



State Representative  23rd Legislative District

Dan Frankel

Democratic Caucus Chairman

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Frankel fighting GOP budget cuts Pa. should use \$1 billion in unexpected revenue

I am fighting the state budget proposals from Gov. Tom Corbett and House Republicans, which would make cuts that are much deeper than necessary. They want to hold to a budget number set before the Treasury Department realized Pennsylvania will have \$1 billion in unexpected revenue. We also have options such as passing a reasonable tax on Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling, as all other major gas-producing states already have. I voted against the House Republican budget, which includes:

■ A \$259 million cut to hospitals (\$141 million state and \$118 million federal matching funds). The cost to treat uninsured residents would then be shifted to the hospitals and to insurance ratepayers. Every state cut in Medicaid creates twice the harm, because we also lose federal dollars distributed to states based on Medicaid spending.

■ A \$42 million cut in state funding for the University of Pittsburgh. This would have a wide-reaching effect beyond a huge tuition increase for students and families. Pitt has been an economic engine for our region, helping to keep some vitality in our economy even during these difficult times. It attracts \$700 million a year in federal research dollars, creating jobs and spin-off businesses in the community; these proposed cuts would make Pitt less competitive for federal research dollars, disabling that economic force.

As a trustee of the University of Pittsburgh and as someone who represents thousands of university students, faculty and staff, I value the important investment and returns of higher education.

■ A \$26.7 million cut to Pittsburgh Public Schools, which would result in higher property taxes and larger class sizes – and could mean the closure of even more neighborhood schools. This could also trigger an end to important early childhood programs that have been shown to pay off years down the road. The Center for Education Policy noted that Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation to demonstrate academic gains across the board from 2002 to 2008. We've kept improving, while other states have not.

■ A cut of more than 10 percent in funding for the Nurse Family Partnership and domestic violence, rape crisis, breast cancer screening and homeless assistance programs.

Counter to Gov. Corbett's rhetoric about shared sacrifice, the proposed Republican budgets put all the sacrifice firmly on the backs of working families and let Marcellus Shale gas drillers and tobacco companies off the hook.

I will continue to call for a more reasonable budget that would protect our educational investment without shifting the burden to our most vulnerable neighbors through drastic human service cuts.

TELL GOP LEADERS TO PASS FAIR BUDGET

If you would like to send a message to Governor Corbett and Republican legislative leaders about the state budget, please visit www.pahouse.com/action_2011/



Rep. Frankel talks with University of Pittsburgh students about deep funding cuts Gov. Corbett and House Republicans have proposed for Pitt, Penn State and other state-related and state-owned universities.



Rep. Frankel speaks at a packed state Capitol rally with Pitt students in favor of restoring the funding for higher education that would be cut under Republican budget plans.

Pa. GOP attacking basic protections, services

Many of our roads and bridges are crumbling, and our buses are overfilled. But instead of focusing on the important problem of Pennsylvania's infrastructure, Republicans are taking advantage of their House and Senate majorities, and control of the executive branch, to try and push through a radical agenda to limit Pennsylvanians' basic rights.

This includes attacks on:

- **Women's health** – changing the rules for abortion providers in such a way that it would put them out of business, without protecting vulnerable patients.
- **Voting rights** – by requiring government-issued photo

identification at the polls – a move that would make it more difficult for seniors, low-income citizens, and students to vote while costing taxpayers millions.

- **Basic education** – privatizing education through a voucher system that would send public dollars to private schools, without requiring any accountability to make sure students progress.

Meanwhile, the Washington lobby Americans for Tax Reform has been put in charge of deciding whether or not Pennsylvanians can ask Marcellus Shale drillers to fund the local communities they're disrupting, and to preserve the environment they may be placing at risk.

Our governor and other Republicans signed an ATR pledge not to raise new revenue, even from major oil companies based in other states – and even, apparently, when their constituents want some recompense for the natural gas riches drilled from Pennsylvania lands and exported to gas-hungry countries.

I'll be working with my fellow Democrats to try and block the proposals, and will continue to call on the administration to put its focus on rebuilding Pennsylvania's roads and bridges, and providing funding for our basic community needs like public transportation and health care.

Frankel supports oversight, tax on Marcellus Shale drilling

Almost weekly, news stories provide a vivid example of the benefits and risks posed by Marcellus Shale drilling. Reports raise concerns about the safety of our drinking water, and also remind us of the shale's potential to bring incredible economic vitality to the region.

One fact is certain: Drillers are already here. Our government needs to catch up and make sure that we're instituting strict regulations to protect our water, our land, our roads, and also our workers.

We must recognize that the drilling puts a strain on our roads and our local police and emergency services. Simply put, when Pennsylvania families are being asked to sacrifice, it's time for oil and gas companies to pay their fair share. The argument that a tax will drive drillers away just doesn't make sense; a 2008 report from the independent research group Headwaters Economics showed that states that cut taxes to increase drilling saw no impact, except for lost revenue.

I'm co-sponsoring several bills this session that would help us take a more measured, cautious approach with drillers:

- A moratorium on state forest leasing.
- A tax on natural gas extraction, at an amount only slightly less than West Virginia.
- Legislation to increase the bonds put on wells, so that if drillers simply walk away from a well without leaving the land as they found it, the Commonwealth would have the money to do the cleanup instead.

I will continue to monitor the reports about the impact of natural gas drilling, particularly on our drinking water. Spurred by public pressure, the Corbett Department of Environmental Protection did ask the industry to stop dumping untreated wastewater into rivers and streams. But a request is not enough; I will keep pushing for stronger protections that would have the force of law.

