycle water to cool the systems. There are also other cooling concepts available to consider. How about the latest technology in nuclear energy to

99TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Reapportionment shifted the 99th Legislative District into Berks County, but most of the district remains in Lancaster County. In Berks, the district includes Brecknock Township, parts of Cumru and Spring townships, Mohnton Borough and the Berks sliver of Adamstown Borough; in Lancaster County, the district includes Brecknock, Caernarvon, East Cocalico, West Cocalico and East Earl townships, part of Salisbury Township, and Denver, Terre Hill and Adamstown boroughs.



power these units. Other nations are way ahead of us in approving and implementing the latest nuclear systems. These systems are also smaller and safer than the older technologies.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 99th District if elected?

Free up our farmers to produce high quality food with less regulations and less paperwork so they can concentrate on the work at hand to assure our state has food security and no one

goes hungry. Roll back the regulations on our small businesses so they can create and produce more. Farmers and small businesses providing more creates competition and ultimately things become cheaper.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in the region?

Rep. Zimmerman referred to his previous answer regarding the most important issues to address.

What uniquely qualifies you to

represent your district?

I grew up down on the farm in the 99th District. I understand what it is that the people of this region need and expect. They want a limited government, they want to be free to raise and educate their children, they want to be free to work, farm and manage a business, they want government to stop spending more than they generate and they want government to uphold the constitution our founding fathers put in place for us. And as their representative, the people expect my staff and I to get answers from government for them.

ETHAN GABRICK (D)



Ethan Gabrick

Age: 23.
Residence: Cumru Township; Berks County.
Education: High school diploma.
Occupation: Teacher's aide at Oley Valley High School.
Family: Single.

What is your position on data center development and regulation in Pennsylvania?

These data centers are causing dirt to leak into local water supplies, and thus ruining people's drinking water. I believe that, as a state representative, you have a responsibility to protect your constituents from that. I believe the best way we can do that in PA is to create a bill similar to one in Maine that would put an indefinite statewide moratorium on any data center using more than 20 MW of power. Because that is the amount of power used for these large language model AI's. Those are the ones having the biggest impact on Pennsylvanians' drinking water.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 99th District if elected?

Creating affordable access to: healthcare, housing and (having an) opportunity to raise a family.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in the region?

Affordable healthcare: Universal state healthcare system.
Affordable housing: Cap rent increases on apartments; cap lot rent increases on manufactured homes; further fund and expand eligibility for PA public housing.
Affordable family: Raise minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour; provide universal school lunches to all PA students; expand eligibility for universal pre-K.

What uniquely qualifies you to represent your district?

I believe we need someone who is an outsider to the political establishment. We need someone who is hungry, passionate and not held up by a corporate donor or any other force that helps maintain our status quo. But instead, fights for and is accountable to the working people of District 99! I believe I am one of those people. I've been organizing and working in my local community for going on half a decade now. I was fortunate enough to lead PA in a nationwide organization, dedicated to teaching members how to phone bank, door-knock and fundraise. Just overall, giving them the skills they need to effectively make change in their local communities. As well as giving them live experience by actively working with candidates who need phone bankers, canvassers, etc.

● To read the candidates' complete responses, visit lancasteronline.com/election.