

INCUMBENT ADVANTAGE

Despite a slate featuring one of the most conservative members of Congress, this year's race to represent the gerrymandered 12th District — which stretches from Ellwood City south through Beaver County to northern Allegheny County and east to Johnstown — is much quieter than in 2012. Democrat Erin McClelland paints incumbent Keith Rothfus as the tea-partier who voted to keep the government shut down, while Rothfus barely acknowledges her at all.

{ COMPILED BY ALEX ZIMMERMAN }

<p>CANDIDATE</p>	 <p>ERIN MCCLELLAND</p>	 <p>KEITH ROTHFUS</p>
<p>BIOGRAPHY</p>	<p>A political neophyte, Erin McClelland cut her teeth in the health-care industry, founding a substance-abuse rehab operation in Blawnox.</p>	<p>Before getting elected to the 12th District, Republican Rothfus was a corporate attorney. The father of six narrowly beat incumbent Mark Critz in 2012.</p>
<p>TAXES</p>	<p>Is in favor of higher capital-gains and income taxes on the wealthy. "Middle-class wages have stagnated," she says. "The upper 1 percent are far richer than they've ever been. [...] That's just not fair to the middle class."</p>	<p>Rothfus has pledged not to raise taxes. In a recent debate, he advocated supply-side economic policies, including reducing the corporate tax rate from 35 percent, which he says "puts us at a significant disadvantage in the global marketplace."</p>
<p>SOCIAL ISSUES</p>	<p>McClelland says she generally doesn't approve of federal regulations on gun owners, but would support efforts to conduct background checks. She says she wants to eradicate abortion, but not make it illegal, and is also a sharp critic on Rothfus' VAWA vote, saying the bill provides important resources for women and LGBT people.</p>	<p>Received the NRA's endorsement and an "A" rating, meaning he's a "solidly pro-gun candidate." That doesn't differentiate him much from McClelland, but there are differences on abortion and women's rights: Rothfus is pro-life and voted against the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>McClelland isn't a climate-change denier, but has also criticized the president on energy, calling proposed caps on coal emissions "arbitrary." Instead, she supports tax incentives to reduce emissions, instead of required reduction benchmarks.</p>	<p>Rothfus echoes the rallying cry that Obama is waging a "war on coal" that will put America at a disadvantage versus countries like China, and raise utility bills. He doesn't believe climate change is human-caused, and has criticized the EPA for treating carbon dioxide as a pollutant.</p>
<p>FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS</p>	<p>Though McClelland has the backing of a slew of Democratic politicians and unions — including the AFL-CIO — she hasn't been able to translate that into strong campaign contributions. At press time, she had raised \$335,000, dwarfed by Rothfus' \$2 million.</p>	<p>Unlike 2012, when Rothfus was in the fight of his life against Critz, conservative SuperPACs such as the Club for Growth aren't pouring money into his campaign. Instead, Rothfus is playing largely off Obama's unpopularity.</p>