

GOING SOUTH

The redrawn boundaries of the 36th District, which includes Pittsburgh's South Hills as well as Baldwin and Brentwood, have brought Rep. Harry Readshaw a challenger for the first time in his 20-year career. First-term Rep. Erin Molchany is running as a new, progressive alternative in a district that is mostly Readshaw's turf ... and she's getting some help.

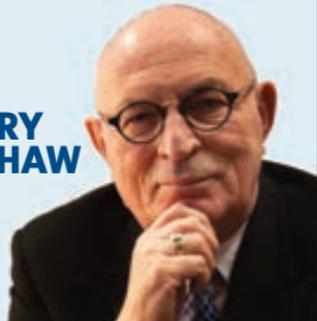
{ COMPILED BY CHRIS POTTER }

CANDIDATE

ERIN MOLCHANY



HARRY READSHAW



BIOGRAPHY

Molchany, of Mount Washington, was elected to the 22nd District in 2012, when it was already clear her district would be combined with Readshaw's. Prior to taking office, she worked in nonprofits including Planned Parenthood, and later ran the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project, which focused on attracting young professionals to the city.

A Carrick native and Marine veteran who also runs a family-owned funeral home, Readshaw was first elected in 1995. He has generally shunned the spotlight in office, but touts his expertise at bringing home tax dollars to support park development and other public projects.

SOCIAL ISSUES

The lone female legislator from Allegheny County, Molchany has been a vocal proponent of gender-equality and women's health legislation: In January, for example, she sponsored a measure tightening equal-pay requirements for female workers. She backs same-sex marriage rights and legislation firming up access to women's health clinics.

While Readshaw has co-sponsored Molchany's equal-pay measure, he's generally opposed abortion rights, and at one point sponsored a controversial "forced ultrasound" bill. (He later withdrew his backing.) Though he supports a bill to prohibit discrimination against LGBT Pennsylvanians, he opposes same-sex marriage, citing "spiritual" reasons.

TRANSPORTATION

In this campaign's highest-octane issue, Molchany backed Act 89 of 2013, which funded mass transit and road repair by raising fees on drivers and a tax on gas wholesalers. Molchany notes that without the vote, Pittsburgh faced a one-third cut in bus service, which many communities in the district rely on.

Readshaw opposed Act 89, saying Democrats should have pushed to tax natural-gas drillers instead, despite opposition to such a tax among Republicans, who control state government. Readshaw has drawn fire for airing ads characterizing Act 89 as a tax hike to boost transit in Philadelphia, without mentioning benefits for Pittsburgh and other areas.

GUNS

Molchany has previously been backed by gun-control advocacy group CeaseFire PA, and she has co-sponsored a bill, HB1010, that would expand mandatory background checks to cover rifles and other "long guns." State law currently exempts the private sale of such guns from background checks.

Readshaw, who has been endorsed by the National Rifle Association, has generally been hostile to gun-control legislation. Asked about expanding background checks at an April 15 forum, Readshaw said, "When you're sworn to uphold the Constitution, nowhere does it say, 'Harry, do whatever you want to.'"

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Molchany launched her campaign with backing from Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, and other members of the county's ruling coalition. She has also been backed by progressive unions like SEIU, as well as socially liberal groups like Planned Parenthood and EqualityPA.

Readshaw has been endorsed by the Allegheny County Democratic Committee and the Allegheny County Labor Council, as well as by more moderate unions including Electrical Workers Local 5, which gave him \$10,000 in March. He's also been helped by fellow funeral-home directors.