

Jim Petro

CAMPAIGN ISSUES:

Reorganization of state government

Petro has proposed a complete reorganization to streamline state government and save money. His plan includes consolidating government services from 23 cabinets to nine key areas and eliminating more than 11,000 employees – mostly through attrition and early retirements.

He projects the plan would save about \$1 billion annually in salaries.

A component of his reorganization also focuses on reform of Medicaid, the federal-state system that pays for medical care for the poor and elderly. Petro estimates his changes could save \$1.2 billion.

Tax reform

Petro also advocates tax reform to make Ohio's personal income tax more competitive with neighboring states'. The tax rate is currently 5.9 percent, while all neighboring states have rates ranging from 2.9 percent to 3.9 percent.

He also has called for the immediate elimination of the corporate franchise tax and the tangible personal property taxes, rather than their current protracted phase-outs.

State university system

Petro has proposed the creation of a statewide university system that would shift governance of Ohio's 13 state universities, their 24 branch campuses and 23 community and technical colleges from individual boards of trustees to two state boards of regents – one for two-year programs and another for four-year universities.

By coordinating state schools under one system, Petro believes each could focus on its best programs – creating centers of excellence in areas of study – while eliminating duplication of majors so that state schools aren't competing against each other for students.

He also advocates the creation of more community colleges across the state, and a system in which some universities with large endowments could opt out of the state system and become charter universities.

Lowering college tuition

With the savings Petro expects the state to realize from his government reorganization and Medicaid reform, Petro wants to allocate \$540 million annually to the state's public universities to buy down tuition costs and make college more affordable for students.

The move is aimed at bringing Ohio's public school tuition more in line with other states'. Petro says tuition at state schools is 45 percent to 50 percent higher in Ohio than in neighboring states.

Creation of the Ohio Economic Development Corp.

Petro wants to convert the Ohio Department of Development into a private, nonprofit development corporation. He believes a private corporation with a dedicated source of funding would ensure that economic development is not tied to state budget cycles or political whims.

Opposing the Tax and Expenditure Limitation Amendment

Petro is adamant that the TEL, which seeks to limit growth of government spending, would be devastating to Ohio and local governments because of the constraints it would put on spending. He contends the amendment is, at best, so poorly drafted that it would make it virtually impossible for local schools or governments to pass needed levies or save money for future spending.

Petro predicts that if the TEL is adopted, the state and local governments will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees dealing with lawsuits that result from challenges to spending.

He has proposed the Citizens Amendment for Prosperity, which would limit state tax revenue to 5.5 percent of the state's personal income. If revenue exceeded the limit, the first 2.5 percent of the excess would go into a state rainy-day fund, while any beyond that would be given back to taxpayers.

The CAP isn't on the November ballot yet.

Other Opinions

Petro opposes abortion, gambling, gun control and same-sex marriage and supports the death penalty and school vouchers.