

# BOUNDARY DISPUTE

In a city/suburban match-up, school teacher Tom Michalow is challenging two-term incumbent Adam Ravenstahl, the brother of Pittsburgh's former mayor. The district includes the suburbs of Avalon and Bellevue, along with the city's North Side and Lawrenceville, plus portions of Ross Township. The winner is slated to face Republican Tom Fodi in November.

{COMPILED BY CHRIS POTTER}

CANDIDATE

**THOMAS  
MICHALOW**



**ADAM  
RAVENSTAHL**



BIOGRAPHY

A teacher in the Northgate School District, Michalow has served as a borough councilor in Avalon, where he lives. While he and Ravenstahl share some convictions, Michalow contends that Ravenstahl is too often a "non-entity"; Michalow says that even as a part-time official, he's been highly engaged on issues like pollution from a nearby coke plant.

Ravenstahl, of Summer Hill, hails from a political family — his grandfather was a state legislator too — but originally worked in the private sector, holding down a financial post at UPMC. He was first elected in 2010, and while some have faulted his lack of visibility, colleagues say he is being unfairly tarred by association with his often-disengaged brother.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Michalow has long been a vocal supporter of abortion rights and same-sex marriage rights. That track record has ensured his repeated success garnering the Gertrude Stein Political Club endorsement, as well as support from the Steel City Stonewall Democrats, a local LGBT advocacy organization.

Ravenstahl is opposed to abortion except in cases of rape, incest or a threat to the health of the mother. But while he previously opposed gay marriage while favoring civil unions, he now favors same-sex marriage rights. He's earned the backing of statewide LGBT group EqualityPA.

TRANSPORTATION

Though Michalow was not in office when the legislature voted for Act 89, last year's transportation-funding bill, he calls Ravenstahl's vote against it "a vote against his district." State roads get poor grades for upkeep, Michalow notes, and "there are neighborhoods that depend on public transportation."

Ravenstahl voted against last year's transportation-funding bill, because, he says, he objected to taxing drivers instead of corporations, and to a provision limiting "prevailing wage" requirements on smaller construction projects. While the change will effect only a handful of small-dollar projects, Ravenstahl says "a compromise could have been reached" instead.

EDUCATION

While Michalow allows that Ravenstahl has voted in line with teachers, he pledges to "give you a vote *and* a voice." He promises to be a vocal advocate for public education, while opposing the state's growing reliance on standardized testing.

Ravenstahl has opposed funding cuts to public education and voted in line with teachers unions; that, and the fact that he's an incumbent, have led the city's teachers, and a statewide union of educators elsewhere, to endorse him.

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Michalow has received backing from some progressive groups aligned with Mayor Bill Peduto, including Clean Water Action, the Gertrude Stein Political Club and the Laborers (who have long opposed all things Ravenstahl). But many local officials and groups have either backed the incumbent or remained on the sidelines.

Ravenstahl narrowly won the backing of the Allegheny County Democratic Committee, and has won backing from the Allegheny County Labor Council and other unions. A handful of Ravenstahl's Democratic colleagues have backed him, and his brother has helped too, forgiving a \$26,000 loan that helped finance the 2010 campaign.