



Rich Fitzgerald **Allegheny County Executive**

Most people don't decide to enter politics for the first time in their 40s, but County Executive Rich Fitzgerald's passion and love for his family and western Pennsylvania motivated him to make that leap. Now, after more than 19 years in public service, he still embraces and relishes his role working with others to make the county a great place to live, work, and play, and he's bullish on the region's future.

When his children went to school, he and his wife, Cathy, began to engage in issues related to the schools and zoning, and they quickly became interested and engaged in other local government matters. Rich also thought his problem-solving skills as a local business owner would translate well to government. So, he began working on the initiative that created Allegheny County's current home rule charter, and he hasn't stopped working to make the region more affordable, accessible, desirable, and economically prosperous since.

Like so many other parents living in Allegheny County in the 1990s, Rich was tired of seeing the area's best and brightest move away to pursue jobs elsewhere. He was worried his own children might leave and that he wouldn't get to regularly see them or his future grandchildren. So, after the ballot initiative passed, and the newly created County Council seats were established, he decided to run for office.

In 1999, he was elected to the inaugural County Council, representing District 11, which contained a mix of Pittsburgh neighborhoods and other municipalities. He spent 12 years on Council and was elected by his peers as President four times. In 2011, he ran and won the election to become the third County Executive. He officially took office on January 3, 2012, and he's currently in his second term.

Under Rich's leadership, Allegheny County has focused on job creation and economic development to great effect. Over the past few years, and for the first time since the end of the region's industrial era, the county is managing growth instead of decline. Last year, the region's unemployment rate reached its lowest level since the 1970s, and Glassdoor ranked the area as the best place in America to find a job. Since 2012, the county's median household income has risen at nearly double the rate than it has nationally. The region has become a leader in health care, finance, education, manufacturing, arts and culture, and emerging sectors such as robotics, artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, and clean energy. And the diversity of opportunity as well as world-class colleges and universities have made the area a magnet for millennials, attracting more than 10,000 over the past five years – an increase of 38.6% that ranks fifth in the country. Last year, LendingTree ranked the area among the three most popular for millennial homebuyers, and CNBC named it best in the country for young people.

Thanks to that growth and Rich's responsible fiscal stewardship of tax dollars, Moody's Investors Service upgraded the county's bond rating last year for the fifth time in the past six years, putting it at the highest level since 1983. Additionally, seven straight budgets have passed with no millage increases, and

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the fund balance has increased substantially, allowing for more investment in projects and programs that increase the quality of life for more than 1.2 million residents.

The county's buildings, facilities, vehicles, and nine parks are being upgraded and improved, including a \$10 million roof replacement project at the Courthouse that will protect the historic structure for future generations to use and admire. Other recent projects have made the county greener and more sustainable, considerably cutting utility costs and reducing the carbon dioxide emitted by 13.8%. The Health Department, under new direction, has undergone meaningful changes and is demonstrating leadership with its aggressive approach to combating complex issues such as the opioid epidemic and air pollution. Additionally, Rich launched the *Live Well Allegheny* campaign as a unique, comprehensive strategy to improve residents' overall well-being. It's no wonder the Economist Intelligence Unit last year recognized the area as the most livable place in the continental United States.

The region also boasts a cutting-edge airport and public transit system that have seen significant improvements over the past few years. Pittsburgh International Airport, with a \$1.1 billion terminal modernization project in the works, now offers 65 nonstop destinations, almost double the number from just five years ago, and there has been a 20% increase in passengers over the past five years. Direct flights to London will start soon, and the airport began nonstop charter flights to Shanghai, China last year. International destinations are continuing to grow. The Port Authority, under new leadership, is enhancing the customer experience, embracing new technology, and developing a Bus Rapid Transit line between the region's two largest job sectors (downtown Pittsburgh and Oakland).

Rich is delighted by the county's progress under his leadership, but he would be the first to deflect credit. He believes achievement comes when we work together for the greater good of the county, and he says collaboration has been the "secret sauce" to solving the region's toughest problems. To that end, he focuses daily on forming strong partnerships with elected officials at the federal, state, county and local levels, as well as with community leaders in business, labor, and philanthropy.

He loves meeting and hearing from constituents. Known for his tireless work ethic, Rich is not one to be hunkered down in an office. As chronicled well on his [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) feeds, he is almost always on the move, attending numerous events around the region on a daily basis and constantly listening to and responding to the needs of county residents.

Rich is a fierce advocate for social and economic equality within the community and its businesses, and he has worked to ensure that government reflects the region's increasing diversity. He's especially proud that more than one-quarter of the county's 3,500 hires during his administration have been African-Americans, and about three-fifths have been women, including many of his top officials.

In addition to his numerous board appointments and memberships as the County Executive, Rich also serves as a member of the board of the County Executives of America, the Remake Learning Council, is Vice Chair of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, and is part of the National Association of County Officials (NACo) Large Urban County Caucus.

Rich's affection for and devotion to Allegheny County runs deep. Raised in Pittsburgh's Bloomfield-Garfield neighborhood, he graduated from Central Catholic High School and later earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering with a business minor from Carnegie Mellon University. After college, he left the area for a short time, but he didn't stay away for long. In 1982, he returned to Pittsburgh and founded a water treatment services and equipment company. He also married his college sweetheart, Cathy, and bought a home in Squirrel Hill. He and Cathy, a pharmacist, have eight children: six girls and two boys.