

36th District race among Pa.’s most competitive

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Democrat James Malone did the unthinkable last year when he won a state Senate seat in a bright red district against an established Republican candidate.

Now, Pennsylvania Democrats are funneling money and resources into Lancaster County’s 36th Senate District race to maintain the seat as part of a larger effort to flip control of the Senate for the first time since 1993.

Republicans have put up state Rep. Tom Jones, of East Donegal Township, as their best shot at taking the district back. Like the Democrats, the GOP is spending heavily on the race to motivate Republican voters to turn out on Election Day.

The race is among the most competitive in Lancaster County and across Pennsylvania. Malone has the incumbent advantage, but Republicans make up 52% of registered voters in the district.

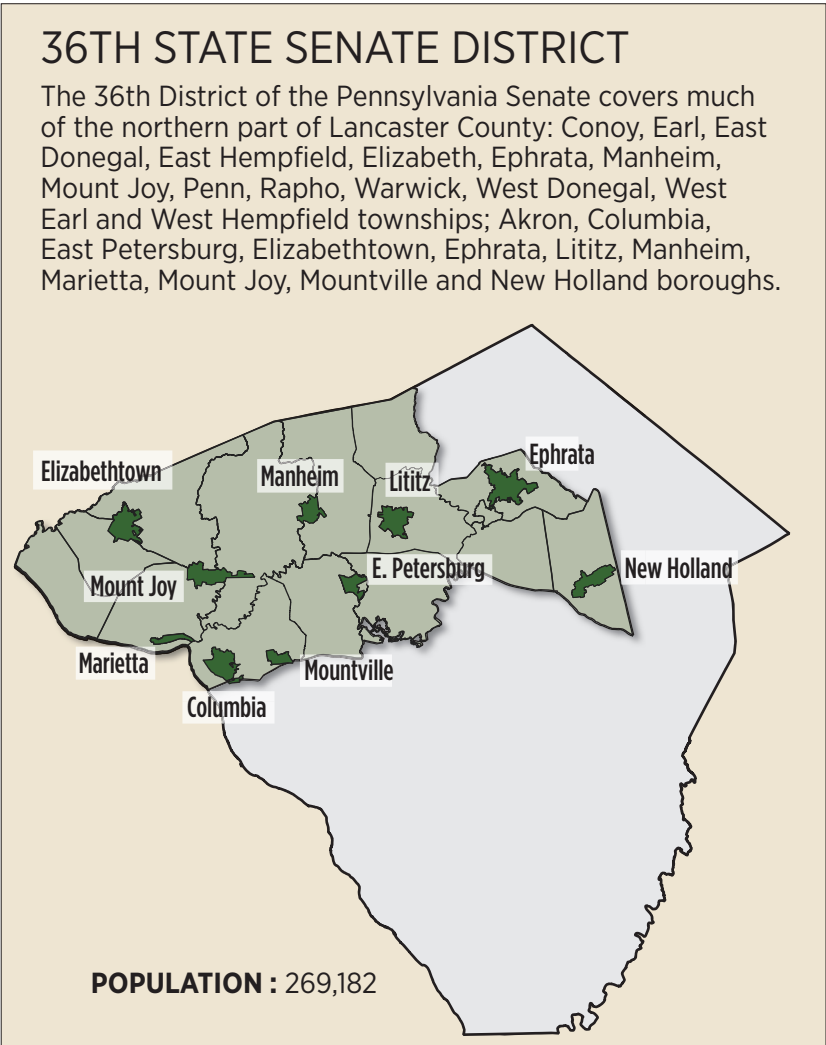
Jones and Malone were asked to respond to a short list of questions ahead of the general election. Below are their responses.



TOM JONES (R)
Age: 52.
Residence: East Donegal Township.
Education: Lancaster Catholic High School.
Occupation: State representative in the 98th House District and small-business owner.
Family: Wife Rochelle and four children.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 36th District if elected?

Affordability is the issue I hear about most from families, seniors and small businesses across Lancaster County. People are paying more for everyday expenses, while government continues to spend more. We also need to protect Lancaster County’s farmland and quality of life, strengthen public safety, support our schools and ca-



reer and technical education, and make sure local communities have a meaningful voice in development decisions. As a small-business owner, father and lifelong Lancaster County resident, I understand that government decisions have real consequences for family budgets and our local economy. In the Senate, my focus will remain on making Lancaster County an affordable and desirable place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in Lancaster County and across Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania needs to control government spending and pursue tax and regulatory policies that allow families and businesses to keep more of what they earn. I have never voted for a tax increase

during my time in office. In addition, I have supported legislation aimed at reducing utility costs, including HB 2224, which included provisions to hold the line on utility rates while eliminating the state’s gross receipts tax on electric bills. I am also a co-sponsor of HB 2371, which proposes tax holidays on residential electricity and cell-phone service. As a small-business owner, I know that energy costs and government mandates ultimately increase costs to consumers. In the Senate, I will continue working to reduce taxes and energy costs while demanding greater responsibility in state spending.

