

State Representative District 12	Name	Democratic
Candidate's Full Name	Robert Bahnsen	
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1. What motivates you to seek this position? And what makes you believe you are the “Best” candidate for this position?

I am an emergency room psychiatrist who cares for Delaware’s most vulnerable. I have seen the effects of poor policy on the lives of my neighbors. I have seen how inaction hurts families and leads to increased rates of suicide and addiction. I took an oath when I became a physician to protect our community, and I am running for office to fulfill that oath.

I am the only person in this race who takes no corporate or PAC money, and I am running an entirely grassroots campaign focused on improving healthcare access and outcomes and fixing our public schools. I would also be the only physician in elected office in Delaware, and I would bring that experience and pragmatism directly to advocate for you in Dover. In my role as a physician, I built world-class, award-winning psychiatric teams from the ground-up that now span multiple hospitals. In my role as a physician educator, I’ve trained dozens of physicians who are now raising their families in Delaware while serving our people.

Establishment politicians want to preserve the status quo, but that just isn’t working for us anymore. It’s time to elect new people. It’s time for a change.

2. If elected, what are your top three (3) legislative priorities that you look to address (either change, fix, or implement) for the coming year and the following year? For each of the priorities you identified, please explain

- **What outcome would you look to achieve?**
- **How do you think it is going to help and positively impact the residents in Brandywine Hundred?**
- **Identify the biggest hurdle you expect to face for each of the priorities and expand on how you plan to overcome it.**

First, I want to focus on healthcare costs, access, and outcomes. We are the fourth most expensive state in the nation for acute hospital care, and we are spending over \$1.4 billion

on Medicaid alone. In the face of Trump's Medicaid cuts, we are about to face a \$400 million deficit that will cause your property taxes to soar and the cost of living to be even more impossible to manage. It's too hard to find a good doctor, and many of us go out of state to find healthcare. Many elements of our healthcare system, especially mental healthcare, are outdated and crumbling, leading to poor outcomes across the board.

I want to bring policy proposals that make healthcare delivery more efficient and invest broadly in medical education to improve access and outcomes. In my first term, I plan to hold psychiatric hospitals accountable for refusing to treat patients because they lack insurance, are homeless, or are "too sick". When we do this, we will stop wasting so much money holding people in emergency rooms and hospital beds and get people the care they need faster. I want to rein in pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to reduce prescription drug costs. I will support the development of the medical school in Delaware as a vehicle to bring high-income earners into our state, train more physicians, improve scholarly activity and the quality of Delaware medical research, and improve access.

Second, I want to focus on fixing our public schools. Our children deserve to go on a safe bus, to a safe school, to be taught by teachers paid well enough to be passionate about their work. The quality of your child's education shouldn't depend on your zip code or your ability to afford a private school.

Fixing our schools is a complicated process and a generational fight. There is no quick fix. I believe it starts with better funding mechanisms and ensuring our teachers are empowered to do their jobs without negative pressure from administrators. I believe it involves progressive economic policies that put money back in your pocket so you have time to be part of building the culture of your child's school. I think it involves fighting for universal pre-K so we can begin our children's social, emotional, and intellectual development early. I also think it involves funding community centers so that children from impoverished backgrounds have a place to go after school to continue their learning and development in a positive way.

This isn't just the right thing to do for our kids; it is the right thing to do to bring Delaware industry back. Throughout this campaign, I have knocked on tens of thousands of doors. I've heard from many parents who plan to leave Delaware as soon as their child turns five years old. They cannot afford to stay here. As young families leave, so do their tax revenues and skilled labor. Without that, Delaware business is dead in the water. And we see it now - we've lost almost every industry in Delaware because of a lack of leadership and a lack of direct investment in our people. We need change.

Third, I believe we need Democrats to stop working for their corporate donors and start working for the people who elect them to office. I will fight to put money back in your pocket, and get money out of politics. The cost of living is absurd. Our electricity bills are through the roof - and current politicians are taking money from the corporations that want to keep it that way. Our property taxes have risen multiple times in the last few years, and that's because our leaders have not been investing in the infrastructure that keeps families and businesses here in Delaware. I plan to hold these corporations accountable for their part in rising income inequality that affects our families directly.

The biggest hurdles to these three priorities - healthcare, education, economic opportunity - are the same they've always been. We have to fight the money with the many. There are many already in Dover who want to do the right thing but feel they cannot. They feel that corporations and their donors will ruin their careers if they do the right thing - and they are afraid. I am not afraid. I was raised to fight for what's right and speak truth to power.

