



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

2020 Auditor General Questionnaire

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: **Tracie L. Fountain**

Office Sought: **Auditor General**

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature: *Tracie L. Fountain*

Date: February 5, 2020

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to info@phillynn.org

and mail or fax a copy of the signature page to

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I. BACKGROUND – PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

1. **What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?** I have never been elected to a government office.
2. If you have previously held a government office(s), state:
 - a. the name(s) of the office(s) and dates served
 - b. the primary issue areas with which you were involved?
 - c. your main accomplishments
3. **What about your background qualifies you to hold this office, including any civic activity that you may have been involved with over your adult life?** I am a veteran of the Auditor General's office. I have served 29 years in the office and I know about the things that need to be changed for the department to run better. I am also a Certified Public Accountant.
4. **What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?**
 1. Upping the profile of the Auditor General's Department so that Pennsylvanians are aware of the mandated duties and responsibilities of this department and how its work can enhance the lives of Pennsylvanians. As I campaign, I'm learning that while most PA citizens know the elected Auditor Generals by name, they have little to no knowledge as to the actual duties and responsibilities of the office.
 2. Increase the number of department staff. When I started with the Auditor General's Office 29 years ago, we had 850 employees state wide and, as of November 1, 2019, that number had dropped to 392 due to continual legislative budget cuts while still being responsible for conducting 5000 audits annually.
 3. Eliminate the Auditor General's Office's growing audit backlog due to excessive staff shortages.
5. **What is your evaluation of the current Auditor General in the performance of his duties?** I had already served as an audit bureau director for 15 years at the time Eugene took office. Working as a part of his administration has been great because he taught me a different way to think when it comes to the types of audits that can be done-it's not just about subsidy entitlement and compliance with laws and regulations; rather, performance aspects can be added to every audit. While he doesn't talk about this, Eugene also revamped the department's infrastructure-taking us from paper audit reports and supporting working papers to electronic; thus, saving us time and money.
6. **What do you understand the powers of the Auditor General to be, and would you seek to change them in any way?** The Auditor General serves as the fiscal watchdog for Pennsylvania citizens by ensuring that audits are conducted, as mandated by the PA Fiscal Code, to determine whether state funds were used for their intended purposes. The Auditor General's Department is a recommending agency that has no enforcement power; that power comes from the citizens of

PA being so impacted by audit findings and recommendations that they feel compelled to contact their legislatures and demand change. The powers of the Auditor General can only be changed legislatively, but if I could make such a change it would be to give the Auditor General the power to assess penalties for auditees' continued failure to address significant findings. I also believe the Auditor General should be given the authority to audit drug pricing and profit margins of every Prescription Benefit Manager to doing business in PA to increase transparency and that the costs of these audits should be billed to the drug companies, just as the costs of audits of programs affiliated with smoking cessation were billed to the Tobacco Settlement Fund.

- 7. What is your strategy to win this race, including all relevant organizational, financial and grass-roots components?** We are actively seeking out their endorsement by providing them with the education necessary about my candidacy.

II. INTRODUCTION

Although many of the questions below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, please state which way you are leaning and what additional information you would need before deciding, if any.

III. QUESTIONS

- 1. The Auditor General in the past has issued a number of Special Reports (based on audits) that address economic and social issues – e.g., the high cost of prescription drugs in Pa., cost of climate change in Pa.; workforce development. What are the top three issues you would target in audits and Special Reports?** 1. Criminal Justice/Cash Bail System; 2. Follow-up audit on High Costs of Prescription Drugs, including an attempt to detail profit margins of Prescription Benefit Managers; 3. Comparison of Charter Schools and Traditional School Districts Funding and Educational Outcomes.
- 2. What power does the Auditor General have relating to the City of Philadelphia, the School District, and their related entities?** The Auditor General has no power to audit city (local) funds. However the Auditor General is mandated to audit School Districts and Charter Schools.
- 3. Would you be interested in auditing the State Revenue Dept with a focus on the extent to which it maximizes collection of corporate and other taxes that fall on high-income taxpayers?** Yes, I would. FYI-The Auditor General's Department used to perform audits of corporate tax returns but I believe that bureau was disbanded as a result of budget cuts by the legislature.
- 4. Do you believe you would have the power to analyze whether the State, and the City of Philadelphia, maximize the return they get on funds within their control and whether they**

could be enhanced by moving funds into a public bank? The AG office has no authority over City funds; responsibility of Philadelphia City Controller. Re: State funds, these funds are overseen by the State Treasurer. Would you pledge to conduct such a study? Not at this time.

5. **Would you commit to doing a financial or performance audit of the new voting machines in Philadelphia and of the process used to select these machines?** Possibly, it would depend on whether state funds were used to purchase these machines.
6. **Would you commit to a performance audit of the Philadelphia Pension Fund's engagement of private managers to determine if the pension investments further or detract from the City's policies on the environment, reducing poverty, public health, affordable housing, and living wage?** Not at this time, as I believe the authority for the conduct of an audit of this nature would fall under the authority of the Philadelphia City Controller.
7. **Do you believe you have the power to audit the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation and would you do it?** I don't believe so, and if not, I would not.
8. **Would you commit to a performance audit of the Dept of Environmental Resources, specifically regarding its enforcement of fracking regulations?** I would definitely consider.
9. **Would you commit to conducting an audit of the personnel practices of selected State offices to determine if, and the extent to which, personnel practices are conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner?** I would definitely consider.
10. **What role, if any, do you see the Office of Auditor General playing on issues for economic, social and racial justice?** This office can play a very important role in educating all Pennsylvanians on these issues, moving conversations forward, and defining resolutions for appropriate change.
11. **As a general matter, why should it matter to progressives, poor people, people of color and marginalized communities, who wins this office?** It matters because these people want someone on this office who understands and cares about those issues that uniquely and negatively impacts their lives and well-being.
12. **How would you bring more public attention to the results of your audits and reports?** In addition to the use of news conferences, press releases and social media, I'd implement the use of local town halls to present/discuss identified statewide issues.

