



Chelsa Wagner

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

22ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

WWW.PAHOUSE.COM/WAGNER



SPRING 2011

Capitol Office: 111 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202022 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2022 • (717) 783-1582 • Fax: (717) 780-4755

Constituent Service Office: 900 Brookline Blvd. • Pittsburgh, PA 15226 • (412) 343-2094 • Fax: (412) 343-2262

Satellite Office: Caste Village Shoppes (Between Frank's Shoes & the Mall Entrance) • 5301 Grove Road • Suite M112
Pittsburgh, PA 15236 • (412) 881-1005 • Fax: (412) 881-1007

Dear Friends:

It is my pleasure to once again have the opportunity to provide you with an update on my activities on your behalf over the past half-year.

Strengthening our community libraries remains one of my priorities, and funding I secured has already begun flowing to libraries in both the city and county. I also continue to advocate for long-term, dedicated funding for public transit, along with reform of the Port Authority's governance to ensure tax dollars are spent wisely and efficiently.

I am gratified to have been entrusted with another term as your representative in last November's election, and will continue to strive to always act in the best interests of those I represent. Since my first campaign in 2006, I have advocated for a smaller, less costly legislature, greater efficiency and transparency in state government, and an end to the pay-to-play culture of Harrisburg.

I continue to fight to see the reforms that Pennsylvanians have been demanding finally being put in place, and I will gladly work with members of either party to accomplish this. I was pleased that the first bills to be considered in the new legislative session were reform measures with broad bipartisan support, and I will fight to continue on the path toward a more responsible and responsive state government.

For my own part, I have introduced a "Pay-to-Play Prevention Act" that would end Pennsylvania's infamous status as having one of the weakest campaign finance laws in the nation. Allowing unlimited amounts of money to flow into campaigns with insufficient transparency has led to a failure to address the needs of average Pennsylvanians and, in the worst cases, outright corruption. My legislation would help put an end to this stain on our politics.

Along with providing a new perspective on the need for reform, our new state leadership should shift the geographic focus of our state government. Our new House majority and minority leaders, our new Democratic Appropriations and Caucus chairmen, and of course our new governor are all from Allegheny County. To make sure our region can compete for limited state and federal resources, all of us – Democratic and Republican, city and suburb – must work together toward a successful future.

As always, it is my pleasure to serve you and I encourage you to contact one of my offices with any matter of concern.

Kindest regards,

Chelsa Wagner
Representative, 22nd District

2010 Property Tax/Rent Rebate available

Many Pennsylvania homeowners and renters meeting certain income and eligibility requirements can once again benefit from Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program and claim a cash rebate on property taxes or rent paid during 2010. Applications are available from Rep. Wagner's constituent service offices at 900 Brookline Blvd. and in the Caste Village Shoppes.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 and older; widows and widowers 50 and older; and permanently disabled individuals 18 and older. The income limit is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters (excluding half of Social Security income), and the maximum rebate for both homeowners and renters is \$650.

The deadline to apply for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2010 is June 30, 2011. Rep. Wagner's office staff is always available to assist constituents with completing and submitting the application. Documentation of all income received in 2010 must be included with your application. Homeowners also must submit copies of their property tax payment receipts for 2010, and renters must complete the rent certificate included with the application.

Rep. Wagner has introduced legislation to ensure that all Pennsylvanians receiving a rebate benefit fully. Currently, landlords are permitted to claim up to 100 percent of a tenant's rebate if this is part of the lease agreement. Unfortunately, many landlords include and enforce this provision without the full understanding of the tenant or their family. The lease agreement provided to personal care homes by the state Department of Public Welfare actually includes boilerplate language claiming the rebate for landlords.

House Bill 415 would prohibit the landlord from claiming any portion of a tenant's rebate to ensure that this program fulfills its purpose of benefitting vulnerable Pennsylvanians living on fixed incomes.

"As we work to plug a record state budget deficit, we must be mindful that our citizens face their own challenges – the elderly and disabled who depend on this rebate foremost among them," Wagner said. "We must make sure this money reaches those for whom it is intended."

PAT needs reform along with funding

The Port Authority bus service reductions planned for March are causing headaches for commuters and others who rely on public transit, with several bus routes in Rep. Wagner's legislative district and dozens more around the county being affected.