We also need to elect progressives who know how to get things done. I've been forged in the political fires of the largest hospital system in Delaware, and I've already established the relationships I will need in Dover to get legislation passed. I'm ready on day one.

3. How do you intend to be transparent in your decision-making and keep residents informed before major votes?

I am running this race to be your voice in Dover - and in order to do that well, I need to hear your voice. I will attend all civic association meetings and host town halls every month throughout our neighborhoods. I will also be using social media and email to solicit feedback and reach out directly to constituents. I warmly invite my neighbors to join me in the political process and make themselves heard - and I will always be listening.

4. What is your position on "Sustainability" when addressing its three main pillars, and how will you address them legislatively? Please provide short-term and long-term initiatives for each of the pillars:

- **environmental** (conserving natural resources, fighting climate change, and reducing waste so ecosystems can recover)
- **economic** (supporting resilient, long-term financial growth and jobs without relying on destructive practices)

- [social](#) (ensuring fairness, equal opportunities, and healthy communities for everyone).

Environmental

A sustainable community is a healthy community. We have an obligation to our neighbors and to future generations to leave this world better than we found it - and an obligation to position Delaware for economic growth.

I am against the development of hyperscale data centers because they use millions of gallons of our fresh drinking water and massive amounts of electricity that Delaware cannot produce itself. The backup generators required for them will require diesel fuel that will poison our air.

We need to build out battery-electric storage on our grid system, move forward with our plans for offshore wind projects (before Trump stopped them), and develop a robust agrivoltaics program where we couple the use of solar panels and agriculture on the same land.

We need to prioritize business and housing development in areas that can be upgraded or repurposed, instead of paving over open green spaces.

Economic

Delaware has traditionally relied on and invested in banking and chemical industries, but those companies have been shrinking over the last 15 years. The landscape is changing.

For Delaware to thrive, we must focus on attracting business here and keeping it here. To do that, we need vision. We should be asking ourselves what the next big thing will be, and start positioning Delaware to take advantage of the opportunity.

Climate change is the existential crisis of our time. We talk about capitalism and innovation - solving how we can live on this earth without destroying it is the ultimate business problem. I think Delaware should position itself to tackle this problem directly.

Why? We rely on one pipeline to deliver energy to our entire state. Energy costs are going up, and we need to diversify. We're a small, solidly blue state that understands the threat of climate change. And because of our historical expertise in the chemical industries, we already have the expertise and infrastructure already to bring new business that relies on sustainable innovation.

What does it look like? First of all, it would look like funding research, particularly after the federal funding cuts. This doesn't have to be only Delaware - it could be a collaborative effort across states, a pact to share research and work together toward this greater goal. The research is key, because none of this can happen without the science.

Secondly, it looks like investing in early-stage start-ups that are working on these problems: clean tech, carbon capture, bio-based alternatives to chemicals, water recovery, water purification, hydrogen fuel cells, and battery technology. Connecting scientists to capital, lab space, and consulting to help them scale and grow.

Aspects of this are already happening in Delaware - the Innovation Space is a great example of this (and it's in District 12, near Alapocas). We already have some funding sources such as the Early Growth Grant and the Delaware Prosperity Partnership.

What else does it look like? We can get good-paying jobs by investing in high-speed rail. We are one of the only states that does not have a robust rail system. Connecting Wilmington to the rest of the state will increase our economic prosperity and benefit the environment.

Neighboring states have launched their own version of a state Climate Corps, and we should be doing so, too. In fact, in 2023, President Biden launched the American Climate Corps (ACC) initiative, which aimed to train young people in high-demand skills for jobs in the clean energy economy. Let's bring that to Delaware.

For far too long, Delaware has been known as a corporate state. A chemical state. We can - and should - be so much more.

Social

This is at the core of my platform. When healthy communities have what they need to thrive, we are free to fight together for what is important. People need access to quality and affordable healthcare, safe schools, and the ability to participate meaningfully in our economy. Delaware lags behind the rest of the nation in all of these areas.

I will head to Dover with a clear vision in mind - everyone has the right to participate meaningfully in our society, contribute to our culture, and participate in our economy. Anything less is unacceptable.

