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## GOP gubernatorial hopeful Paul Mango talks state budget, health care in Lancaster



SAM JANESCH | Staff Writer Aug 1, 2017



Gubernatorial candidate Paul Mango. Friday, July 28, 2017

DAN MARSCHKA | Staff Photographer

Election Day for the next governor of Pennsylvania may be a distant 15 months away, but the politicking is well underway.

Paul Mango, an Allegheny County businessman and former member of the 82nd Airborne, is running for the Republican nomination and held a pair of fundraisers in Lancaster Friday.

He is one of two Republicans who have said they will seek the nomination for governor in 2018, when Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf will be up for a second term. State Sen. Scott Wagner, of York, is the other, and House Speaker Mike Turzai has said he is considering it.

Mango, a political neophyte who is relatively unknown, sat down with LNP to discuss his campaign.

Here are some takeaways.

## State budget

Mango criticized some of the methods currently in play to finish the state's still-unfunded 2017-18 budget.

Solving the roughly \$2 billion budget hole with solutions related to gambling, alcohol, tax amnesty and borrowing are "unpalatable" and "absolutely not the way to balance the budget," Mango said.

While those options have been developed mostly by Republican legislators, Mango quickly placed the blame of the current situation entirely on the governor's shoulders, saying the fiscal status is due to the state not maximizing its potential in economic growth.

## Health care

Mango said he supports continuing protections for patients with pre-existing conditions and for coverage of "every citizen who is truly vulnerable" who doesn't have the means to pay for it.

While he did not comment specifically on whether he supported any of the various plans that languished in the U.S. Senate in recent days, he said he does support shifting more responsibility for Medicaid coverage to states.

"What I really liked about the initial plan that came out of the House is that it would grant money to the states to take charge of their own Medicaid programs and manage them very differently, much more cost effectively. I would love to be able to do that," he said.

And despite criticisms about the plan to scale back federal funding increases for Medicaid, Mango said Pennsylvania could "make it work."

## Education

The “civil rights issue of our day,” Mango said, is the skills gap between students coming out of educational institutions and the jobs that are available.

He said the state should be experimenting more in different types of education — mentioning one project from his former consulting firm that developed a successful 12-week curriculum based on technical, leadership and interpersonal skills for specific jobs.

“There are many new business models out there to teach kids, electric and otherwise, much faster, much more effectively, much cheaper than what I call the ‘early 20th century bureaucracy of our public school system,” he said, noting that he and his five children went to public schools.

## Pipelines

Mango said he supports pushing forward with the development of natural gas pipelines, which have gathered significant opposition in various parts of the state including in Lancaster County.

Getting Pennsylvania’s supply of natural gas to other markets will increase its value, and it could invigorate manufacturing operations in the state, he said.

“If we’re going to be a first-world economic superpower as the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we can’t be operating off a third-world infrastructure,” he said.

## Lancaster

In his first three to four months of campaigning, Mango said he’s visited Lancaster about a half-dozen times.

A Western Pennsylvania native whose family roots are tied to the northeastern part of the state, he said he hadn’t been in the area much before his campaign. But so far, he likes what he sees.

“I’ve had some wonderful time down at some of your dairy farms. Very, very interesting. I was so impressed with the level of automation, the level of sophistication and the quantity of the output of some of Lancaster’s wonderful, I mean, it’s quite extraordinary.”

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