"I realize how vital transit is to many of my constituents and the difficulties that these cuts will cause, but economic and political circumstances do not favor an immediate solution," Wagner said. "I also have sought to leverage transit as a resource for community development in the neighborhoods I represent, and it is clear that the cuts are a setback to these efforts."

Special programs are available for senior citizens, disabled individuals, and those receiving Medical Assistance who find themselves in need of transportation due to the cuts. Please contact Rep. Wagner's constituent service office at (412) 343-2094 for more information about these programs.

There are many questions as to why the PAT board chose to reduce service when \$45 million in emergency funding for the authority was approved last

December. While PAT could have chosen to maintain current service until July using these funds, the authority claims that a devastating 50 percent cut would then have been necessary unless a funding solution were to be approved at the state level before this time. The 15 percent cut in March should allow this level of service to be maintained until July 2012, according to PAT.

While opinions differ on which choice is preferable, conditions in Harrisburg do not appear to be ripe for a legislative solution in the near future.

"I and many other legislators are fully aware of the value of public transit to our constituents and communities and advocate full funding, but we have received no indication from our new governor or legislative leadership that this is a priority for them," Wagner said.

Despite the challenges, Rep. Wagner remains committed to continuing to advocate for a funding solution as soon



as possible and to seeing transit service restored and expanded.

She also is reintroducing legislation that would provide PAT board appointments to the governor, legislative leaders, and the City of Pittsburgh. Currently, all board appointments are made by the county executive. The lack of a diversity of viewpoints on the board has been cited as a deficiency within PAT by multiple independent analyses, and this proposal is essential to addressing this problem.

"PAT must reform its governance to restore the confidence of county residents and state officials," Wagner said.

Funds flowing to county libraries

Rep. Wagner led the effort to secure a dedicated funding stream for the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) through legislation passed last year authorizing table games at Pennsylvania's casinos. The ACLA will receive 85 percent of the county's 1 percent share of table games proceeds. The first quarterly payment was made last October.

"Libraries improve the quality of life in our communities and are an essential resource for residents of all ages," Wagner said. "It was my pleasure to advocate for this important source of funding to sustain our local libraries."

McNeilly grocery now open

Rep. Wagner has advocated since taking office for a new grocery store at the corner of McNeilly Road and Sussex Ave. on the Brookline/Baldwin Township border. In November, these South Hills communities welcomed Aldi, which opened a brand new facility on the site. This should be a convenient grocery option for many neighborhoods in the area.



Visit Rep. Wagner's website at www.pahouse.com/Wagner to sign up for regular e-mail alerts.

51/88 reconstruction planned

Last fall, PennDOT announced a major reconstruction project of the Route 51/Route 88 intersection to take place beginning in fall 2012. This \$15 million project is fully funded and is expected to improve safety and reduce delay times by as much as 40 percent after completion in fall 2014.

“This intersection is important to residents and commuters alike and has been in need of attention for many years,” Wagner said. “I was pleased to advocate for this project to be funded during a period when transportation dollars are scarce.”

According to PennDOT, this project is necessary not only due to the traffic jams and accidents that regularly affect travel in this area, but also due to the need to replace deteriorating bridges that otherwise could cause road closures.

The main construction feature of the project will be a “jug handle” to be used by northbound traffic on Route 51 to access Route 88, Glenbury Street and Hillview Street, eliminating left turns in this area. The jug handle will be

constructed in the first phase of the project to allow four-lane traffic on Route 51 throughout construction.

Traffic signals and pedestrian access will be improved as part of the project, and public transit access is expected to be maintained during construction.

The most disruptive aspect of the project will prevent access to Route 51 from Route 88 for approximately two months, with PennDOT posting an 11-mile detour via Connor Road. Motorists using local streets rather than the posted detour are asked to use caution.

Improvements to the Route 51 corridor have been a top concern for Rep. Wagner. She initiated a working group of municipalities stretching from the Liberty Tunnels to the Elizabeth Bridge to study sustainable planning and development in the corridor. The Sustainable Design Assessment Team of the American Institute of Architects visited the corridor in October and made recommendations to the working group, whose work continues on this initiative.



These dilapidated bridges along Routes 51 (left) and 88 (right) have led to the reconstruction project set to begin next year. When completed, delay times and safety should also be improved. Photos are courtesy of PennDOT.