Fighting discrimination

I was proud that in the last legislative session, my bill to expand protection from discrimination for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Pennsylvanians gathered the most co-sponsors ever, and was voted out of committee.

Unfortunately, this year that legislation to expand basic civil rights protections faces a more difficult road. The chairman of the State Government Committee, which would hear my bill (H.B. 300), is an adamant opponent of providing these rights. Worse yet, he is sponsoring legislation that would deny same-sex couples any chance of equal access to civil marriage by putting a ban in the state constitution.

While some faces in Harrisburg have changed, I know and polls show that the majority of Pennsylvanians still favor extending basic civil rights protections – to work, find housing, and go to restaurants, shops, and entertainment – regardless of race, religion, disability and sexual orientation or gender identity. I will continue to advocate for equal protections, while working to prevent any further erosion of rights for the LGBT community in Pennsylvania.

Frankel elected to House leadership as Democratic Caucus chairman

In November, I was elected by my colleagues to the position of Democratic Caucus chairman, the third-highest ranking member of leadership.

I am deeply honored by my colleagues' confidence. I will work as part of the Democratic Caucus team to advance policies that benefit working families and help to create and retain jobs in Pennsylvania. This session will be a difficult one and balancing the budget will be challenging, primarily because the nationwide economic recovery is not as rapid as we all would hope. The people of Pennsylvania will need Democratic legislators to defend the social safety net and maintain state services, especially for our most vulnerable residents.

I have been privileged to serve as your representative since 1999. While I will add new responsibilities in my leadership role, I will stand firm in my advocacy for the needs and concerns of the 23rd Legislative District. I will continue to champion initiatives such as increased funding for mass transit, community and economic development in Pittsburgh and other cities, public education, biomedical research and expanded access to health care, as well as fighting discrimination.



Rep. Frankel speaks at a Capitol news conference in favor of passing a tax on natural gas extraction. All 11 states that out-produce Pennsylvania in natural gas have an extraction tax or fee. Rep. Frankel is co-sponsoring several bills that would help Pennsylvania to take a more measured, cautious approach with gas drillers, including a moratorium on state forest leasing.

House passes bipartisan measures to increase government transparency

A good government is one that citizens understand, trust, and believe effectively represents them. Elected officials and public employees at all levels must be held to the highest legal, ethical and professional standards. All branches and offices of government must be transparent and open to the public. Taxpayer money – and all public dollars – must be used legally, responsibly and ethically, and all expenditures of public money must be transparent and open to public review. There must be a clear and unmistakable wall between campaign activity and taxpayer-funded public service.

I'm glad that the House again passed bipartisan measures to make our government more transparent. If passed by the Senate, they would:

- Create stronger whistleblower protections for people employed by the legislature or working on state contracts;
- Give the public access to information about no-bid contracts through an expansion of the "Right to Know" law; and
- Strengthen the lobbyist disclosure act, to make information about lobbyist gifts clear.

Additionally, we voted to create a public database of state expenditures so any citizen could look up how government funding is spent.

Working to rein in state prison spending

Soon, I'll be introducing legislation that will also create more transparency in another critical area of government: the Department of Corrections. My proposal would make it possible for judges, juries and the public to access easily information about the costs of sentencing for prisoners.

Currently, Missouri judges can find out the cost of incarceration before issuing a sentence. They can also look at the statistical evidence showing how likely the prisoner is to commit another crime.

In Pennsylvania, the cost of incarcerating prisoners goes up faster than inflation every single year. Meanwhile, other states are cutting their corrections budgets. It's important that our judges, and the public, have the ability to find out both what sentences will cost the taxpayers, and how likely those sentences are to actually prevent criminals from committing new crimes.



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INSIDE:

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School vouchers: Still a bad idea; EITC wins bipartisan support

I oppose a bill currently in the state Senate that would drain your tax dollars from public schools and hand them over to private schools through vouchers with little or no accountability or oversight. Private schools in the new program could reject any student at their own discretion, which could create an unequal system for students with disabilities or special needs.

Over the past decade, we've adopted measurement tools to help understand how our students, and schools, are doing. But private school students receiving vouchers wouldn't be required to take those tests, so we'd have no way to ensure that students were performing better than in public schools. In fact, after a requirement to give the same tests took effect in Wisconsin, the results showed students on vouchers performing about the same or worse than their counterparts in public schools.

This type of legislation was defeated by Democrats and Republicans when then-Gov. Tom Ridge proposed it in the 1990s, and it's still a bad idea – especially when the current governor and House Republicans are already proposing to cut \$1 billion from K-12 education. There are proven ways to enhance children's learning, early childhood education among them. I will continue to oppose voucher proposals and to advocate for fair funding to maintain our education success of the past eight years.

I recently voted for a bipartisan expansion of the Educational Improvement Tax Credit, which leverages public dollars to gain substantial private sector support in contributions to qualified scholarship, educational improvement, and pre-kindergarten scholarship organizations. The bill the House passed (H.B. 1330) would expand the program from \$75 million to \$100 million for 2011-12 and to \$200 million for 2012-13. The bill is now in the Senate, which should give this public/private partnership priority over the divisive voucher bill.



Rep. Frankel meets with parents from the Latino Family Center in Squirrel Hill.



Rep. Frankel tours the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry, which moved to Hazelwood Avenue last year, with (from left) Becky Abrams, SHCFP director; state Sen. Jay Costa and Aryeh Sherman, president & CEO, Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh.