



Retirement News Highlights

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Comptroller's Race: Lierman Touts Legislative Record, Proposes Climate and Equity Policies

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Comptroller candidate and state Del. Brooke E. Lierman (D-Baltimore City) thinks being the state's top fiscal watchdog should also mean preparing for climate change and combating racial inequality.

"I think the comptroller's office is going to be central to ensuring that we don't just 'get back to normal,' but that we actually create a more equitable and prosperous state moving forward," she said in an interview.

Lierman wants to create an equity officer position within the comptroller's office to look at tackling the racial wealth gap by promoting homeownership and closing the "appraisal gap," or the difference in the cost of building or renovating a home to the potential sale price, in historically redlined neighborhoods.

She also wants to promote participation in the state's Earned Income Tax Credit, which she voted to expand during the 2021 legislative session.

"We know that a quarter of Marylanders who are eligible for that earned income tax credit don't claim it," Lierman said. "That's money that they're leaving on the table, and many of those are Black and Brown families."

Lierman said she would push for a new fund that would set aside 1% of state pension funds to help combat the appraisal gap and promote homeownership in communities that have seen divestment from both the federal and state government in the past. She also said that the next comptroller also needs to promote investments in a "multimodal transportation system" in Maryland. She added that she supports the Red Line project and opposes the current state plan to add toll lanes to the Capital Beltway and Interstate 270 in Montgomery County.

"I do not believe that it is fiscally responsible or that it will solve our traffic congestion problems to simply add lanes," she said.

On the comptroller's role in fighting climate change, Lierman said the comptroller needs to be analyzing how climate change could affect the state's budget, like renovating public buildings located in growing flood zones. She said she expects climate change to be "enormously expensive" for the state, and that identifying risk areas now will help the state manage and combat climate change.

Lierman also said she would use the comptroller's seat on Maryland's powerful Board of Public Works to more strictly enforce Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) rules and make state procurement more

competitive by cutting back on single-bid contracts. She said she would make all data on procurement and contracts publicly available via an online tool.

“Single-bid contracts, waiving MBE requirements, and massive out-of-state contracts that have no competition from in-state companies: that cannot happen anymore,” she said.

Lierman’s only declared primary opponent is Timothy J. Adams, the first Black mayor of Bowie and a defense contractor. Adams also pledged to tackle the state’s racial wealth divide by cutting back on single-bid contracts and more strictly enforcing Minority Business Enterprise procurement rules.

Adams, the founder, president and CEO of the multimillion-dollar defense contracting firm Systems Application & Technologies, is pitching his private sector experience to voters as part of his campaign.

Lierman is pitching her work in the state legislature: In her six years as a state delegate, she has spearheaded efforts to address a wide range of issues from environmental accountability to collective bargaining rights for student athletes. During the 2021 legislative session, she sponsored successful efforts to set up a statewide broadband office and cut back on appraisal gaps. Lierman has scored the endorsements of a slew of her Democratic legislative colleagues, and argues that her work in the legislature means she’s uniquely positioned to hit the ground running as comptroller.

“I have a unique understanding of the many levers the comptroller’s office has,” Lierman said. “I work with the comptroller’s office on a regular basis, whether it’s doing constituent work or policy work, and so I am ready to hit the ground running on day one.”

The competitive Democratic comptroller race comes after incumbent Peter V.R. Franchot (D), who has held the office since 2007, embarked on a gubernatorial bid. And with the retirement of Nancy K. Kopp (D) after nearly 20 years as state treasurer, the Board of Public Works is set to see its largest shakeup in recent memory.

Harford County Executive Barry Glassman (R), the lone declared Republican comptroller candidate, has positioned himself as a “traditional moderate” and previously said the state’s next comptroller should focus on safeguarding the state’s financing as opposed to highlighting political issues that he believes fall under the legislative or executive branches’ responsibilities.

Lierman, however, said she thinks being a fiscal guardian means planning ahead for climate change.

“I don’t think it’s possible to safeguard the state’s finances without meeting the challenge of climate change, or tackling the challenge of the racial wealth divide,” she said.

The primary election is set for June 28, 2022.

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