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## LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

# TRASH TALKING



## EDITORIAL: Local municipalities shouldn't renegotiate with Scott Wagner's Penn Waste

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Let's see if we have this straight. Donald Trump has started a trade war with China.

China, in response to Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods, set much stricter contamination limits on the recyclable materials they'll accept. There's also been an outright ban on some materials.

China just happens to be the largest buyer of recyclable material in the world. The net result? American sanitation companies that send their recyclables to China for processing are facing markedly higher costs.

That just happens to include Scott Wagner's York County-based company, Penn Waste.

Wagner, of course, is the Republican candidate for governor in Pennsylvania, and in many ways, he's been following the divisive partisan road map laid out by Trump in his victorious 2016 presidential campaign.

**Sustainability fee:** Wagner's company has responded to the increased costs of recycling

by approaching local municipalities to see if they can renegotiate waste contracts to add a sustainability fee to help reduce contamination, according to the company's website. Penn Waste collects recycling from 70 municipalities in the region.

So, Wagner's political guru, Donald Trump, starts an unnecessary trade war that hurts Wagner's business. In response, Wagner wants to raise rates on small businesses and consumers all across this region.

He doesn't place the blame where it belongs — at Trump's feet. Instead, he wants to raise rates that have been contractually agreed upon.

**Laugh him out of room:** It would be curious to see Wagner's reaction if municipal officials approached him to renegotiate a contract for cheaper rates just because they had a better offer from a competitor?

The guess here is Wagner would laugh those municipal officials out of the room.

A contract, after all, is a contract. Both sides knew what they were getting into when they signed it.

Well, the local municipal officials should have the exact same reaction right now — they should laugh Wagner (or his Penn Waste managers) right out of the room.

**Wolf campaign responds:** Not surprisingly, Tom Wolf, the incumbent Democratic governor from York County, is making political hay out of the situation, accusing Wagner of hypocrisy, especially considering his lack of financial transparency.

"Wagner is the first gubernatorial candidate in over 20 years not to release his tax returns while his company, Penn Waste, is raising rates on small business owners and consumers," a Wolf campaign news release said.

Wolf's campaign spokeswoman, Beth Melena, later elaborated. "(Wagner's) company is trying to bail itself out on the backs of small business owners and

consumers by raising rates while Scott Wagner is hiding his income and pouring his own money into his campaign coffers," Melena said.

**"Makes no sense:"** Wagner has stated that he doesn't plan to place his business assets in a blind

trust, as is the custom, but he does plan to distance himself from his business interests.

That's a decision that G. Terry Madonna, the director of the Center of Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin & Marshall College, says "makes no sense" politically. Of course, Trump has specialized in authoring hypocrisies, making senseless decisions and hiding his financial resources, and it landed him in the White House. Wagner, no doubt, thinks it will work for him, too. In November, we'll find out if he's right.

In the meantime, however, if you live in a municipality that has a contract with Penn Waste, hold on tightly to your wallet and make sure to let your local officials know that you don't want to bail out Wagner because of a dreadful decision made by his political mentor.