

GAN asks County Executive candidates about positions on campaign funding



Responses were requested on a 10 question survey.

THE GROWTH ACTION NETWORK has asked the five candidates running for County Executive to complete a survey of their positions on topics important to Anne Arundel voters. The full survey questions and answers can be viewed at [this link](#) and will be published in the print and e-news editions of the Capital Gazette on Sunday, May 24 and on their website thereafter.

These questions have been stimulated by comments from our GAN members, our ongoing conversations with the County Council and County Executive, and the results of the [Spring 2026 survey](#) of Anne Arundel County residents by the Center for Study of Local Issues at AACC.

This is the second in a series of newsletters we will publish over the next few weeks to inform voters who the candidates are and to allow side-by-side comparisons of their positions.

Question 2:

The County Council rejected Bill 23-26 which would have banned developers with business before the county from making campaign contributions. What is your position and why? Would you sign such a bill if the Council passed it?

Question 2 responses:

The following four candidates, listed alphabetically, are running in the Democratic primary:

James Kitchin

Bill 23-26, which would have banned developers from contributing to elected officials and candidates while they have work/legislation before the county, should have passed by a unanimous vote. It is a commonsense way to infuse more trust and transparency into the process and has proven to work in other jurisdictions. In the face of unanimous public testimony in support of this bill, a bipartisan majority of the County Council voted it down

without any discussion whatsoever. And to be very clear, an amendment clarifying that this bill would not have changed anything for this election cycle was also defeated.

This bill was not about any one campaign, it was about making our politics work for people instead of corporate interests. Any reasons given now for the way this was handled is too little, too late. My opponents who sit on the council could have explained their votes at the County Council meeting when this bill was heard, but they declined to do so. If there were technical, policy-driven issues they had with the legislation then they could have addressed that through the amendment process, but instead they decided to quietly kill the legislation. It would have been very simple for them to vote for this bill, and had they done so the Democratic Party would have had a unifying issue to campaign on in the fall. But they didn't, and if our party isn't in unison on how we want big money to interact with our political system then a primary is exactly the time to have this policy discussion. I know what I want the future of our party to look like.

Yes, absolutely. I'd also send a bill down to the County Council to implement this change within my first 100 days in office. We need development to continue in this county - but in a way that works for our residents and our communities. To quote Barack Obama when discussing healthcare reform and the health insurance and pharmaceutical lobbies: "they [developers in this case] can have a seat at the table, they just can't buy all the seats." My administration will get this done.

Kyle Nembhard

There was no excuse for voting against the Bill and only re-affirms my participation in this election. I testified in support of the Bill.

Absolutely.

Allison Pickard

Bill 23-26 was rejected by a supermajority of the Council, which underscores the concern about the lack of engagement in its development. There was no collaboration with Councilmembers or the Ethics Commission, and no effort to build consensus on the correct way to craft the policy. The current County administration has had this legislation on hold for years, choosing not to bring it forward because it did not believe the bill as drafted was sufficient. Nothing about the legislation changed in the last month.

I support ethics reform, as evidenced by my vote to create the new Public Finance program that passed in 2023 and my vote to uphold full funding of the program in last year's budget cycle. I have also championed legislation to hold developers accountable for building affordable units, making infrastructure investments, and enforcing environmental protections. Because I take Ethics reform seriously, I believe our approach must be Anne Arundel County focused, not copy and pasted legislation from another County that has since repealed their version of this bill, and that a thoughtful, inclusive, and collaborative process will actually deliver on the goal we set out to achieve, which will do far more to maintain the public trust than a haphazard bill that falls short of its promised outcomes. The timing of this effort was clearly about political gamesmanship to help one candidate in a competitive primary. I look forward to working with colleagues on serious and equitable reform efforts.

Yes. I would support and sign legislation that meaningfully reforms campaign contributions from all special interest groups that have business before the county.

Pete Smith

I support a prohibition on campaign contributions for local offices from individuals who are connected to pending zoning and development applications, and enhanced disclosure rules. I support the concepts in Bill 23-26 and will sponsor a re-introduction. I have always

stood for and promoted transparency and the highest ethics on all issues, including campaign finance. Because some provisions in Bill 23-26 didn't make sense, and because the timing of the legislation made it clear that it was introduced to help one particular candidate in the race for county executive, I was forced to vote against it.

I also want to make clear: I fully support public financing of campaigns. In fact, we have it in Anne Arundel County because I voted for it. I believe we need to reduce the role of money in politics, and I believe that demonstrating support from a large number of small donors is a great threshold for any candidate to aim for.

Absolutely. I would sign it.

Dave Crawford – Running unopposed in the Republican Primary

I support banning campaign contributions from developers with active business before the County. The perception of pay-to-play politics — whether or not quid pro quo exists — corrodes public trust and discourages citizen engagement. Anne Arundel voters deserve to know that land-use decisions are made on merit, not on the size of a developer's check.

Yes — I would sign such a bill without hesitation. In fact, I will advocate for its passage as a top ethics priority in my first year. Good governance requires that elected officials be, and be seen to be, free from conflicts of interest. Closing this loophole is a commonsense reform that GAN members, neighborhood associations, and citizens across the political spectrum can rally behind.

Next GAN Board meeting is May 27, All members are welcome to observe and comment. See calendar for link.

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