Brian Sims challenges incumbent Rep. Babette Joseph’s in this spring’s Democratic Primary.

By Nicole Contosta
Staff Reporter

As Pennsylvania’s Primary April 24th Election draws closer, political advertisements on the state and federal level will flood newspapers, the airwaves and telephone poles.

In fact, one such political flyer grabbed the attention of many in the Philadelphia’s 182nd District, which encompasses Rittenhouse, Fitler and Logan Squares, the Gayborhood, and parts of Washington Square West, Bella Vista, Graduate Hospital and Grays Ferry. That was none other than a negative ad issued from State Rep. Babette Joseph’s against her opponent Brian Sims. In it, Joseph’s suggested that Sims’ pledge to compromise with Republicans on key legislation made him a closet Republican. But, there’s nothing "in the closet" about Brian Sims. After all, he was an openly gay quarterback throughout college.

Moreover, Sims believes that "the state legislature should be working for bi-partisan support on bills that apply to jobs, civil rights, education and the debt."

Even when the legislatures passes something that, "I disagree with such as [restrictions] on women’s reproductive rights, doesn’t mean that we [Democrats] should abandon ways to create new jobs," Sims continued from his campaign headquarters on Broad Street right below Locust Street. In Sims’ opinion, "it doesn’t matter how passionately you talk about ideology, it matters how much legislation you pass. And Joseph’s," Sims added, "hasn’t passed any legislation since 1996."

When commenting on Joseph’s negative flyer, Sims said, "It means we’re doing something right," citing the fact that he says that he has received endorsements from four of the five wards the 182nd District represents. As for his platform, he stresses the importance of passing legislation that will improve jobs, education, the environment and civil rights.

When it comes to creating new jobs, Sims supports green policies for green jobs, better incentives and funding for high tech jobs and fixing the state’s broken corporate tax system. Supporting green job legislation already being developed with the Greater Philadelphia Innovation Cluster (GPIC), will create thousands of living wage jobs "that cannot be outsourced," Sims explained. In addition, increasing funding for technology benefits "established companies that use technology to drive business," Sims said, explaining that he opposes the fact that Corbett has cut this funding by 14.5 million in 2012-2013. And for Sims, changing the corporate tax system remains paramount considering the fact that seventy-one percent of all corporations are exempt from paying it
due to the Delaware Loop Hole. The remaining twenty-nine percent, pay a tax rate of 9.9 percent, "which is the second highest in the country," said Sims, adding that this practice does not entice business to open in Pennsylvania.

As for education, Sims wholeheartedly opposes vouchers. "I think that Charter Schools are often a good alternative. My opposition stems from the fact that as a very proud gay man, I don’t want my money going into a system that educates people to think of homosexuality as wrong," Sims explained. As for the problems that plague the Philadelphia School District as a whole, he doesn't think the state should maintain its control over all 249 public schools. "I think Philadelphia should have its own school board with the mayor appointing its board members," Sims continued, adding that the state should still continue to manage the "most underperforming schools."

On the hot-button subject of Marcellus Shale, Sims argues, "...to this date, no one can explain how to make fracking safe. Since it’s going to occur - we need to tax the heck out of it." And in Sims opinion, he doesn’t understand why "Republicans in Pennsylvania oppose this tax since Bush enacted it in Texas and Palin in Alaska."

And when it comes to Civil Rights, Sims argues that it’s statistically proven that openly gay representatives in other states tend to support civil rights issues whether they are relevant to the LGBT community or not. But when it comes to the LGBT’s lack of civil rights in Pennsylvania, Sims cites the fact that under current laws, members of the LGBT community can be fired or evicted by leading an "openly gay lifestyle in seventy percent of the state."

Brian Sims holds a Bachelors of Science degree from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania and a Juris Doctor degree in International & Comparative Law from Michigan State University College of Law.

Sims worked as the former Staff Counsel for Policy and Planning at the Philadelphia Bar Association, he recently stepped down as both the President of the Board of Directors of Equality Pennsylvania and as Chairman of GALLOP. During his time at the Bar Association, Sims worked with attorneys, legislators and community organizations on issues ranging from gender and pay inequity to environmental regulation. A member of the National Campaign Board of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund until August 2011, Sims lectures regularly about the policy and legal challenges facing the LGBT civil rights movement and is a regular lecturer at the Center for Progressive Leadership. Prior to his time at the Bar Association, he practiced law as a disability attorney representing disabled professionals. He also worked as the Senior Law Clerk at the U.S. Environment Protection Agency’s Washington office where he focused on state and municipal compliance and enforcement.

Please make sure to read Wednesday’s on-line article of the SOSNA, CCRA and Logan Square Neighbors candidates debate for the 182nd State Representative primary between Rep. Babette Josephs and Brian Sims. The debate was held last night as the Weekly Press went to press. For more information on Brian Sims: www.sims4pa.com