



# STATE REPRESENTATIVE **JOSEPH F. MARKOSEK**

25TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

House Transportation Chairman

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## SPRING NEWSLETTER *Update 2009*

### Markosek named Transportation Advocate of the Year

Rep. Markosek, who serves as chairman of the House Transportation Committee, was honored last month by the Pennsylvania Highway Information Association as the Transportation Advocate of the Year.



*Rep. Markosek receives the Transportation Advocate of the Year Award.*

PHIA commended Rep. Markosek for his leadership and role in advocating for additional transportation infrastructure funds, specifically on Act 44, the state's transportation funding law.

"I am thrilled to have been chosen by PHIA for this award," Markosek said. "During my tenure as transportation chairman, my staff and I have worked very hard to develop a fiscally responsible plan to address the critical state of Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure and funding. It is an honor to be recognized for those efforts."

Rep. Markosek was appointed chairman of the House Transportation Committee in 2006. He was immediately charged with addressing the findings of the Governor's Transportation Funding and Reform Commission, which reported that Pennsylvania had 5,913 structurally deficient bridges – the highest number of any state; 8,528 miles of roads in poor condition; and 25 percent transit service cuts looming in the future.

In 2007, under Rep. Markosek's leadership, the General Assembly passed legislation creating Act 44. The law authorizes a 50-year public-public partnership between the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation that will provide billions of dollars for investment in transportation without increasing taxes.

"We've made progress in bringing awareness to Pennsylvania's deteriorating infrastructure, but with anticipated cuts in the national and state budgets, we can expect increased challenges to fund essential repairs and maintenance," Markosek said. "As federal stimulus money comes in, I will work expeditiously to allocate those funds to critical projects across the state to ensure the safety of state roads and bridges."

### New law exempts trained military from CDL skills test in Pennsylvania

A new law waives the Commercial Driver's License skills test for Pennsylvania residents who are active duty military or recently discharged veterans.

The person must hold a valid Class 2, 3 or 4 driver's license issued by any of the military branches or have at least two years of experience working in commercial-type vehicles as a part of a military job.

In order to obtain a military CDL skills test waiver, applicants first will have to obtain a CDL learner's permit and successfully complete all of the knowledge tests applicable to the type of commercial vehicle they intend to operate.

Fact sheets and forms related to the waiver are available online at [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us) by clicking the "military personnel/veterans" link under information centers.



*State Rep. Joseph Markosek takes the oath of office for the 2009-10 legislative session in January. During his 26 years in office, Markosek has maintained a record of perfect attendance when the legislature was in session.*

## Markosek introduces bill that would protect teen drivers

Rep. Markosek has introduced legislation that would impose stricter driving standards for teen drivers in an effort to reduce vehicular accidents and fatalities involving junior licensees. The bill would increase training requirements, prohibit the use of certain electronic devices while driving and create passenger restrictions.

Rep. Markosek said he introduced the bill due to an increase in fatal accidents involving inexperienced teen drivers who thought they could balance driving with other distractions. In 2007 alone, PennDOT reported more than 100 teen driving fatalities, and that doesn't include serious accidents that did not result in death. Rep. Markosek said he doesn't believe anyone should take their eyes off the road, especially young drivers who lack proper vehicle instruction time.

Rep. Markosek's bill would give new drivers time to learn and correctly respond to many scenarios while accompanied by a seasoned driver, and remove distractions like cell phones, iPods, text messaging and passengers from taking a young driver's primary focus off the road.

"I believe it is essential to establish safe driving practices early on before bad habits settle in," Rep. Markosek said. "And, most importantly, it would help prevent vehicle crashes, the leading cause of death for young people."

The legislation (H.B. 67) was reported out of the House Transportation Committee and now goes to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

According to the American Automobile Association, motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 cause of teen deaths. More than 5,000 U.S. teenagers die in vehicle accidents every year.

## Applications for energy efficiency loan and rebate program available online

The Keystone HELP Energy Efficiency Loan and Rebate Program is available to help families save money by conserving energy at home.

The program offers a range of low-interest loans and rebate options that encourage cost-effective energy savings. Homeowners can receive help with air sealing and insulation services, or installing high-efficiency equipment, such as heating and cooling systems, water heaters, programmable thermostats, windows and doors.

The deadline to apply is June 30. Applications and program guidelines are available at [www.keystonehelp.com](http://www.keystonehelp.com).

The program funding is just one component of a \$650 million Alternative Energy Investment Fund created by the General Assembly last year. More programs to help businesses of all sizes and households increase energy efficiency and lower energy costs will be coming online soon. More information can be found at the state Department of Environmental Protection Web site, [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us).

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## Low-cost prescriptions available through PACE/PACENET

PACE, PACENET and PACE Plus Medicare are Pennsylvania's prescription assistance programs for older adults, offering low-cost prescription medication to qualified residents 65 and older.

To be eligible for PACE, a person must be 65 or older, a Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days prior to the date of application and cannot be enrolled in the Department of Public Welfare's Medicaid prescription benefit. For a single person, total income must be \$14,500 or less. For a married couple, combined total income must be \$17,700 or less.

To be eligible for PACENET, a person must be 65 or older, a Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days prior to the date of application and cannot be enrolled in the Department of Public Welfare's Medicaid prescription benefit. A single person's total income can be between \$14,500 and \$23,500. A couple's combined total income can be between \$17,700 and \$31,500.

Rep. Markosek and his staff can answer any questions you have about these programs. They can also help you apply.

