

The People's Voice, LLC

Ethics Ballot™

3205 B Corporate Court Ellicott City, MD 21042

March 5, 2018

2018 Howard County Candidate Questionnaire

MD General Assembly

Thank you for taking the time to fill out The People's Voice (TPV) / Ethics Ballot 2018 Candidate Questionnaire which will be used in the TPV endorsement process.

Publication: Your answers are considered "on the record." They will be circulated to all members of the TPV Board and may be published on the [TPV website](#).

Endorsement Process: TPV will endorse in several local races for the Primary Election in 2018, and will likely add more races to The Ethics Ballot for the General Election. Click on the "PAC – Ethics Ballot" tab at www.ethicsballot.com, and Star Logo info, for further details on endorsement criteria.

Please return questionnaires via email to ethicsballot@gmail.com by **Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 1:00PM**. Please email any questions you have about this questionnaire. A Board Member will respond.

Candidate Information

Name	Jessica Feldmark
Phone	410-446-1291
Website	www.jessicefeldmark.com
Campaign Account Name	Friends of Jessica Feldmark
Treasurer	Patrick Croushler
Chairman	Jessica Feldmark
Campaign Manager	Jessica Feldmark
Funds Balance	\$6,100

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2018 Questionnaire Howard County – MD Delegate and Senator Candidates

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office?

Public service is my calling. I have spent the last 22 years working in a variety of nonprofit and government roles with a single common focus of strengthening our communities. I believe it is time for me to take my knowledge, experience, and commitment to getting things done to Annapolis. I have extensive experience in government operations and the legislative process, and over the years, I have specialized in taking on complex issues and working through them with multiple stakeholders to reach viable solutions. This has given me a unique understanding of the art of political compromise without compromising on our community's core values.

2. Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

The viability of my campaign is closely tied to my answer above regarding my qualifications and experience. Over the past two decades, I have earned the trust and respect of numerous community members. Over the coming months, I look forward to getting to know many more community members, and I believe I will gain their confidence as well.

3. How do you believe one eliminates the appearance of conflicts regarding campaign contributions?

My decisions as a Delegate will be guided by my principles and my commitment to doing what's best for my community, not by campaign contributions. I realize that these words can sound empty until I have the opportunity to let my actions demonstrate it. Unfortunately, dependence on large campaign contributions has the potential to impair or skew an elected official's judgment of what is best for the community. Even if an elected official is completely successful in guarding against that risk and maintains complete impartiality and sound judgment, the mere appearance of potential conflicts of interest can cause distrust and suspicion among residents. This is why I support public campaign financing and am particularly proud of the work I did to help establish the Citizens' Election Fund system in Howard County.

4. If you are elected, or reelected, what are your top priorities for 2019?

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My top priorities are:

- fully funding education to meet the needs of all students and return Maryland's public schools to the best in the nation;
- increasing economic opportunity so the high quality of life we celebrate is accessible to all Maryland families; and
- protecting Maryland's ecosystems.

5. Do you believe that local Boards of Education in MD should have the right to terminate their Superintendents for cause?

Yes. Maryland's public schools are its most important institutions, and they should be governed by smart, effective, and compassionate people, whether as Superintendents or members of Boards of Education. We also need these institutions to run in consistent, thoughtful ways where the focus is always on the student. When relationships between Boards and Superintendents become untenable, however, we must have options available to get our schools back on the right track. Therefore, I would support giving local Boards more latitude to terminate Superintendents for cause.

6. Would you be willing to sponsor a Bill that elects the Howard County Board of Education members by district, and voted on by district? What districts do you believe are best to use? Why?

Yes, I would support a bill that elects Howard County's Board of Education by councilmanic districts. I support this because, as we have seen, Howard County's school board often lacks geographic diversity and this lack of representation for certain areas has shown to be problematic. I believe that councilmanic districts are best because, as a community, we are familiar with these districts, and that familiarity would help us transition to a new paradigm for electing board members. I would be open to considering districts that better align with school attendance areas, but given the potential for school redistricting, this could prove challenging to implement.

7. Do you believe that local Boards of Education should control their calendars without mandated dates to start or end the school year?

Yes. As we have seen, mandating school start and end dates creates considerable challenges for local Boards of Education in both setting and managing their calendars. In Howard County's case, we have seen this current year's calendar changed multiple times to allow for inclement weather days while still complying with the state mandates. This has created confusion and concern among parents and educators who are looking for predictability. We may see further impacts, particularly around spring break which has been reduced by several days and may turn out to be a time when there are considerable absences of both students and teachers because of pre-arranged travel plans.

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8. Would you be willing to sponsor a Bill that shifts the burden of proof in Special Education litigation from parents/guardians to the County School System?

I have heard extremely concerning stories from parents of children who receive special education services about the challenges they've faced in navigating our education system and ensuring that their children have the supports in place that they need to be successful. No parent should have to endure the obstacles and anguish that I have heard of parents going through. I support measures to make it easier for parents to advocate for their children to ensure that they receive the critical services and programs they need.

