

STATE REPRESENTATIVE Jaret Gibbons

10TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



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SPRING 2011

CORBETT'S BUDGET HURTS MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES

In March, Gov. Tom Corbett proposed a \$27.3 billion budget to the legislature that makes deep cuts in public schools, higher education and other important services that shift the tax burden to local taxpayers, middle-class families and school districts.

LOCAL JOB CUTS

The governor's budget includes the elimination of as many as 100 jobs at the New Castle Youth Development Center. Closing units and cutting jobs at this large, well-run juvenile justice facility while expanding the number of managers here and at other centers in central and eastern Pennsylvania is highly questionable and unfair to our community. Staffing cuts, which the Department of Public Welfare previously denied would be proposed, should be spread across the state. The Corbett Administration should not target our community and impact local businesses already hit hard by the economic downturn.

\$15 MILLION CUT TO LOCAL SCHOOLS

His budget calls for cutting state support for public schools by \$1.1 billion, or 10 percent. This includes \$550 million for basic education in public schools. This would disproportionately hurt schools in our area, because state funding provides between 50 percent and 68 percent of their budgets.

PROPOSED \$15 MILLION CUTS TO OUR SCHOOLS

Ambridge Area	-\$1,687,254	-14.7%
Ellwood City Area	-\$1,661,580	-13.4%
Freedom Area	-\$1,148,882	-13.6%
Laurel	-\$1,143,130	-14.1%
Mohawk Area	-\$1,443,939	-13.8%
New Castle Area	-\$3,345,678	-13.5%
Riverside Beaver County	-\$1,172,907	-13.9%
Shenango Area	-\$991,603	-12.9%
Slippery Rock Area	-\$1,338,647	-14.5%
Wilmington Area	-\$870,085	-14.0%



A strong supporter of early education, Rep. Gibbons reads to pre-kindergarten students at Hartman Elementary School in Ellwood City.

The governor also wants to eliminate another \$260 million, of which \$4.1 million goes to our school districts, to invest in pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and smaller classes in the early grades. The funding is proven to help students succeed in the later grades and improve test scores. Our school districts also stand to lose another \$767,000 in reimbursements for students who transfer to charter schools.

In total, the 10 school districts in this area would lose \$15 million in state funding. This will force school districts to raise property taxes, lay off teachers, increase the number of students in classrooms and eliminate effective early education programs.

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Rep. Gibbons fights for government reforms. See page 4

50 PERCENT CUT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Gov. Corbett is also targeting higher education. His plan would cut \$625 million – more than 50 percent – for the 14 state-owned universities, plus the state-related schools: Penn State, Pitt, Temple, and Lincoln.

For students at Slippery Rock University, the University of Pittsburgh, Penn State and other schools, this cut could force huge tuition hikes and shut down some academic programs. The state funds nearly 30 percent of the state system universities' budgets to make higher education affordable to middle-class students so they can achieve the American Dream. The governor's plan essentially abandons that commitment.

STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

California	28.6%
Clarion	30.5%
Edinboro	28.7%
Indiana	30.1%
Slippery Rock	31.9%



Hundreds of college students from across Pennsylvania rally at the state Capitol to protest Gov. Corbett's proposed 50 percent funding cut for higher education.

HURTING HEALTH CARE

Our local hospitals would be hurt by Corbett's request to cut \$333 million in Medicaid payments and \$150 million in additional funding to hospitals. The state would lose millions in federal matching funds and force hospitals to raise fees, resulting in higher insurance and patient costs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CUTS

He plans to eliminate a fund providing \$23 million to county and local governments in the state for a variety of social services. As a result, county and local governments could be forced to decide between raising taxes or reducing services to children, seniors and people with disabilities.

CORPORATE TAX LOOPHOLES

If Corbett is serious about sharing the pain in this budget, then it should be shared by everyone. Instead, he already has approved hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate tax breaks. While these companies pay less, he's asking working families and retirees to pay more in property taxes for less services and college students to spend significantly more for an education. That's not sharing the pain.

CORBETT IS WRONG ON NATURAL GAS DRILLING

Gov. Corbett is ignoring public opinion by refusing to consider a fair fee or tax on Marcellus Shale natural gas companies while taking regulatory decisions away from experienced inspectors and putting them in the hands of political appointees in Harrisburg.

Opinion polls show that Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support requiring global oil and gas drilling companies to pay to protect our environment and help local communities impacted by drilling. All other natural gas producing states, including Texas, Louisiana, and Alaska, tax the extraction of this fossil fuel for a good reason.

Even the industry is prepared for a tax. Ray Walker, vice president of drilling giant Range Resources, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in March that, "We are willing to discuss a severance tax."

The governor should listen.

Gov. Corbett should not allow corporate special interests to influence his administration. He gave C. Alan Walker, the new head of the Department of Community and Economic Development and a former coal mogul, the unusual authority to influence the permitting process at the Department of Environmental Protection. Without interference last year, DEP issued 3,316 Marcellus Shale drilling permits.

Concerns also have arisen regarding the governor's office meddling in environmental enforcement. He now requires local DEP inspectors to get approval from political appointees in Harrisburg before issuing violations against Marcellus Shale drillers.

We should support an industry that is creating jobs and helping our economy. However, the governor must not allow corporate special interests and large campaign contributions to block policies that ensure these massive companies operate responsibly in our community.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

GIBBONS CALLS FOR MAJOR GOVERNMENT REFORMS

Rep. Gibbons has introduced six bills representing a bold step forward in reforming local, county and state governments. The legislation is the result of years of research that would save millions of tax dollars, improve transparency and ensure elected officials serve the public, not themselves.

ONE-CHAMBER LEGISLATURE

House Bill 918 would merge the 253 seat Senate and House into one chamber with 201 seats. Using two chambers is outdated in modern society and duplicates offices, staff and services that unnecessarily cost millions of tax dollars.

ELIMINATION OF THE OFFICE OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

House Bill 919 would amend the state constitution to eliminate the position of lieutenant governor and transfer the limited duties to other state officials. The state treasurer would be designated to complete a governor's unfulfilled term.

LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS

House Bill 920 would create term limits for legislators. State representative terms would increase to four years and limit service to three consecutive terms. State senator terms would increase from four to six years with a limit of two consecutive terms.

RECALL OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

House Bills 921 and 922 would amend the state constitution to empower voters to recall state, county and local elected officials for failing to fulfill their duties. Gibbons introduced the proposal after a former Lawrence County treasurer was charged with improper acts in performing official duties but remained on the job.

ABUSE OF OFFICE

House Bill 115 would make it illegal for a public official, a person appointed to serve on a government body or elected official to require a public employee to perform an activity not related to the office's official duties. It also outlaws "pay for play" in which a public contractor provides goods or services for the personal benefit of an elected official.

GIBBONS VOTES FOR ADDITIONAL REFORM BILLS

- To establish a user-friendly website about all state government spending;
- To stop state employees from awarding a state contract to a recent private employer;
- To ban legislators from creating nonprofits, such as the Beaver Initiative for Growth;
- To strengthen whistleblower protections for state employees and people working with the state;
- To increase penalties for illegal activities by lobbyists.

The bills await action in the state Senate.

GIBBONS DECLINES PAY INCREASE

Rep. Gibbons did not accept an automatic cost-of-living adjustment in his salary for the third straight year. A 1995 law provides an annual COLA to state elected officials.

Gibbons returned the money to the treasury to support other state programs. Starting July 1, all legislators will contribute toward the cost of health care insurance. Many legislators, including Gibbons, voluntarily contribute to this cost already.

To encourage transparency in government spending, Gibbons makes his expenses available on his website at www.pahouse.com/Gibbons.

PROTECTING SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS

Rep. Gibbons voted to expand the "Castle Doctrine," which allows a citizen to use deadly force in self defense. Currently, a person can use such force in self defense in his home, but must first try to retreat outside the home if he believes there is a threat of death, serious injury, kidnapping or rape.

The bill would make state law consistent by removing the retreat requirement at work, in a vehicle, state park or any place someone has a legal right to be. The issue has been discussed extensively in the legislature for several years and resulted in a carefully written bill. It avoids creating a "Wild West" mentality by requiring the person to show the situation posed an imminent threat.

The bill, which easily passed the House, also grants immunity in civil cases if a person can justify the need to use deadly force to stop a violent attacker.

