



Capitol Office:

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Slots tax revenue up for 2011-12 fiscal year; table games revenue strong

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board reported that tax revenue from slots play was up by nearly \$100 million for the 2011-12 fiscal year, allowing the state to continue to help lower local property taxes, aid volunteer fire and emergency service companies and give a boost to economic development projects.

The total slots tax revenue for 2010-11 was \$1.284 billion. That's a 7.8 percent increase from the previous fiscal year.

The Gaming Board also reported that tax revenue from play at table games during the recently completed state fiscal year totaled \$81.4 million. Pennsylvania started offering table games at its casinos in July 2010.

The gaming industry now employs more than 14,000 people while spending hundreds of millions of dollars to purchase goods and services from Pennsylvania businesses.



Progress continues on Valley View Downs racetrack and casino



I am joined by American Harness Tracks managing partner Charles Knoll Jr., left, and state Harness Racing Commission member Richard Welsh after a meeting in Harrisburg to discuss the proposed Valley View Downs racino.

Progress is continuing on plans to build a multimillion dollar harness racetrack and casino in Mahoning Township, which would create numerous jobs and give Lawrence County and the surrounding area an economic boost.

The state Harness Racing Commission on July 12 approved the stock transfer application of Valley View Downs LLC to American Harness Tracks. That's an important step that allows American Harness to build a racetrack in Lawrence County.

To proceed, American Harness must secure and show proof of financing to build the racetrack and assemble a management team by Sept. 12. The track must cost a minimum of \$150 million.

It also must secure a license through the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board to operate a casino as soon as possible. If it fails to obtain the license to run the casino, the harness racing license would be revoked and the project would be off.

The stock transfer and award of the license are subject to conditions of the State Racing Act and the Harness Racing Commission's regulations.

This project has been coming for a long time, and although there is still a way to go, I'm pleased with the latest developments.

The harness racing license was first awarded in 2007 to Centaur Gaming of Indiana to develop Valley View Downs. But Centaur since had financial problems during the economic downturn and eventually filed for bankruptcy.

American Harness Tracks, which is based in Pittsburgh, in May applied for Centaur's harness racing license.

If the project comes to fruition, the racetrack and casino would be built on a reclaimed 250-acre strip mine off Route 422.

Funding cuts too deep in 2011-12 budget

I could not support the 2011-12 state budget because it cut too deeply into education and social service funding while leaving revenue on the table.

The school districts that I represent were cut by nearly \$6.5 million in the budget Gov. Tom Corbett advocated and the General Assembly passed. Local school districts have furloughed teachers, cut programs that help students succeed, instituted pay-to-play extra-curricular activities and raised taxes as a result.

The budget also cut state aid to Pennsylvania's state-owned and state-related universities by \$200 million. That forced the University of Pittsburgh to raise tuition by 8.5 percent, Penn State to increase tuition at its main campus by nearly 5 percent and state-owned universities such as Slippery Rock and Clarion to hike tuition by 7.5 percent.

The state's community colleges were cut by \$23.6 million, or 10 percent, in their state appropriation. Cuts to employment and training programs, including New Choices and Industry Partnerships, also affect the community college system because they administer many of those programs.

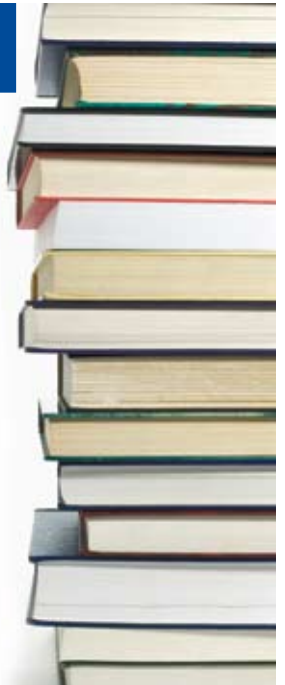
Another reason I voted against the budget were cuts to important services for senior citizens and the disabled. For example, the budget reduces funding for Pennsylvania's hospitals by as much

as \$23 million. Jameson Hospital is important to the physical and economic health in our area, and cuts that hurt its future are unacceptable.

Additionally, the Republican budget cuts millions of dollars from county services and programs – where state funding is reduced, counties must either replace with local revenue or cut services. This includes cuts to county child and youth programs, mental health, behavioral health, homeless assistance and the human services development fund.

It didn't have to be this way.

As we were voting on the budget, the state had a \$785 million surplus we could have used to ease these cuts.



EDUCATION FUNDING CUTS TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS VERSUS LAST FISCAL YEAR

Blackhawk School District	-\$730,858	-7.6%
Laurel School District	-\$673,234	-8.3%
Mohawk School District	-\$749,702	-7.2%
Neshannock Township School District	-\$341,096	-10.1%
New Castle Area School District	-\$2,891,308	-11.7%
Union Area School District	-\$396,646	-8%
Wilmington Area School District	-\$696,294	-11.2%

Property Tax/Rent Rebate application deadline extended to Dec. 31

The deadline to apply for Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended from June 30 to **Dec. 31, 2011**.

This program provides state rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2010 to eligible Pennsylvanians age 65 or older; widows and widowers age 50 or older; and people with disabilities age 18 or older. The income limit to qualify is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. Applicants must count all sources of income toward the limit, but only half of any Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits count toward total income.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates for qualifying homeowners can be up to \$975.



Applications are available at my office and we can assist you in completing the forms.

Last year more than 603,098 homeowners and renters across the state received more than \$281 million in property tax and rent rebates as a result of this program. If you think you are eligible to receive the rebate you should apply now!



SPORTSMEN'S CORNER

Bill would end hunting license display requirement

The state House of Representatives recently passed legislation that would eliminate the requirement in Pennsylvania for hunters to display their hunting license on their back while hunting.

Pennsylvania is one of only two states that still require hunters to display their license. I think it makes more sense to simply require hunters to have their license with them when they are hunting.

The legislation (H.B. 735) is being considered by the state Senate and is supported by the state Game Commission.



Around the 9th Legislative District with Rep. Sainato



Neshannock sports teams had championship seasons.



Congratulations to New Castle Christian Academy on winning the state archery championship.

I participated in the opening ceremony for Darlington Days.



The Mohawk Band performed at the opening ceremony for the Lawrence County Fair.



It was my honor to join the Dr. Martin Luther King Day luncheon at New Jerusalem Church.



STATE REP. CHRIS SAINATO

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Inside:

- Valley View Downs racetrack and casino plans progress
- Why I voted no on the state budget
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate application deadline extended

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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE 9TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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Summer 2011



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Lawrence County to remain fifth-class county

Legislation I co-sponsored, now Act 55 of 2011, keeps Lawrence County a fifth-class county despite a drop in population.

The new law reduces the population threshold for a fifth-class county from 95,000 to 90,000. Had the bill not been passed and signed into the law, Lawrence County would have been reclassified as a sixth-class county.

I and local officials were concerned about the negative ramifications from a drop in classification, including a potential loss of grant money.



American Harness Tracks managing partner Charles Knoll Jr. and I discuss the proposed Valley View Downs racetrack and casino. Please look inside for an update on the project.

To watch video of me honoring former Pittsburgh Pirates manager Chuck Tanner, who passed away earlier this year, visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Sainato, or scan here with your smart phone's QR reader.