Wagner working with KO officials and parents

Over the past year, the Keystone Oaks School Board has held several meetings about the possible consolidation of its three elementary schools, Aiken, Dormont and Myrtle. The meetings were heavily attended by concerned parents who urged the board to keep their neighborhood schools open. A task force was formed last fall to further investigate other options the board may have instead of closing and consolidating schools.

Rep. Wagner and her state House colleagues representing parts of the district met with the Keystone Oaks School Board and administration in December to discuss potential options to keep all school buildings open. This was a candid and constructive discussion on how to work together toward solving the challenges faced by the district, as well as the real limitations of the state’s own budgetary situation and the uncertainty of a new administration.

While achieving the best possible solution for Keystone Oaks’ students and communities will require many more discussions and deliberations, it was important for these efforts to begin. Rep. Wagner will be continuing communication with district officials and other community members in assisting Keystone Oaks, and will keep constituents updated on these efforts.



Marcellus jobs, safety top Wagner agenda

While the Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling industry is bringing economic opportunity to many Pennsylvanians, there is no shortage of cautionary tales about water pollution, noise and odors, and road damage near drilling areas. As drillers begin to explore sites closer to residential areas, it is imperative that action be taken to protect residents and municipalities from potential costs and hazards.

First, Pennsylvania must end its status as the only state with a significant drilling industry to not impose an extraction tax. An extraction (or “severance”) tax is a built-in cost of business for drillers in every other state where they operate. In addition, most other states levy a property tax on drillers’ reserves, while Pennsylvania does not. Also, gas drilled in Pennsylvania costs far less for companies to transport to major east coast markets than gas from other states.

A reasonable severance tax will allow sufficient funding for state agencies tasked with ensuring that drilling is being conducted safely, protecting water resources, supporting county and local governments facing challenges from the growth of the industry, repairing roads and bridges damaged by drillers’ heavy equipment, training first responders on drilling-related emergencies, and training Pennsylvania residents for jobs now being done by workers from other parts of the country.

Rep. Wagner fully supports proposals introduced in the House to impose a reasonable extraction tax in order to meet these critical priorities.

Residents also are in need of stronger regulations on drillers to protect property and water resources. Rep. Wagner is a co-sponsor of legislation that would require drillers to disclose the chemicals used in the drilling process, clarify the ability of local governments to place zoning regulations on drilling, ensure that surface property owners receive compensation for damages, track the discharge of drilling wastewater, and prohibit drilling within 2,500 feet of a reservoir. She also supports legislation to prevent drilling companies from receiving tax credits unless they employ Pennsylvania workers.

“The shale industry has great potential as a source of jobs and revenue for Pennsylvania, but it cannot be at the expense of the health and safety of our residents,” Wagner said. “Enacting meaningful legislation to address these challenges will be one of my top priorities in the new legislative session.”



Rep. Wagner surveys a natural gas drilling rig on a tour of Marcellus Shale sites in Westmoreland County.

2010 Senior Fair

Rep. Wagner held her 4th Annual Senior Fair in October at Resurrection Church in Brookline. Constituents had the opportunity to meet Rep. Wagner and her staff, hear from vendors and service providers, and receive free flu and pneumonia shots.



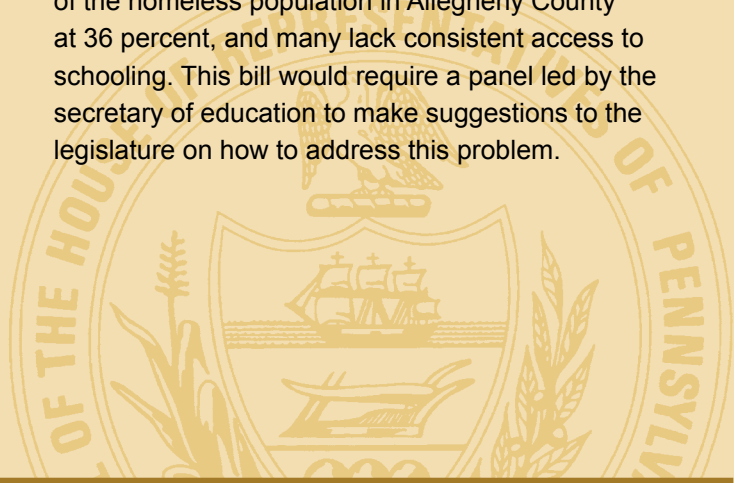
Rep. Wagner thanks all who attended!