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

I believe local municipalities and the people who live there must

have a meaningful role in determining whether and where these facilities are developed. Data centers present legitimate concerns for Lancaster County involving farmland, water, electricity, infrastructure and the character of our communities. That is why I co-sponsored HB 2496, legislation allowing municipalities to temporarily pause new data center applications while considering appropriate zoning regulations; the bill passed the House. I also supported the House’s effort to end Pennsylvania’s existing sales-tax exemption for data center equipment. Pennsylvania should not pursue data center development at the expense of local taxpayers, our electric grid, productive farmland or the ability of communities to determine their own future.

Senate Republicans have advocated for the adoption of the Save Women’s Sports Act and have pressured the House to hold a vote on the issue. Where do you stand on this bill?

I support the Save Women’s Sports Act. I believe female athletes should have the opportunity to compete in athletic programs designated for women and girls. The Senate passed SB 9 in May 2025, and it remains in the House. I am also a co-sponsor of HB 158, the House version of legislation addressing participation in male, female and coed scholastic and collegiate sports. My position has been consistent: Pennsylvania should preserve and protect separate female athletic competition in our schools and colleges.



JAMES MALONE (D)
Age: 52.
Residence: East Petersburg Borough.
Education: Bachelor’s degree in psychology, counseling and Bible, Lee University.
Occupation: State senator, former IT specialist.

Family: Wife Beverly, two children and two stepchildren.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 36th District if elected?

Things have become too expensive for everyday Pennsylvanians. When I’m reelected, I’ll continue working to bring down utility costs, increase the minimum wage, and address housing costs. I’ll also remain steadfast in protecting our farm and gamelands, fully and fairly funding our public schools, and protecting Lancaster from the detrimental effects of data centers and AI deepfakes.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in Lancaster County and across Pennsylvania?

In my time in office, I’ve supported historic tax breaks for working families and seniors, limited predatory fees, and brought down energy costs. As long as I’m your Senator, I’ll continue to prioritize tax relief, affordable housing and raising the minimum wage.

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

I believe strongly that local residents and municipalities should have a say in whether or how data centers come in to their neighborhoods. Our communities should have the tools to protect their residents and farmlands, and ensure data centers don’t pass on costs to ratepayers. That’s why I called upon Senate leadership to bring common-sense regulations to the Senate floor immediately.

Senate Republicans have advocated for the adoption of the Save Women’s Sports Act and have pressured the House to hold a vote on the issue. Where do you stand on this bill?

I voted for this bill the first time it came to the Senate floor.

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

Write-in Democrat vies with Gebhard for Senate seat

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Coming off of a heated GOP primary, Republican Sen. Chris Gebhard faces a Berks County Democrat who won a spot on the ballot through a write-in campaign.

Gebhard is running for reelection in the 48th Senate District against Democrat Wayne Moyer, who works in information technology support.

Moyer did not secure the necessary signatures to appear on the primary ballot but a push from Democrats in the district got him more than 1,200 write-in votes. He needed just 300 votes to earn a place on the Nov. 3 ballot.

If elected, Moyer would be the first Democrat to serve the 48th District, which includes all of Lebanon County, parts of Berks County and the northeast corner of Lancaster County.

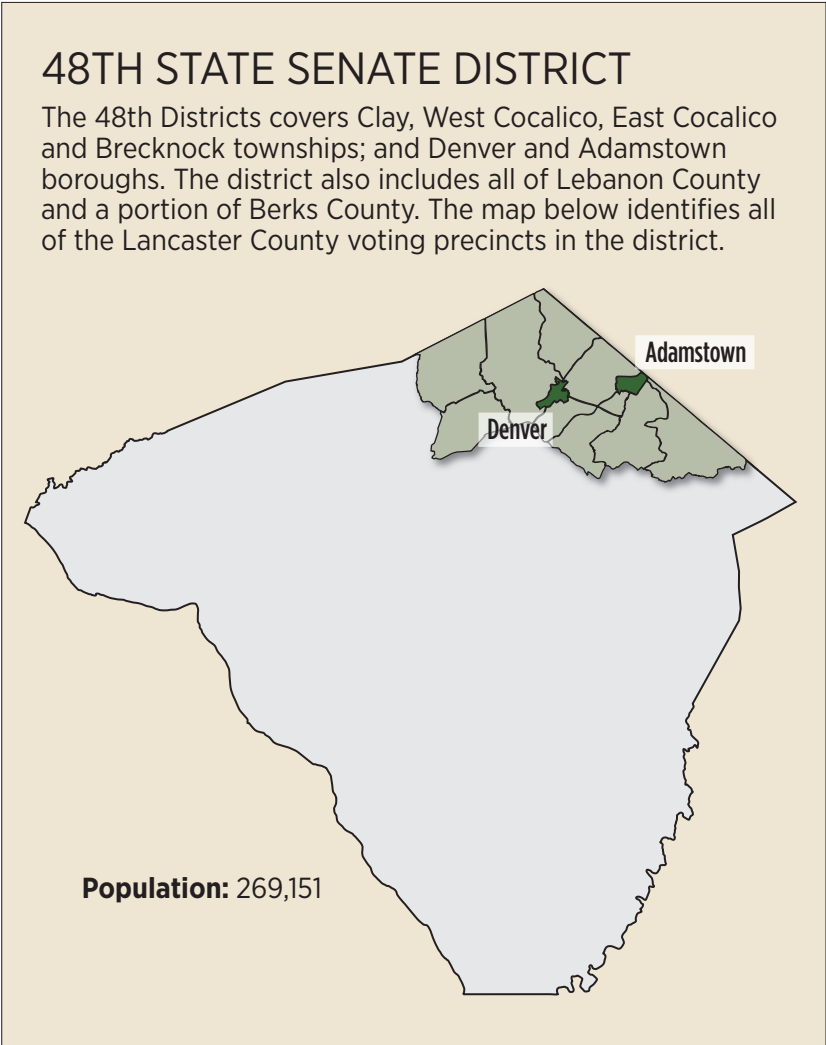
Incumbent Gebhard, who first won a special election in 2021 and fended off well-funded GOP challenger Clovis Crane in the May primary, is the favorite to win. Republicans hold a 57% voter registration advantage over Democrats, who make up just 27% of the electorate.