5. Will you ensure that there is legislation that requires comprehensive “Traffic studies” to be conducted by WILMAPCO & DELDOT to control and prevent the overuse/crowding of major secondary road traffic when residential and business developments are approved by New Castle County? Please elaborate.

Yes. A great example of where this is failing currently is the proposed Dash-In near Westhaven. The increased traffic in this area is dangerous to the children from Wilmington Charter/Cab Calloway who run on that road during gym class. This is a serious safety issue for our children. This project should not proceed until we complete the sidewalk project.

Another example of poor traffic planning is the proposed development on Bancroft Parkway. It's ridiculous to build something so tall and out of character with the rest of the neighborhood - and then propose reversing traffic on the Parkway as a potential solution. We need to make sure that development fits the character of our neighborhoods and that the infrastructure is there to support it.

I will maintain excellent working relationships with our County and City Councilmembers to make sure traffic issues are properly addressed. We shouldn't be against development - but it has to add to our communities, and it has to be done correctly.

6. **“Affordable Housing” is one of the key needs in the Brandywine Hundred for newcomers, young families, and senior citizens who want to downsize, and/or cannot afford to buy or provide the needed upkeep of the currently available houses. This means affordable apartment buildings need to be developed, either through new construction or by converting old office buildings into apartments. This also requires public transportation with new routes and/or increasing the frequency of existing routes from apartment buildings to key locations. Given the current 2027 budget cuts to DelDOT, how do you plan to meet residents' needs when you start your new term in office?**

DelDOT funding increased this year, from \$213 million to \$273 million. The important aspect is where the money is going. Increases went to grants and allocations (funding projects like rebuilding train stations), roads (paving, sidewalks, and potholes), and support systems (maintenance, facilities, information technology, and equipment).

Public transit is only a small part of the DelDOT budget, and even that was reduced from 5.1 million to 1.5 million.

As we continue building affordable housing, we need to continue investing in infrastructure. This includes public transportation, which is efficient and environmentally friendly. I want to make sure that our roads do not become congested or dangerous.

7. **What legislation will you propose and champion to control the development of the data centers and their energy use without taxing and increasing the power costs of the residents?**

I strongly oppose the development of hyperscale data centers in Delaware. They increase our energy bills, and they destroy our environment. They provide no useful benefit to society at large, except to make a billionaire richer. Further, these computers are being

used to train AI models to replace the white-collar jobs (such as doctors, lawyers, and engineers) that make up a substantial portion of jobs in District 12.

We've already passed HB233 and HB445 which require data centers to bring their own clean energy generation and pay for necessary infrastructure upgrades. SB 312 banned state agencies from entering into NDAs with data center companies. SB 276 allows the Delaware Electrical Cooperative to legally reject electricity requests from hyperscale data centers. We've done a lot already, and we need to do more.

You can expect me to fight for the following:

- A moratorium on hyperscale data centers.
- Studies that examine the environmental impact of data centers, including water use.
- Creation of a sovereign wealth fund, where a portion of revenues from data centers goes into the pockets of Delaware families. This would be difficult to achieve, but not impossible, because Delaware requires a 3/5ths supermajority in the General Assembly for a new tax or an increase in taxes.
- Require that data center companies hold liability insurance for when we find out that these data centers cause major health issues down the line. We could also create a health fund that companies pay into, to ensure the money is there down the line.

8. Just recently, at the end of the 2026 Legislative Session, the state agreed to pitch in an additional \$110 million to help cover a \$189 million shortfall in the Edgemoor container terminal construction (ballooned from originally estimated \$415 million to \$669 million)

- **When the state's budget is already reduced, how will taxpayers be affected?**
- **Please explain what you will do to protect and maintain the existing services?**
- **How do you plan to communicate your legislative efforts transparently so that the services are not eliminated without taxpayers' knowledge and consent?**

Delaware is approaching a \$400 million deficit by 2028 because of a combination of ineffective leadership from our representatives, a lack of bold vision and investment in a diverse economy, and the effects of Medicaid cuts from the Trump administration. Further unnecessary spending will only make it worse. Unfortunately, without swift action and new leadership we risk continued increases to property taxes, which will only make Delaware that much more unaffordable.

Protecting and maintaining services will require that we find new sources of revenue, and I believe that involves investing directly in people. When you invest in people - and they have what they need to thrive - then people tend to move here. With them comes tax revenue and a stronger, more reliable workforce that attracts Delaware industry. And with more industry, comes a more diversified and resilient economy.

