



Mayor-elect Kenney: What are his biggest issues?

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NOW IT GETS interesting.

Jim Kenney, the South Philadelphia native son of a firefighter, put an exclamation point on his journey from Democratic machine cog to beacon of hope for Philly progressives with a landslide victory yesterday that will make him the 99th mayor in the city's long history.



Jim Kenney celebrates his victory in the mayoral race with backers at the National Museum of American Jewish History. STEVEN M. FALK / Staff Photographer

"I want a lot of things for our children, but, most of all, I want them to grow up in a Philadelphia where we all look past our differences and join together to create a better place for all of us to live," Kenney said in declaring victory shortly before 9 p.m., at the National Museum of American Jewish History. "A place where we not only agree that all neighborhoods matter, but where we act on it."

The general election victory for the 56-year-old former at-large city councilman over previously unknown Republican newcomer Melissa Murray Bailey had the suspense of a Harlem Globetrotters basketball game, in a city where Democrats hold a 7-to-1 registration edge on the sagging Republicans.

The real drama begins today, as the mayor-elect starts picking his key aides and cabinet members while developing a plan to attack what he called Philadelphia's most pressing issues throughout the 2015 campaign: the city's high rate of poverty, its fiscally challenged schools and its developing neighborhoods beyond Center City.

In the most closely watched personnel move, Kenney is widely expected to name Richard Ross, the highly visible and well-regarded longtime deputy police commissioner, as Philadelphia's top cop after Charles Ramsey retires at year's end.

Kenney said in an interview last week that he hates the "100 days" benchmark for the accomplishments of a new mayor, but other City Hall watchers urged the incoming Democrat to hit the ground running if he's serious about tackling those problems.

"[F]or a job like this - it doesn't really matter where you come from - you've never done it before, so the learning curve is steep and fast and I think we have to hope that Jim Kenney is up to tackling and moving up that learning curve quickly," said David Thornburgh, who heads the Committee of Seventy watchdog group.

"He's shown ability over the course of his career to learn, ask questions, adapt, and I guess our hope is that he continues to exhibit those characteristics."

Kenney initially learned politics as an aide to former state Sen. Vince Fumo - the two are no longer close since Fumo's 2009 felony conviction - and first won election citywide to council in 1991.

Originally perceived as a rowhouse law-and-order guy, Kenney steadily moved left in supporting LGBT and immigration rights and decriminalizing pot, while urging an end to police citizen searches known as "stop and frisk."

Based on interviews over the last few days and Kenney's statements in the fall campaign, here's what we can expect on policy matters after he takes the oath of office on Jan. 4, 2016:

* **Expanding pre-kindergarten programs.** Kenney's call for universal pre-K is his signature proposal, echoing the top achievement of New York City's progressive Mayor Bill de Blasio, to whom the mayor-elect's agenda is often compared.

Last month, Kenney said that expanding pre-K would cost \$60 million over three years and that he believes it can be accomplished by city changes on tax liens and abatements worth \$40 million, plus \$20 million from outside sources, but the devil will be in the details. People close to the incoming mayor have told the *Daily News* that the plan won't just hinge on the dollars but also on increasing the number of top-quality pre-K providers, which would require a small-business economic-development plan to lure new ones.

* **Community schools.** Another key part of Kenney's education agenda will be the creation of these neighborhood public schools that also serve as centers for health care and other social services. As with the pre-K plan, one problem could be money, with plans for any increased school aid from Harrisburg hopelessly gridlocked.

* **Economic development.** In seeking growth in outlying neighborhoods, Kenney is eager to promote small-business commercial corridors like the one on Ogontz Avenue in West Oak Lane, the base of key ally state Rep. Dwight Evans. The incoming mayor has said he also wants to foster job growth in tech, in startups and at the port.

* **Criminal justice.** Amid growing concern about tackling mass incarceration, Kenney has said he wants the city to make more jobs available to citizens returning from prison and to better enforce the 2012 "ban the box" legislation barring private employers from asking about convictions and arrests in the early stages of hiring.

Like most new mayors, policing will be also be critical for Kenney, both in personnel - with the expected appointment of Ross - and in policy. That will likely include not just curbs on stop and frisk but also a laundry list of reforms that were recommended in a recent U.S. Department of Justice review of city police.

"It's an interesting moment for the city," mused Alison Perelman, executive director of Philadelphia 3.0 and a former aide to former at-large Councilman Bill Green. "I hope that we are really able to start capitalizing on the progress that we've seen recently in the city and that we are able to extend that progress to other parts of the city."

- *Jenny DeHuff contributed to this article.*