Visit Rep. Wagner’s Caste Village office, between Frank’s Shoes and the Mall entrance. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday.



Rep. Wagner's Legislative Update:

- The **Pay-to-Play Prevention Act** would end Pennsylvania's status as having some of the weakest campaign finance laws of any state in the nation. This legislation would institute campaign contribution limits in Pennsylvania for the first time, require disclosure of all campaign contributions by those receiving state contracts, and ban personal use of campaign funds.
- Rep. Wagner once again has introduced **Port Authority Board Reform** legislation. With all members currently appointed by the county executive, the lack of diverse viewpoints on the board was cited as a deficiency by multiple independent analyses. This bill would provide appointments to the governor, state legislative leaders, and the City of Pittsburgh.
- The **Green Work Force Training Act** was reintroduced by Rep. Wagner. This legislation would provide financial support to training programs in the growing energy efficiency and renewable energy industries, especially those focusing on the unemployed. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, a total of 106,000 Pennsylvanians currently are working for renewable energy or energy efficiency companies, and more jobs are being added daily.
- The **Senior Rebate Protection Act**, which was unanimously approved by the House Urban Affairs Committee last March, was reintroduced by Rep. Wagner. This would prohibit landlords (mainly personal care homes) from claiming any portion of the state rent rebate received by a tenant. These rebates, funded through lottery proceeds, are important to many seniors and disabled individuals on fixed incomes.
- **Disabled Parking Fraud Prevention** legislation introduced by Rep. Wagner would increase penalties for fraudulent use of a parking placard and require recertification every five years to ensure that spaces are available for those who truly need them.
- Legislation creating a **Homeless Children's Education Task Force** was introduced by Rep. Wagner. Children now make up the largest proportion of the homeless population in Allegheny County at 36 percent, and many lack consistent access to schooling. This bill would require a panel led by the secretary of education to make suggestions to the legislature on how to address this problem.



Rep. Wagner's local constituent service offices are here to help you!

- State and federal tax forms
- College and financial aid resources
- Housing issues
- Food assistance
- Employment issues
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate questions
- Car registrations, PennDOT forms
- Birth certificate applications
- Questions about Pennsylvania Department of Welfare services (food stamps, LIHEAP, etc.)
- Applying for PACE and PACENET drug coverage for seniors
- Capitol tours
- And any other question related to state government



PLUS FREE NOTARY PUBLIC SERVICE



**STATE REPRESENTATIVE
CHELSA WAGNER**

P.O. Box 202022
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2022

lpo.ts.0311

COMMUNITY SHREDDING EVENT

Let Rep. Wagner help with your spring cleaning

Please join Rep. Wagner on Saturday, April 16 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Castle Shannon Volunteer Fire Department, 3600 Library Road, for a community shredding event.

Shredding is not only environmentally friendly, but protects personal information. Constituents will have the opportunity to bring up to five (5) boxes or bags of confidential items to the truck for shredding.

Acceptable items for shredding include:

- Bank information and cancelled checks
- Mortgage & loan information
- Letters, envelopes, ledgers
- Outdated bills
- Medical information
- Any other clean paper
- Obsolete invoices

For more information, please contact Rep. Wagner's constituent service office at (412) 343-2094.

EITC benefits local students

This year, the Bridge Educational Foundation will receive a \$44,000 donation from U.S. Steel through the Commonwealth's Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC). These funds will support scholarships for students attending a number of local private and parochial schools. Schools in and near Rep. Wagner's legislative district that will benefit include:

- Bishop Leonard – St. Mary of the Mount Academy, Mt. Washington
- Cardinal Wright Regional School, North Side
- Good Shepherd Christian Preschool, Whitehall
- St. Gabriel School, Whitehall

Rep. Wagner worked to avert a planned reduction in the amount provided by the EITC during last year's state budget negotiations, and has supported legislation to return funding to the level which existed before cuts two years ago.

Eligible businesses can claim a tax credit for as much as 90 percent of EITC contributions up to \$300,000. For more information, visit www.newpa.com or call 1-866-GO-NEWPA.