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## Emergency actions will help Pennsylvanians

Gov. Rendell recently announced unprecedented emergency executive actions to provide immediate relief to residents in need and to spark economic recovery. The actions include:

- 16,000 people on the waiting list for adultBasic health coverage will be added to the program.
- \$5 million will be pumped into mortgage assistance to help unemployed workers keep their homes while they retrain or search for new jobs.
- PA CareerLink centers will expand operations in the coming months.
- About 19,000 families benefited from a \$6.6 million extension of home heating assistance.
- A new Web site – [www.parxpricefinder.com](http://www.parxpricefinder.com) – will help Pennsylvanians find the best local price for prescription drugs by providing a price comparison of local pharmacies.

For a link to all of these programs and more, visit [www.HeretoHelp.pa.gov](http://www.HeretoHelp.pa.gov). Further aid from the federal stimulus program will come through the state budget, which the General Assembly is continuing to work on. To learn more about where that money will go, visit [www.recovery.pa.gov](http://www.recovery.pa.gov).

## Cell phone legislation gaining momentum

Rep. Markosek is supporting legislation that would restrict the use of hand-held cell phones while driving. The bill would permit drivers to use Bluetooth technology or another hands-free device to make calls.

House Bill 538 would ban the use of hand-held cell phones while driving on all public roads in Pennsylvania. Exceptions would be provided for law enforcement officers, drivers of mass transit vehicles, operators of emergency vehicles when on duty, or motorists who are reporting a traffic accident or are making a 511 or 911 emergency call. A violation would be a summary offense and, upon conviction, a person would be required to pay a \$50 fine. There would be no points assessed to a driver who violates this measure.



*Rep. Markosek speaks at a news conference at the state Capitol on legislation that would ban the use of hand-held cell phones while driving.*

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, hand-held cell phones contributed to 1,245 crashes on Pennsylvania roadways in 2007. In contrast, there were 56 crashes on the state's roadways attributed to hands-free cell phone use during the same year.

Clearly, technology has evolved much



*Rep. Markosek conducts a House Transportation Committee hearing last month. The committee met to bear testimony on legislation that would require ignition interlock use for all convicted drunk drivers.*

faster than Pennsylvania laws. Rep. Markosek believes H.B. 538 is a commonsense measure that would still allow drivers to use a cell phone, but in a much safer manner.

## Take a day to visit Pennsylvania history

### Join Rep. Markosek on a trip to the state Capitol and Gettysburg National Military Park

Back by popular demand, Rep. Markosek is pleased to offer residents in the 25th Legislative District two bus trips to tour the Pennsylvania Capitol and Gettysburg. A spring tour is scheduled for Thursday, May 7 and a fall tour is scheduled for Thursday, Sept 24. Rep. Markosek is now accepting reservations for the May 7 trip only. If you are interested in attending the fall Capitol tour, please contact Lori Beatty in the district office to have your name placed on a waiting list. Rep. Markosek's staff will contact you with more information closer to the time.

The bus will depart from 4232 Northern Pike (Commerce Building) at 6:30 a.m. and return at approximately 9 p.m. The cost is \$50 per person, which includes transportation, breakfast, lunch, a tour of the Capitol and a guided tour at Gettysburg.

The bus will stop later in the evening for guests to purchase dinner.

If you have any questions, or would like to attend, please call Rep. Markosek's constituent service office.

### **YES, Rep. Markosek, I would like to attend your May 7th bus trip!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people attending: \_\_\_\_\_

**Checks should be made payable to "Rep. Joe Markosek."**

**Reservations are on a first-come basis.**

**Please return this form to Rep. Markosek's constituent service office at:  
Suite 303, Commerce Bldg., 4232 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146.**

**A staff member will contact you with further information.**



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
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## PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

### Applications for the state's 2008 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program are now available.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides rebates on the previous year's property taxes or rent to income-eligible residents who are 65 or older, 50 or older and widowed, or 18 or older with a permanent disability. The household income limit for homeowners is \$35,000; for renters, it's \$15,000. Applicants only have to count half of Social Security or federal railroad retirement benefits when calculating their income. The maximum rebate is \$650. Some senior homeowners, depending on where they live or their income, may be eligible

for an even larger rebate. If so, the additional rebate will automatically be calculated by the Department of Revenue.

If you qualified for or received a state property tax or rent rebate for the 2007 tax year, you should receive an application for the 2008 year in the mail automatically. Otherwise, you can download the form online at [www.revenue.state.pa.us/ptrr](http://www.revenue.state.pa.us/ptrr) or contact Rep. Markosek's office – plenty of copies are available and the office can help you apply.

## Time for college-bound students to complete FAFSA

If your family includes a student who will attend college this coming fall, now is the time to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to ensure your student is considered for a variety of financial aid resources.

Information from the FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for federal grants, the Pennsylvania State Grant program, scholarships, reduced-cost federal loans, work-study programs, and many school-based scholarships and financial aid programs. While the deadline to submit the FAFSA for most students seeking a State Grant is May 1, individual schools and scholarship programs often have different, and sometimes earlier, application deadlines.

You can fill out the FAFSA online at [www.PHEAA.org/FAFSA](http://www.PHEAA.org/FAFSA). The Web site also features preparation worksheets and links to other financial aid resources. If you would like a copy of the FAFSA mailed to you, call toll free 800-433-3243.

You can also contact my constituent service office for additional information.

### PHEAA announces local grant recipients in 2008

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency reported that in 2008, 961 students from the 25th Legislative District received state grants totaling more than \$2 million.