

LOCAL



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF UNITED WAY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY

One of the volunteer efforts involved stuffing backpacks.

United Way holds annual Days of Caring

More than 100 volunteers contributed hundreds of hours supporting local non-profits during United Way of Washington County's seventh annual Days of Caring from Sept. 15-19.

Employees of EQT, Range Resources, Community Bank, UGI Energy Services, Fisher Associates and residents of Traditions of America partnered with five local nonprofits to complete a number of projects. Volunteers tackled deep cleaning, organized donations, stuffed backpacks, served lunches, and helped spread awareness.

Nonprofit partners included Dress for Success, Domestic Violence Services of SWPA, Food Helpers, City Mission, and United Way of Washington County itself.

Organizations supporting these efforts included the Presenting Sponsor, EQT; pitch-in sponsors, Community Bank and Groundworks, and media sponsors, Lamar Advertising and the Observer-Reporter.



Volunteers view a box of donated clothing.

Volunteer opportunities through www.volunteer-washco.org can be found and shared

Death toll climbs to 40 after stampede at political rally in southern India

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW DELHI — The death toll following a stampede at a political rally for a popular Indian actor and politician in the southern state of Tamil Nadu has climbed to 40, the state's health minister said Sunday, as medics treated at least 124 injured in hospitals.

Ma Subramanian told The Associated Press that

36 victims were dead by the time they were taken to a hospital on Saturday night and four more died later. He said the injured were largely stable. The dead included nine children, Subramanian said.

Tens of thousands of people gathered in the district of Karur on Saturday to attend the rally by Joseph Vijay Chandrasekhar, popularly and professionally known as Vijay, amid swel-

tering heat. Vijay is one of Tamil Nadu's most successful actors and is running for office in state elections scheduled to be held in early 2026.

In southern Indian states, particularly Tamil Nadu, some film stars have larger than life status, rooted in the ancient Tamil culture of hero worship. Many have become successful politicians and some have even been given divine status.

Election

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includes taking on disputes over zoning and easements, and with homeowners' associations.

Before starting his practice, Wolford was an attorney for the Department of Environmental Protection, and before that a deputy state attorney general, supervising the environmental crimes section regional field office in Meadville. He also worked as a special prosecutor for the attorney general's office and the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Like Tsai, his campaigning heated up over the summer, and he most recently made appearances at the Wyoming County Fair, the Sullivan County Fair, and StroudFest in Monroe County. And in a sign that campaign operatives in both parties consider Lackawanna County to be up for grabs, Wolford, like Tsai, was at Scranton's Italian Festival.

Wolford's campaign has repeatedly stressed that he "will not legislate from the bench," and noted that he "is running for Judge of the Commonwealth Court because he is concerned about government over-regulation and overreach."

Wolford is endorsed by the Pennsylvania Republican Party.

The Pennsylvania Bar Association noted in its assessment of Wolford that his other professional activities include a longtime adjunct professorship at Erie's Gannon University, and he is "active in the bar association and community organizations."

The PBA rated Wolford as "highly recommended," noting that he has been "litigating all aspects of environmental law," both civilly and criminally and at trial and appellate levels, for almost four decades.

Wolford is "highly regarded for his work ethic, preparation, common sense, fairness, integrity, prompt and efficient performance and legal expertise in the environmental area," the association wrote.

Read Wolford's answers to the PBA questionnaire here.

Superior Court

The 15-member Superior Court handles criminal and civil cases that don't involve the government.

The panel's main role is to review lower courts' verdicts. Notable recent decisions include a 2019 opinion tossing out rapper Meek Mill's conviction on drug and gun charges. Judges

serve initial 10-year terms, then face nonpartisan retention votes, which usually succeed.

One seat on Superior Court has been open since Judge Daniel McCaffery was elected as a Democrat to the state Supreme Court in 2023.

The court currently has eight judges elected as Democrats and six Republicans. Its president judge, Democrat Anne Lazarus, was selected through a vote by members of the court and serves a five-year term in that role.

Democratic candidate: Brandon P. Neuman

Neuman, of Washington County, has served as a judge on the county's Court of Common Pleas since 2018. He was a member of the state House of Representatives from 2011 to 2017.

As a judge, Neuman primarily presides over civil court and a veteran's specialty court, according to his campaign website, and has also presided over criminal and family law cases.

Last year, Neuman handed down a notable ruling that ordered Washington County to notify voters if their mail ballots have errors that would keep them from being counted, so that those voters would be able to cast provisional ballots.

During his time in the legislature, one of Neuman's biggest accomplishments was a successful 2015 law that sped up the processing of rape kits, which was aimed at addressing a major backlog Pennsylvania had at the time.

Before his time in Harrisburg, Neuman was a trial lawyer and handled "complex civil litigation and representing victims who have been neglected or abused in nursing homes," his campaign website says.

His most recent campaign stops have been to a Philly barbecue alongside other judicial candidates, Pittsburgh's Labor Day parade, and the Schuylkill County Democratic Picnic.

He's been promoting endorsements from unions like the Pennsylvania Laborers' District Council, as well as from law enforcement groups that don't always back Democrats — the Fraternal Order of Police, the State Troopers Association, and the Sheriffs' Association.

Neuman is "highly recommended" by the Pennsylvania Bar Association, which said his "opinions demonstrate knowledge of substantive and procedural legal issues and the ability to provide good factual backgrounds and well-developed legal arguments." The association added that Neuman's colleagues be-

lieve he has high integrity, a good judicial temperament, and "treats all individuals fairly," among other positive attributes.

You can read Neuman's answers to the PBA questionnaire here.

Republican candidate: Maria Battista

A Clarion County resident, Battista previously served as assistant general counsel for the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and State under former Govs. Tom Corbett, a Republican, and Tom Wolf, a Democrat.

She also was a prosecutor in Franklin and Venango Counties, and was a contract specialist for the Department of Defense.

Battista ran unsuccessfully for Superior Court in 2023. She is currently president at Judge Government Services, a consulting firm.

Her campaign has most recently taken her to the Sullivan County Fair, the Pen Argyl Fireman's parade in Northampton County, and the Erie County Republican Party Labor Day Picnic. She also fit in a visit with her old baseball coach, writing on Facebook that as a child in the '70s, she was the first girl to play on boys' Little League teams in Knox.

In Battista's 2023 bid for a judgeship, she received the state Republican Party's endorsement during her primary. This time around, the state party chose Ann Marie Wheatcraft, a Common Pleas judge from the Philadelphia suburbs, in its primary endorsement.

After Wheatcraft lost the primary, the state party endorsed Battista.

The Pennsylvania Bar Association did not recommend Battista because she did not participate in its rating process.

Liberal Party candidate: Daniel Wassmer

Wassmer is an attorney who has worked as an adjunct professor, run his own firm, and previously worked in the Bucks County solicitor's office.

He has unsuccessfully run for office several times, including in 2020 for attorney general and U.S. Senate in 2022.

The Pennsylvania Bar Association said Wassmer did not request a questionnaire to be evaluated.

Spotlight PA's Stephen Caruso and Kate Huangpu contributed reporting for this guide.

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John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Example of ad and message

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Father David Jones

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