



FALL 2011

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June 14, 2011 was “National Guard Day” in Pennsylvania, commemorating the 256th anniversary of Pennsylvania’s first laws providing for a militia, and saluting the guard. Pictured from left are Major Gen. Wesley E. Craig, the adjutant general; Myer Kurgan, resident of Delaware Valley Veterans Home and honor guard member; Rep. Sainato; PNG Command Chief Warrant Officer Master Sgt. Renee Chikotas, Pennsylvania Air National Guard Honor Guard member of the year; Sgt. First Class Dana Graham, Pennsylvania Army National Guard soldier of the year; and Command Sgt. Major Chip Gilliland, PNG Command Sergeant Major.

## A look back at House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness accomplishments

The House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee continues to produce and advance important legislation. Two bills advanced by the committee were signed into law, and several more have been passed to the Senate for its consideration.

As Democratic chairman of the committee, I’m looking forward to continuing our work. Meanwhile, here’s a summary of the legislation I helped advance.

### Signed into law

**Cancer presumption for firefighters (Act 46)** – On July 7, H.B. 797 was signed into law so firefighters can receive workers’ compensation if they develop cancer and can establish direct exposure to certain carcinogens while responding to an incident. Firefighters also must successfully pass a physical exam showing no evidence of cancer before beginning work as a firefighter.



**Honor & Remember Flag (Act 19)** – On June 30, H.B. 385 was signed into law. It adopts the Honor and Remember Flag as the Commonwealth’s official flag to recognize and honor the service and sacrifice of the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who have given their lives in the line of duty. Additionally, the Honor and Remember Flag will be placed in Soldiers’ Grove, an area designated on Capital Lands to honor and remember our fallen soldiers.

### Passed by the House to the Senate

**H.B. 1500** – Under this bill, authorized pharmacists and pharmacies associated with long-term care facilities would be able to re-label, repackage and dispense prescription drugs which nursing home residents are able to acquire through the U.S. Veterans’ Administration.

**H.B. 1174** – This bill would prohibit the release of 911 callers’ names, phone numbers, addresses and locations unless a court determined that the public interest in release of the information outweighed the interest of nondisclosure.

**H.B. 973** – This bill would require a funeral establishment that has held cremated remains for more than 120 days to contact veteran’s service organizations to determine if the remains are of a veteran. And if so, the cremated remains would be turned over to a veteran’s service organization for final disposition in a national cemetery.

**H.B. 728** – This bill would incorporate National Fire Protection Association standards, which allow multiple emergency control devices and electrical disconnects at gas stations to allow for a larger bay area to reduce congestion and enhance safety. The legislation would only be mandatory for newly constructed, modified or expanded stations.



# On the road with the Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

## ***Southeastern Veterans Center, Spring City, Chester County***

The Southeastern Veterans Center, which the committee toured Aug. 1, currently accommodates 304 veterans.

All residents receive medical, clinical and nursing services, drug and nutritional therapy, rehabilitative services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy and recreational therapy, dental services, social services, and laundry, transportation, housekeeping, maintenance, security, business management, and related services.

The center is building a new, state-of-the-art facility based on the Green House concept. The Green House model is the vision of Dr. William Thomas, a Harvard-educated geriatrician, and is designed to feel more like a private home or apartment. There will be six units, two per floor, with each unit housing 15 people. Each individual will have a private bedroom and full bathroom, opening to a central living and dining area. The new wing is expected to open in the spring of 2012.

## ***Limerick Generating Station, Limerick Township, Montgomery County***

The committee toured the Limerick Generating Station, one of Exelon's three nuclear power plants in Pennsylvania, on Aug. 1, where we were shown the various safety and emergency response programs and initiatives that are in place at Limerick and the other nuclear power plants in Pennsylvania. Safety and the ability to respond to an emergency is a top priority for the industry.

Limerick employs 600 people and is responsible for \$115 million in direct economic output to the state's economy.



***Rep. Sainato learns about safety procedures at Limerick Generating Station.***

## ***Red Cross House, Philadelphia***

The committee toured the Red Cross House on Aug. 2. The Red Cross House is a short-term recovery center for families displaced by fire, a water main break, a gas leak or another incident. Residents stay an average of 21 days. In these three weeks, families receive the support they need to return to normal and independent living. Additionally, they receive an array of services including a case worker who creates a unique disaster recovery plan for each family.