9. Do you believe that development fees should be increased in Howard County? Would you be willing to sponsor or vote for a Bill that allows Howard County to increase those fees? Would you be willing to enable Howard County that right in perpetuity? For all, why or why not?

Yes, I believe that new development should cover the costs it imposes on Howard County's public facilities, including schools, roads, and other facilities. I believe Howard County should have the authority to set adequate fees at the local level, and I would support legislation to give the County that authority.

10. Do you support or oppose the Potomac Pipeline? Would you allow the transportation of natural gas through Maryland by pipelines?

I oppose the Potomac Pipeline and am particularly concerned about its proximity to and potential impact on sensitive natural resources, as well as the drinking water supply for millions of residents of our region. Maryland already has numerous natural gas pipelines, but I do not believe we should be adding more. We must shift our focus to clean and renewable energy sources.

11. Do you support the ban on styrofoam in carryout packaging? Would you sponsor or support a ban or a fee on plastic grocery bags?

I have long been a champion of sustainability efforts, and I believe bans on Styrofoam and plastic grocery bags would significantly benefit our local and global environments. I recognize, however, that such bans may result in increased prices for customers, and with many Maryland residents living near or below the poverty line, we must ensure that our efforts to build a more sustainable world are balanced with measures to prevent negative impacts on our most vulnerable residents.

12. What is your position on increased gun control? How would you go about increasing safety for our schools and/or other public venues?

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I support increased gun control, and I believe the current public discourse on how to increase safety at schools and other public venues should remain focused on gun control. Of course we need to make our schools safe, and we also need our malls, movie theaters, coffee shops, bus stops, parks, hospitals, and everywhere in our community to be safe. None of these places will be safe until we do a better job of restricting access to guns, particularly high-powered assault rifles. Shifting the conversation away from gun control toward security measures is a strategic diversionary tactic. We should not fall for it.

13. Describe positions you have taken, or votes you have made, or causes you have championed, which you feel are the most important. Include information on any position or vote you regret, or about which you feel differently.

I have been directly involved in a number of initiatives and accomplishments through my positions in County Government; however, I would like to highlight here a few examples of issues I have worked on through my personal volunteer activities:

- Bridges Over Wilde Lake – As a Wilde Lake Village Board member, I served as the Board’s liaison to the public schools located within Wilde Lake, which led to my participation in the Bridges Over Wilde Lake program. I believe broad community engagement in our schools to support and supplement academics is critical to the success of our students. I support the community schools model and would like to see it expanded.
- Neighbor Ride – I am particularly proud of the work I did as a founding board member of Neighbor Ride, a nonprofit organization that utilizes volunteer drivers to provide transportation for seniors. Neighbor Ride is a strong example of leveraging limited public investment through a powerful multiplier model of community volunteers. (This multiplier model of volunteer impact was also the basis of my work as an AmeriCorps member and staff member at Volunteer Maryland.)
- Reproductive Freedom – This is an issue to which I have dedicated activism and advocacy efforts for many years. My first electoral activity in Maryland was as a college student volunteering in support of Question 6 in 1992. I have volunteered as a clinic escort and served as a board member of NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland. This continues to be a critical issue in terms of healthcare access and economic security.

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14. Choose from topics below on womens' rights and describe your positions, especially regarding any MD law you believe needs changing.

Employment (wage disparities, family leave)

Safety (human trafficking, domestic abuse)

Reproductive health

Reproductive health

Reproductive healthcare is exactly that – healthcare. As such, it is fundamental to and inseparable from women's overall health and well-being. Despite the fact that Maryland affirmatively codified a woman's right to choose over 25 years ago, every year anti-choice legislators introduce bills attempting to limit women's access to healthcare. In addition to standing firm on protecting women's existing rights, I would also support legislative initiatives to advance reproductive freedom such as increasing access to emergency contraception, promoting paid family leave, and protecting the rights of pregnant or parenting students to ensure that their choice to have a child does not jeopardize their ability to continue their education.

15. How would you improve community living opportunities for people with disabilities?

Education, employment, and affordable housing are all areas where significant improvements for individuals with disabilities are needed, and one important issue which ties into each of these areas is transportation. While we have made considerable strides over the last decade, we need better public transportation options for all residents, and especially those for whom access can be difficult. A public transportation system which is still predominantly based on one-hour headways is simply not passenger friendly. We must commit meaningful and consistent financial support to create a public transportation system that will be seen as truly connecting opportunities rather than as a last resort option.

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16. How much time do you believe should pass before it is allowed, in Ethics Regulations, before a prior elected official can be compensated by a private company that could have benefited from the decisions of that official?

I appreciate the intent of this question, and assuming I understand the intent accurately, I believe a minimum of two years should be required; however, I wonder if the wording of the question (“could have benefited from the decisions of that official”) may be overly broad. Consider a governor leaving office...any business or institution within the state could have benefited from the decisions of that official. I definitely agree with the basic concept, but I wonder if there should be a more specific threshold to activate the prohibition.

17. Have you ever testified before the MD General Assembly? If so, describe positions you have taken.

I have not.

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By Authority, The People's Voice PAC, Lisa Markovitz, Treasurer