



State Representative

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Update *from*

**GARY HALUSKA**

*Your* State Representative • The 73rd Legislative District

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## **2011-12 State Budget will cost seniors and middle-class families** *Lots of pain, not much gain for most Pennsylvanians*

I voted against the final state budget for 2011-12 because it will cost our region thousands of jobs, increase your taxes, harm senior citizens and the disabled, and turn back the clock on education in Pennsylvania.

### **Tax dollars hoarded while people harmed**

Even though Pennsylvania ended the fiscal year with a **\$785 million revenue surplus**, the Corbett budget includes more than \$1 billion in cuts to education, slashes services for senior citizens and forces trickle-down tax increases on middle-class families.

Instead of using the surplus revenue – money already collected from taxpayers – to help limit devastating budget cuts, the governor left \$560 million of this surplus sitting unused in the treasury. This money hasn't even been transferred to the state's Rainy Day Fund.

### **A tax-increase budget**

The cuts in the 2011-12 budget will force school districts and local governments to increase your taxes over the next several years, so calling this a no-tax-increase state budget is **not accurate**. Raising taxes is raising taxes, and the governor's state budget will force local tax increases across Pennsylvania.

### **What about jobs?**

While taxes will be going up, jobs will be disappearing.

Gov. Corbett's budget cuts will result in more than 11,000 teachers and additional school staff losing their jobs. The \$200 million in cuts to higher education will reduce jobs and economic activity related to universities, which in many areas of Pennsylvania are the largest employer. The higher tuitions will also force many young

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people to leave the state for their education and career.

The Corbett budget also cuts funding for hospitals, another huge local employer throughout Pennsylvania, and a variety of economic development and job-training programs. How can the state grow its economy with thousands more people out of work and young people leaving the state?

## Budget is about ideology, not good policy

The 2011-12 Corbett budget is more about an extreme ideology coming from Washington than it is about financial reality here in Pennsylvania. Gov. Corbett began the year giving huge corporations a \$200 million tax break. He ended the fiscal year by signing a budget that gives big oil and natural gas companies a free ride on taxes while forcing middle-class families to pay more for almost everything.

**More details on how the budget will impact you are available at [www.pahouse.com](http://www.pahouse.com).**



## LEARN MORE

You can watch Rep. Haluska discuss the budget's impact on tourism in our region and across Pennsylvania by visiting [www.pahouse.com/Haluska](http://www.pahouse.com/Haluska) online, or by scanning here with your smart phone's QR reader.



You can see specifics on how the budget will impact local school districts by visiting [www.pahouse.com/Haluska](http://www.pahouse.com/Haluska) online, or by scanning here with your smart phone's QR reader.



## PA transportation funding at a crossroads

One of Pennsylvania's most pressing public safety and economic issues is its deteriorating transportation network. The state needs to come up with between \$2 billion and \$3 billion to get its roads and bridges fixed and to adequately fund public transit.

While the governor did appoint a state transportation commission to make recommendations, his 2011-12 budget doesn't address the need for transportation funding at all. That's a huge oversight. Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of structurally deficient bridges. In addition to the public safety issue this presents, it's also harmful to Pennsylvania's economy. Goods and services are more expensive to transport, and businesses are not going to locate or expand, in a state with an inadequate transportation system.

Public transit is also a serious concern throughout Pennsylvania. In urban, suburban and rural areas, millions of Pennsylvanians – particularly senior citizens – rely on public transit to get to work and school, go to their doctor and other appointments, and for shopping and commerce.

Pennsylvania must address its transportation funding needs now. Some suggestions include leasing the turnpike, tolling other state highways, increasing the state's gas tax, or adjusting PennDOT licensing and other fees.

### What do you think?

**Pennsylvania needs critical funding to fix its roads and bridges and to support public transit systems in all areas of the state. Public safety and the state's economic well-being are at risk if these transportation needs are not addressed. Please visit my website at [www.pahouse.com/Haluska](http://www.pahouse.com/Haluska) to fill out my brief [Transportation Survey](#) on the variety of options for raising revenue for Pennsylvania's roads, bridges and public transit systems.**





*Rep. Haluska speaks with an attendee at this year's Pennsylvania Motorsports Day at the state Capitol in Harrisburg.*



*Rep. Haluska greets a child participating at the free Kids Fair he hosted last August. The representative will be hosting an event for senior citizens later this year – information coming soon!*

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications available

As a reminder, the deadline for senior citizens and other qualifying residents in Pennsylvania to apply for a state rebate on their 2010 property taxes or rent is **Dec. 31, 2011**.



The Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides income-qualifying senior citizens and other Pennsylvania residents with rebates of as much as \$650 based on property taxes or rent paid the previous year.

The program is open to residents 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people 18 or older who have a disability. The income limit to qualify is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. Applicants must count all sources of income, but only half of their Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits toward the total.

Applications are available in my local offices, online at [www.revenue.state.pa.us](http://www.revenue.state.pa.us), by calling 1-888-222-9190, or at local area agencies on aging and senior centers. Assistance with Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications is also available in my offices.

## Marcellus Shale drillers still not paying fair share

Because of a veto threat by the governor, the state budget does not include a tax or fee on the billions of dollars in natural gas that out-of-state companies are taking from Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region. While this growing industry offers jobs and the promise of economic benefits, it also presents health, public safety and environmental costs that must be dealt with.

Several shale tax or fee proposals were introduced this session in the state legislature by both Democrats and Republicans. Three-quarters of Pennsylvanians continue to show support for having this industry pay its fair share to protect Pennsylvania's people, municipalities and environment from the impact natural gas drilling will have. **Every major natural gas-producing state in the nation – except Pennsylvania – has a natural gas drilling tax or fee.**

### What do you think?

Please let me know your view on the Marcellus Shale tax issue by visiting my website at [www.pahouse.com/Haluska](http://www.pahouse.com/Haluska) and filling out the [Marcellus Shale Survey](#). And thank you for your input!





# Sportsmen's Corner



*Rep. Haluska questions a testifier at a public hearing of the House Game and Fisheries Committee.*

## Bill would end hunting license display requirement

The state House of Representatives recently passed legislation that would eliminate the requirement in Pennsylvania for hunters to display their hunting license on their back while hunting.

Pennsylvania is one of only two states that still require hunters to display their license. I think it makes more sense to simply require hunters to have their license with them when they are hunting.

I am a co-sponsor of this bill, which is supported by the state Game Commission. The legislation (H.B. 735) is being considered by the state Senate.

## Sunday hunting considered

Legislation (H.B. 1760) was recently introduced that would remove the state's prohibition on Sunday hunting.

Supporters argue that removing the Sunday restriction would improve access for hunters at a time when the state's hunting and sporting traditions are in jeopardy. The legislation would not require Sunday hunting throughout the year, it would simply authorize the commission to include Sundays as part of regular hunting seasons.

Please use the **CONTACT ME** feature on my website at **www.pahouse.com/Haluska**, or contact one of my offices listed at the bottom of this page, to let me know whether you think Sunday hunting should be permitted in Pennsylvania.

## Youth Mentored Hunting Program Expanded

A new law expands the Mentored Youth Hunting Program in Pennsylvania by allowing an adult mentor to transfer one antlerless deer license per year to a participating youth. Previously, mentored youth could not harvest antlerless deer. Brochures with more information about the state's Mentored Youth Hunting Program are available in my offices.

# Prison population and costs skyrocket

In the last 30 years, the state prison population has risen from 8,000 to more than 52,000, while Pennsylvania's overall population grew by only 3 percent. The state's corrections budget has skyrocketed from \$94 million to nearly \$2 billion.

Most of this increase has come since 1995, when the legislature began passing a number of laws attaching mandatory minimum sentences to more crimes – particularly non-violent drug crimes. Corrections officials, courts and legislators are now starting to rethink the wisdom of these mandatory minimum sentencing laws. They are overcrowding our prisons and exploding our corrections costs, but not reducing the rate of drug use or

other crime.

I support efforts to reform mandatory minimum sentencing laws, and to find other ways to reduce Pennsylvania's prison population and its cost to taxpayers. It is becoming clear that many mandatory minimum sentencing laws don't work.

The key to reducing drug use and other crime in Pennsylvania is early intervention with kids. More programs that focus on that, and fewer laws that require minor offenders to spend long periods in state penitentiaries at tremendous cost to taxpayers, should be carefully considered.



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