

Voters Guide Commissioner of Agriculture November 8, 2016 General Election

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Candidates for Commissioner of Agriculture

Office Commissioner of Agriculture

Name Buddy Guthrie

County of Residence Monongalia

Party Libertarian

Biography

With an undergraduate degree in business administration and a master's degree in software engineering, both from West Virginia University, a background in family farming as well as experience in fields, ranging from construction and event staffing to fitness instruction. HAN avid community activist, and volunteer for Boys & Girls Clubs and for programs bringing inner-city kids to the country for outdoor

1. What do you see as the role of Commissioner of Agriculture in spurring the economic growth of agriculture?

The commissioners role is simple, to be an advocate and protector of rights for farmers and consumers in the state to exchange goods. There are way to many roadblocks that exist in our current system that bog down and burden current farmers, and that deter potential agricultural entrepreneurs from entering the market. The commissioners role should be to fight tooth

2. Do you feel that the environmental impact of agriculture has been properly addressed? If not, what changes would you favor?

Environmental impact of agriculture is a big deal, and needs to be addressed. When addressing this however, we need to tread lightly on our approach, and make sure that it allows leeway for innovative concepts so that our agri-preneurs can come up with solutions. Generally speaking a small scale farmer's cows burps and or beef or hogs manure finding its

Office Commissioner of Agriculture

Name Walt Helmick

County of Residence Pocahontas

Party Democrat

Biography

Graduate of WV Tech; OU Economic Development Institute, and Mendenhall School of Auctioneering. Teacher and businessman. Elected to Pocahontas County Board of Education, Pocahontas County Commission, House of Delegates, and State Senate for six terms (Senate Finance Chairman for 8 years). Walt launched a family agricultural operation on his 200-acre Pocahontas County farm. Elected Commissioner of Agriculture in 2012.

1. What do you see as the role of Commissioner of Agriculture in spurring the economic growth of agriculture?

WV consumes over \$7 billion worth of food each year, yet grows less than \$1 billion. This is a \$6 billion economic opportunity. The Commissioner must provide leadership, guidance and assistance, in the form of technical, distribution, marketing and sales support to help those entrepreneur farmers throughout West Virginia that want to take advantage of this growth opportunity.

2. Do you feel that the environmental impact of agriculture has been properly addressed? If not, what changes would you favor?

With the highest percentage of family farms in the US, WV family farmers are the most knowledgeable and environmentally responsible farmers anywhere. My Department works closely with WV family farmers, the WVU extension service and other organizations, to continually monitor, develop and implement best environmental practices for the benefit of both farmers and the general public.

Office Commissioner of Agriculture

Name Kent Leonhardt

County of Residence Monongalia

Party Republican

Biography

I hold degrees in Wildlife Management, and Business management, and graduated from the Defense Intelligence College, the Defense Language Institute, and the USMC Command and Staff College. I retired from the USMC with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

My wife and I restored an abandoned WV Farm in Monongalia County. We raise cattle, Sheep, and goats. Currently State Senator www.kentforwv.com

1. What do you see as the role of Commissioner of Agriculture in spurring the economic growth of agriculture?

The WVDA should provide farmers with assistance in marketing, and developing markets in and out of state. We must not repeat the traditional crops of the past that have declined, but look for new opportunities in specialty crops and meats. The department should not be experimenting with taxpayer dollars and running aggregation centers that could be done by private industry.

2. Do you feel that the environmental impact of agriculture has been properly addressed? If not, what changes would you favor?

Recent reporting has revealed that the waters of WV streams are improving through voluntary practices made available through the USDA. My concern is the duplication of effort between state agencies. Recently the WVDA opened a soil nutrient testing lab in competition with WVU Extension. Those funds could have been better used for water testing to pin point pollution entry points.