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

CHRIS GEBHARD (R)
Age: 51.
Residence: North Cornwall Township, Lebanon County.
Education: Psychology degree from Vanderbilt University.
Occupation: Insurance agent and state Senator.
Family: Wife Sarah and sons Davis and Drew.

What uniquely qualifies you to represent your district?

I bring both real-world business experience and a proven record of delivering results in the Senate. For nearly three decades, I have worked in the private sector and today own a small business in Lebanon. That experience taught



me firsthand how taxes, regulations and government decisions affect employers, workers and families. In the Senate, I chair the Banking and Insurance Committee and have worked on tax relief, energy affordability, infrastructure investment and reducing unnecessary regulations. I’ve also helped secure millions of dollars for critical infrastructure projects throughout the 48th District. I understand our communities because I live, work, raise a family and built a business here.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 48th District if elected?

The issue I hear about constantly from constituents is affordability. Families are paying more for electricity, groceries, housing, transportation and nearly everything else, while taxpayers continue to be asked to shoulder more government spending. My priority is making Pennsylvania

more affordable by holding the line on taxes, controlling state spending and reducing unnecessary costs imposed by government. I also believe we must address rising energy costs, protect our communities, support our schools and create an economic environment where small businesses can grow and families can prosper. Every decision in Harrisburg should begin with a simple question: Does this make it easier or harder for Pennsylvania families to afford to live here?

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in Lancaster County and across Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania cannot spend its way to affordability. We need to lower taxes, control government spending and allow working families to keep more of what they earn. I have championed proposals to cut taxes and reduce electricity costs, including elimi-

nating the gross receipts tax on electric bills. I will continue fighting unnecessary spending, excessive regulation and policies that increase the cost of energy and doing business in Pennsylvania. Lancaster County families know how to live within a budget, and Harrisburg should be expected to do the same.

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

Data center development cannot come at the expense of local communities, taxpayers or energy consumers. Municipalities should have the tools and time necessary to address impacts involving electricity, water, noise and setbacks. That is why I co-sponsored legislation allowing municipalities to temporarily pause data center applications while updating local ordinances. I also voted in favor of legislation to eliminate Pennsylvania’s special sales-tax exemption for data centers rather than continuing to subsidize an already-growing industry. My position is straightforward: Local communities should have a meaningful voice in development decisions, taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize data centers, and Pennsylvania families should not be left paying higher costs because of their expansion.

WAYNE MOYER (D)
Age: 54.
Residence: Womelsdorf Borough, Berks County.
Education: High School with vo-tech.
Occupation: IT Support.
Family: Married with three children.

What uniquely qualifies you to represent your district?

I have been living in Pennsylvania my whole life. I’ve also been here in Womelsdorf for the last 20 years. So it gives me a local perspective on the issues of Western Berks County, Lebanon County, and Northern Lancaster

County. I also have been working in IT Support for the last 30 years. Which gives me more of an insider’s view of the data center issue. Having seen this grow and expand from inside the industry. As well as working and helping people for the last 30 years.

What do you see as the most important issues to address in the 48th District if elected?

We need to stop the data centers from taking over the farms in Lancaster and Lebanon counties. After that, we need to stop private companies from buying out the public water systems from local townships.

How do you plan to address affordability concerns in Lancaster County and across Pennsylvania?

We need to make sure that the public water systems are not purchased by private companies. This raises the prices for a basic need for those with their first homes and those on limited incomes. At the state level, we also need to raise the minimum wage and then attach it to inflation. So that everyone in the district can afford basic necessities.

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

Having been in the computer industry for my entire career, there is no need for the number of data centers they are trying to build. It is strictly a giant money grab during another bubble. One that we have seen before like the dot-com bubble and the crypto currency bubble. The environmental needs of the data centers for land, water and power are just too extreme and unsustainable for what this is. So, yes, legislation at the state level working with the counties and local municipalities is needed. At least we have the farm preservation program in place for those farmers who don’t want to sell out to the data centers.

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