The Red Cross hopes to continue to receive support from the Pennsylvania legislature in order to build more Red Cross Houses to help families in other parts of the state receive the same assistance as those in Philadelphia.

Additionally, the Red Cross offers assistance to military families in contacting a service member in times of an emergency and dealing with the psychological impacts of deployments.

## ***State Fire Academy, Lewistown, Mifflin County***

The Subcommittee on Security and Response Readiness had an informative tour, led by State Fire Commissioner Ed Mann, on Aug. 16.

The academy trains and prepares responders for a variety of incidents. Recently, the academy has been contacted by the Marcellus Shale industry to provide emergency response training for its workers. Commissioner Mann noted that emergency responders are struggling to fully understand the hazards associated with natural gas exploration in the Marcellus Shale, and said the academy will look into programs to train firefighters and emergency responders about hazards associated with it.

Local fire chiefs in the Lewistown area donated land to the Commonwealth to build a fire academy in the area. The academy began operating in 1953. The first training class was held in June 1955 and offered tuition-free training for in-state public emergency responders. It maintains that purpose today.

## ***Penn State University Applied Research Laboratory, University Park***

The Subcommittee on Security and Response Readiness on Aug. 17 toured Penn State's Applied Research Laboratory. It is the largest interdisciplinary research unit at PSU, containing approximately 1,350 faculty, engineers, staff and students.

The Applied Research Laboratory specializes in defense science and technologies, with a focus on naval missions and related areas. It also provides technical expertise for the U.S. Navy as well as various industries within the Commonwealth and across the nation.



# About the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs provides resources and assistance to Pennsylvania's one million veterans and their families, and provides care for aging and disabled veterans.

It also prepares the Pennsylvania National Guard for combat, performing worldwide combat and combat support operations, providing global reach and the projection of U.S. military power in support of national objectives; and, at the command of the governor, providing trained personnel to support state and local authorities in times of natural disaster or civil strife.

The department was created by the Pennsylvania General Assembly on April 11, 1973. It employs more than

21,000 military and civilian personnel in more than 80 communities statewide. It is overseen by the adjutant general, a governor appointed cabinet-level position.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and Pennsylvania National Guard are headquartered at Fort Indiantown Gap in Lebanon County, about 20 miles east of Harrisburg. Fort Indiantown Gap has more than 17,000 acres and 140 training areas and facilities for year-round training for military forces, law enforcement agents and civilians from across the nation and is one of the busiest National Guard Training Centers in the country.

To learn more, visit the department's website at [www.dmva.state.pa.us](http://www.dmva.state.pa.us).



*Rep. Sainato attends the VFW Post 315 picnic.*



*Rep. Sainato with VFW Post 267 at Bessemer Community Day Parade.*



## Help available for local veterans in my office

I have arranged to have a representative from the American Legion make regular visits to my local office at 20 S. Mercer St., Z-Penn Building, New Castle, to help veterans with concerns about a variety of issues.

To arrange a meeting with a veterans service representative, please contact my district office at (724) 656-1112.

Information available as part of this service includes veteran housing benefits, financial assistance, employment benefits, veteran and dependent education benefits and other state-sponsored veteran programs.



**STATE REP. CHRIS SAINATO**

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**INSIDE:**

- A look back at House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness accomplishments
- About the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- On the road with the Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

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# Be prepared; plan to survive a disaster

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. The best way for you and your family to survive is by being prepared.

Being prepared can help you respond effectively in a dangerous situation and sometimes even avoid the danger completely.

Local responders may not be able to reach you immediately, or they may need to focus their efforts elsewhere. Your ability to be self-sufficient may be a matter of survival for you and your family. Don't wait for help that may not be available or may come too late. Take control of your own safety.



To learn how to make an emergency plan for your home, vehicle and workplace, please visit <http://www.readypa.org>.

## 10 POTENTIAL EMERGENCIES

- Floods
- Fires
- Terrorism
- Winter storms
- Dam failures
- Influenza pandemic
- Hazardous material incidents
- Earthquakes and landslides
- Nuclear facility accidents
- Tropical storms, tornadoes and thunderstorms



*Rep. Sainato participates in the Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony at Rhoades Estates.*



*Rep. Sainato joins the Darlington Fire Department at Darlington Days.*