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CRITICAL CAMPAIGN



Political signage sits at the corner of North Centre Street and Nichols Street in Pottsville, Monday, Oct. 27, 2025. MATTHEW PERSCHALL — MULTIMEDIA EDITOR

Hard-fought election to decide Pottsville’s leadership and future on Nov. 4

By Ron Devlin  
RDEVLIN@REPUBLICANHERALD.COM

POTTSTVILLE — A slate of Republicans drawing support from downtown businesses has mounted an aggressive campaign to capture one of the few remaining Democratic strongholds in Schuylkill County.

Waged with intensity in meet-and-greet rallies and on social media, the campaign pits three political newcomers against three veteran office holders.

The Republican candidates, experienced business officials who have yet to hold public office, are: Tom Smith running for mayor, and Jon Marsh and Scott Price seeking positions on city council.

The Democratic candidates are: Andy

Wollyung for mayor, and Tom Wood and Mike Weres for city council. Wollyung and Wood are current members of city council and Weres is city controller.

The campaign played out against a backdrop of change in city leadership.

The late Mayor Dave Clews, a Republican, stepped down for health reasons in October 2024. He was replaced by councilman Mark Atkinson, a Democrat, who resigned citing health reasons in May. Since then, Councilman William Messaros, a Democrat, has been acting mayor.

In Pottsville, a third class city of about 13,000 residents, the mayor is a voting member with four council members.

Republicans hold a slight edge over Democrats in voter registration, 3,438 to 3,276, according to the Schuylkill

County Election Bureau. An additional 1,437 people are registered as independents or “third party” members.

**THE CAMPAIGN**

A spirited campaign, waged largely on social media, exposed a rift between the city and some downtown businesses.

Republicans have held meet-and-greet rallies in center city businesses weekly since early September.

The venues included businesses associated with Bobby Weaver, who waged a lengthy court battle with the city during the 20-month closing of Black Rock Brewpub on code enforcement issues in 2023 and 2024. The pub reopened in January.

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SNAP BENEFITS CUTOFF

Shapiro  
makes \$5M  
available  
to state  
food banks

Federal judges have ordered Trump administration to fund SNAP

BY MEDIANEWS GROUP

Gov. Josh Shapiro made \$5 million available for Pennsylvania food banks on Friday through Feeding Pennsylvania as the federally subsidized Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program was set to dry up.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture planned to freeze payments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program on Saturday because it said it could no longer keep funding it due to the federal government shutdown.

Meanwhile, two federal judges ruled nearly simultaneously on Friday that the Trump administration must continue to fund SNAP, the nation’s biggest food aid program, during the shutdown through contingency funds.

The program serves about 1 in 8 Americans and is a major piece of the nation’s social safety net. Word in October that it would be a Nov. 1 casualty of the shutdown sent states, food banks and SNAP recipients scrambling to figure out how to secure food. Some states said they would spend their own funds to keep versions of the program going.

It wasn’t immediately clear how quickly the debit cards that beneficiaries use to buy groceries could be reloaded after the ruling.

That process often takes one to two weeks. It remained unclear Friday night whether the administration would appeal the rulings from the federal judges or acquiesce.

The president did suggest on social media that the government would comply with court rulings to pay for food aid during the government shutdown but said more clarity is needed first.

“Even if we get immediate guidance, it will unfortunately be delayed while States get the money out,” Trump said. Federal funds for the program are expected to be frozen starting Saturday.

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Uncertainty over federal food aid deepens as fight reaches a crisis point

By Stephen Groves and Ali Swenson  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The crises at the heart of the government shutdown fight in Washington were coming to a head Saturday as the federal food assistance program faced delays and millions of Amer-

icans were set to see a dramatic rise in their health insurance bills.

The impacts on basic needs — food and medical care — underscored how the impasse is hitting homes across the United States. The Trump administration’s plans to freeze payments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program on Saturday were halted by federal

judges, but the delay in payouts will still likely leave millions of people short on their grocery bills.

It all added to the strain on the country, with a month of missed paychecks for federal workers and growing air travel delays. The shutdown is already the second longest in history and entered its second month on Saturday, yet there was

little urgency in Washington to end it, with lawmakers away from Capitol Hill and both parties entrenched in their positions.

The House has not met for legislative business in more than six weeks, while Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., closed his chamber for the weekend after bipartisan talks failed to achieve

significant progress.

Thune said he is hoping “the pressure starts to intensify, and the consequences of keeping the government shut down become even more real for everybody that they will express, hopefully new interest in trying to come up with

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