

ALLEGHENY COUNTY EXECUTIVE

The county executive position provides leadership and strategic direction for all aspects of the Allegheny County government. The executive ensures policies of the county are implemented and its responsibilities to the residents of Allegheny County are met. Democratic incumbent Rich Fitzgerald — first elected as county executive in 2011 — is running for re-election against first time Republican challenger Matt Drozd.

BY ELISE LAVALLEE

CANDIDATE



RICH FITZGERALD
(D-Squirrel Hill)



MATT DROZD
(R-Ross)

BIOGRAPHY

Rich Fitzgerald, a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, was born and raised in the Bloomfield-Garfield area. Fitzgerald was elected to represent District 11 in Allegheny County Council in 1999, serving the role for 12 years before being elected as county executive in 2011. If elected, this would mark Fitzgerald's third and final term as county executive.

Matt Drozd, a resident of Ross Township, served as a county councilor from 2005 to 2013. He told *CP* that he imposed a term limit on himself, but in 2013 he lost the Republican primary. Drozd is a former Air Force officer, and has worked as a businessman and economic developer. Earned his bachelor's and master's in business administration from Duquesne University.

TAXES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Job creation and economic development are Fitzgerald's top priorities as county executive, according to his website. Since taking office, his website claims he has helped to maintain economic growth at around 2 percent per year and kept taxes stable. Under Fitzgerald, the county's general fund increased from \$5 million in 2012 to over \$49 million in 2019. He wrote an op-ed last year saying the county's bond rating is the highest it has been since 1983.

Proposes to cut taxes and says this will create jobs in the county. While he didn't offer specifics on how he plans to reduce taxes on Allegheny County residents, Drozd said he would consider taxes on large nonprofits, especially UPMC, to offset tax decreases on individuals. In the past, Drozd says he helped bring many jobs to the region while working for an economic development company.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Campaign website states he is dedicated to improving public health by improving air quality and access to health care and supporting clean energy. While in office, has supported fracking on county-owned land in Deer Lakes Park and the Pittsburgh International Airport. Recently came out in support of a micro-grid project at PIT that would combine solar energy and natural gas to power the airport's energy needs. In 2019, under Fitzgerald, the county issued a \$1 million fine on Clairton Coke Works for its repeated air quality violations. When UPMC announced they would no longer accept Highmark insurance, Fitzgerald told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "I don't like it but there's not much I can do about it."

Wants to analyze the county health department to look for potential improvements to efficiency. Opposed to fracking in public parks and neighborhoods and says the funds raised by fracking at the airport should go back to the taxpayers. (Fracking funds at the airport are currently used to subsidize flights and other redevelopment in the area.) Supports bringing more solar energy to the community, but hasn't provided specifics.

FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Allegheny County Democratic Committee and Steel City Stonewall Democrats. Has received campaign contributions from Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, SEIU 32 BJ PA American Dream Fund, and the Cement Masons Local 526.

Hasn't received any endorsements. Drozd says he has not been actively seeking them. "We need an executive that works for the people of Allegheny County and not special interest groups," Drozd said.