AUGUST ADVOCACY REPORT

John Nikoloff
ERG Partners

SUMMER RECESS, FALL ELECTIONS ON HARRISBURG MINDS

The House and Senate have adjourned for the summer and won’t return to Harrisburg until mid-September. With a limited schedule in the fall prior to the November 6 election, Harrisburg focus has been on electoral politics.

Pennsylvania's is a perennial purple state with major urban areas, vast rural areas, pockets of conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans. This year's Nov. 6 general election will see many interesting races in areas where the cities meet the suburbs and rural PA.

US CONGRESS

The state Supreme Court's decision to reapportion the state's Congressional districts has resulted in several closer than normal contests for the state's 18 seats in Congress. Republicans started the year with a 13-5 majority in the delegation, despite Democratic wins statewide, but Democrats have already cut into that majority in 2018. Sn of the districts have vacant seats created by retirements and resignations, the largest number in decades.

The Court’s ruling also resulted in forcing a contest between two sitting Congressmen with Democratic Rep. Conor Lamb and Republican Rep. Keith Rothfus facing off in suburban Pittsburgh. Democrats hope to pick up seats in southeastern Pennsylvania this fall. The state is assured of having at least one Congresswoman next year, with Pearl Kim running against Mary Gay Scanlon in Delaware County’s 5th district. Several other female candidates are running ahead or close in the polls in four other races. Democratic Congressman Mike Doyle of Pittsburgh is the only incumbent running without opposition.

GOVERNOR

The next Governor of Pennsylvania will be from York. Governor Tom Wolf is up for re-election, but joined on the ballot by a new potential Lt. Governor John Fetterman, mayor of Braddock, Allegheny County. He is running against Republican Scott Wagner, who resigned his York County Senate seat to run full time after winning the GOP primary. Wagner, like Wolf before him, is a business man, owner of a solid waste disposal company. We expect to see lots of fireworks in the news media, as Wagner is tenacious and in the mode of President Trump, while Wolf’s staff have maintained a continuing barrage of attacks on Wagner, despite the Governor's lead in the polls.

US SENATE

Congressman Lou Barletta, former Hazleton mayor, is challenging Democratic two-term U.S. Sen. Bob Casey. Casey has become a vocal critic of President Trump, while Barletta is among the president's most reliable defenders – and vice versa. Barletta is currently trailing significantly in polls.
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Republicans hold huge majorities in both chambers -- 121-82 in the House and 34-16 in the Senate. Democrats expect to gain seats, but it's unlikely they will get a majority. The large number of Republican vacancies, especially in the Southeast, Lehigh Valley, and suburban Pittsburgh, could help Democratic chances.

Democrats have candidates in 20 of the 21 open Republican House seats, while the GOP has challengers in just 5 of the 12 Democratic openings. All five Senate vacancies are Republican seats, but at least three of those are expected to remain in GOP control.