GIBBONS SUPPORTS REPEAL OF SPRINKLER MANDATE

To reduce the cost of a new home by several thousand dollars, Gibbons voted for a bill that passed the House to eliminate a requirement that all new one- and two-family homes have sprinklers. After passing the Senate, the governor signed the bill into law April 25.

The costly sprinkler mandate had taken effect in January after an automatic update to the state building code based on changes to the International Building Code. Installing sprinklers should remain an option for buyers, not a requirement that would have put the cost of a new home out of reach for some families.

HOUSE PASSES WELFARE REFORM

Acting on the recommendations of Auditor General Jack Wagner, the House passed several bills that would reduce welfare waste and fraud. Cracking down on people cheating the system will help to ensure those who have fallen on hard times will have access to the important safety net and that tax dollars are used appropriately.

THE WELFARE REFORM BILLS WOULD DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Increase penalties for welfare fraud;
- Require county assistance offices to use a currently available system to check an applicant's income eligibility;
- Ensure applicants receive benefits in the county where they live and not receive a greater benefit payment from a neighboring county;
- Prohibit the purchase of tobacco products with benefit cards;
- Require photo ID on benefit cards to prevent them from being sold or used by an unauthorized cardholder; and
- Require drug testing for recipients with a felony drug conviction in the past five years or on probation for a felony drug conviction.

Wagner released his recommendations following an extensive audit of the Department of Public Welfare.

The House sent the bills to the state Senate for consideration.

BANNING BATH SALTS AND FAKE MARIJUANA

The House has unanimously approved a bill that would ban "bath salts" and other forms of synthetic cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana. Law enforcement around the state reports an increase in the use of the synthetic drugs is responsible for a rise in violent criminal acts and illness, including hallucinations and paranoia.

The dangerous products are sold in some tobacco shops, convenience stores and online. The bill would put the chemical compounds used to make bath salts and synthetic marijuana on the state's list of controlled substances. Traditional bath salts sold in retail stores would not be affected by the legislation.

PROPERTY TAX/ RENT REBATE DEADLINE IS JUNE 30

Rep Gibbons' staff is ready to help senior citizens and other residents who qualify for the state's Property Tax/ Rent Rebate Program.

It provides rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2010 to residents who are 65 or older; 50 or older and widowed, and 18 or older with a disability.

The annual income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. Half of Social Security, Supplemental Security, or federal Railroad Retirement Tier I income is excluded from the income limit.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates for qualifying homeowners can boost rebates to \$975. The deadline to apply for a rebate is June 30.

If you need an application or help filling it out, please contact Gibbons' constituent service offices.

FOLLOW ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Rep. Gibbons is using social media as another way to share information about how he is working for you.

His legislative Facebook page – www.facebook.com/RepGibbons - has news releases, photos and videos. If you visit the page, click the "Like" bottom to automatically get updates.

He has also started a Twitter page, where you can get short, timely messages about his work and different issues. You can follow him on Twitter [@RepGibbons](https://twitter.com/RepGibbons).



SIGN UP FOR FREE EMAIL ALERTS

Visit Gibbons' website at www.pahouse.com/Gibbons to stay up-to-date on legislative and community initiatives. You can also sign up to receive free email alerts about his work in Harrisburg and important state programs that may affect your life. To sign up, click "Contact Me" on his website and fill out the form.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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2011 TOWN HALL MEETINGS WITH REP. GIBBONS OPEN DISCUSSIONS OF STATE ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU



Beaver County area

Thursday, May 12, 2011

Franklin Township Building

897 State Route 288, Fombell

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

New Sewickley Township Building

233 Miller Road, New Sewickley

Lawrence County area

Thursday, May 19, 2011

Taylor Township Building

Industrial St., West Pittsburg

All meetings run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Visit www.pahouse.com/Gibbons for additional town hall meeting announcements.

SENIORS: MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Rep. Gibbons will host another series of free senior seminars. The meetings for seniors and their families provide important information to help make wise decisions about the future.

Thursday, May 26, 2011

6 p.m.

Slippery Rock Township Community Center

155 Branchton Road, Slippery Rock

Learn about last wills and living trusts

Thursday, June 2, 2011

6 p.m.

Ellwood City Library

415 Lawrence Ave., Ellwood City

Learn about protection through powers of attorney



Local legal experts will explain why it is important to have the documents signed before you need them and recent changes to state law.