I want to invest in businesses of the future. Battery technology, alternative fuel technologies, and pharmaceutical and biotech industries will be key areas of growth, especially in the era of climate change.

I plan to hold frequent coffee talks and town halls in all of the neighborhoods of District 12 and attend community meetings. I will also plan to send a monthly email directly to our neighbors and use social media to provide and solicit feedback. And this will happen year-round - not just during an election year.

9. DNREC listed Shellpot Creek as NOT SAFE for swimming or primary contact recreation. Shellpot Creek flows through a highly urbanized and suburban area in New Castle County (15-square-mile watershed). It is officially impaired by high levels of bacteria and nutrients from urban and storm-drain runoff, and by elevated concentrations of toxic PFAS "forever chemicals" in the watershed. However, DNREC still allows siphoning or the withdrawal of water from Shellpot. Controlling what is dumped into Shellpot Creek relies on both regulatory limits and community practices.

- Could you please explain how you ensure that DNREC monitors the Shellpot Creek regularly and meets the requirements as identified in their regulations?**
- How do you control and monitor what is being dumped into the Shellpot Creek?**
- How often is Shellpot Creek monitored for safety?**
- Will you commit to notifying all neighborhood communities under your jurisdiction about the DNREC findings, and to sharing the report DNREC generates, so children and pets are protected from health hazards?**
- Will you put this information regularly in your newsletters to your constituents?**

A: It's important to discuss what those regulations are, and who is responsible for ensuring their completion. Shellpot Creek is monitored by the Watershed Assessment and Management Section of DNREC's Division of Watershed Stewardship. CCOBH oversees 128 communities, and Shellpot Creek goes through many of them. There have been

longstanding issues with flooding and water quality with Shellpot Creek, and concern amongst the community that these issues are not being addressed by their representatives.

Shellpot Creek is monitored in accordance with the Surface Water Monitoring Plan, which is posted annually. There are three monitoring stations along Shellpot Creek. A report of data from these stations is published every two years, per the Federal Clean Water Act.

Part of my job as your State Representative will be to ensure that District 12 continues to be appropriately monitored, which involves maintaining active relationships with those assigned to these tasks.

B: There have been reports of white vans dumping trash bags and other hazardous waste into Shellpot Creek, as well as reports of people siphoning water out of the Creek. A cleanup in 2025 has not solved the problem, because there is no active monitoring beyond a neighborhood watch.

C: Shellpot Creek is monitored by three data-collecting stations. One of those stations, called “C1”, is collocated with USGS flow gauges and can give us detailed information on pollutant loading. This is monitored monthly, with an aggregated report released every two years. The remaining two stations, both called “C2,” give a snapshot of pollutant concentrations at a moment in time. This is monitored every other month, with a report made public every two years.

D: Yes.

E: Yes.

10. Every year, many women experience serious health complications from pregnancy and childbirth in Delaware. Delaware ranks #1 in the nation for hospital maternity practices according to the Delaware Health Association; however, it struggles with maternal mental health and specific birth outcomes. The state has a preterm birth rate of 10.6% and is ranking 30th nationwide. It ranks 15th in maternal mortality and access.

- **What are you going to do to ensure that all mothers have access to the desired healthcare and healthcare providers, and provide them with**

services so they can get proper prenatal and baby care education, nutritional services, so every mother and child in Delaware is equipped to start a healthy life?

- **Please explain the type of legislation you will introduce in 2027 and beyond.**

This matter is incredibly important to me. If I win, I would be the only elected physician in Delaware, and the only elected psychiatrist in the United States. Peripartum and postpartum work is common in my practice, and I have seen first-hand what happens to mothers and families when there is a lack of proper funding and resources.

You can expect me to be a solid vote to improve maternal health initiatives. Not only is it the right thing to do - but we will end up spending more money addressing these issues if they continue to be ignored and become serious problems. Getting it right for our mothers ensures that every child in Delaware starts life on the right footing, which can have lasting impacts for their health, well-being, and contributions to society for the rest of their lives.

The first thing I want to do is elevate the position of the Delaware Healthy Mother & Infant Consortium as a resource for the General Assembly to guide proper legislation. Good legislation requires frequent and quality data - and I am not satisfied with the current data output regarding prenatal, perinatal and postpartum physical and mental health. We should not be working on this issue blind.

Thank you very much for completing the CCOBH 2026 Primary and General Election Survey.

If you would like to provide additional comments, please use the space below.