



State Representative



# Mike Hanna

76TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Chairman, House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE • FALL 2009

## State passes responsible budget for 2009-10

The road to the 2009-10 state budget was long and bumpy leading up to the passage of a \$27.8 billion General Fund budget on Oct. 9. While this is not a perfect spending plan, it is the first time in my tenure as a state representative, and perhaps in my entire lifetime, that an approved budget spends less state funds than the previous year's budget. It contains no broad-based tax increases and still provides funding for core programs for those who need them.

Of course, I do regret the severity of some of the cuts to programs that I support. I am especially disappointed that many agriculture programs that are important to our state's economy were cut disproportionately. However, given the current economic crisis and the fact that the spending plan is more than 100 days late, I think we passed the only spending plan possible: a true compromise budget that is fiscally and morally responsible.

## Education funding increases for Centre and Clinton counties State budget invests in schools, communities

Even though many tough choices needed to be made during the budget process, I felt that one area where we could NOT compromise was education. I, along with my colleagues in the House, felt it was important to continue our progress toward Pennsylvania's commitment to the school funding formula enacted by the General Assembly last year and to renew our commitment to programs proven to boost student achievement.

Not only were we able to maintain funding levels for education, but I am pleased that the 2009-10 budget includes a \$300 million increase in the state's funding formula for basic education. This translates into 3-4 percent increases in funding for school districts in Centre and Clinton counties (see chart), which should help avoid school property tax increases.

The budget also preserves the programs that have been most effective in increasing student achievement, including Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which brings quality half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten to disadvantaged children, and Accountability Block Grants, which provide for vital programs such as pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and class size reduction.

From 2007-08, 5.9 percent of Centre County's and 13.3 percent of Clinton County's 3- to 4-year-old population participated in publicly funded Pre-K programs.

### CENTRE/CLINTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT FUNDING 2009-10 STATE BUDGET

**Bald Eagle Area, Centre County**  
3.65 percent increase

**Bellefonte Area, Centre County**  
3.43 percent increase

**Penns Valley Area, Centre County**  
3.89 percent increase

**Keystone Central, Clinton County**  
4.02 percent increase

# Agreement to conserve state forest lands included in state budget

One of the major issues during this year's budget negotiations was the question of whether or not to lease additional state forest lands for the extraction of natural gas, and whether or not to impose a severance tax on the companies that drill here.

I joined with 28 other legislators, including three other committee chairmen, in opposing the expansion of drilling activity in the Marcellus Shale region on our state's 2.1 million acres of forest lands. We succeeded in our efforts to protect this natural resource and oppose the plan, and the final agreement will limit expanded drilling in fiscal year 2009-10 and eliminate the Senate's planned expanded drilling in 2010-11.

I am also pleased that we succeeded in reinstating the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' role in selecting which grounds will be made available for lease to further protect our state's forest lands, perhaps one of our greatest natural resources.

Although many of my concerns about the impact drilling will have on our state forests and streams have been addressed, it looks like we lost the severance tax fight in this budget. I am disappointed that my colleagues in the Senate would not agree on this important tax. However, the governor and Democratic leaders are committed to allowing us to vote on this tax before next year's budget is completed.



*Rep. Hanna speaks at a news conference about the importance of protecting and conserving our state's forest lands.*

## State budget provides for local vets

**My fellow House Democrats and I successfully fought to increase the General Government Operations line item for the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs by \$1 million more than the original budget proposal, ensuring our veterans receive the benefits they deserve.**

**For the 2008-09 fiscal year, Centre County's 9,469 veterans received more than \$1.3 million in benefits from the department, while Clinton County's 3,682 veterans received more than \$739,000 in benefits.**



## Taxes on arts, cultural events and small games of chance nixed in budget agreement

One of the proposals on the table for the state budget was a tax on small games of chance, which many local fire companies, nonprofits and VFWs rely on for raising funds, as well as a tax on tickets to arts and cultural events, including museums and performing arts venues. At no time did I support either of these taxes.

Arts and small games of chance were indeed options and they would have raised the recurring revenue we needed to balance the budget, but they are not the best options to the vast majority of Pennsylvanians. Our volunteer fire departments, who save taxpayers billions of dollars each year in a time of dire need, are already struggling. We knew that, even trying to balance a budget with a \$3.2 billion deficit during the worst economy in decades, there had to be better options than turning to non-profits, VFWs and volunteer fire companies to pay our bills.

My colleagues in the House and I also fought to save the arts funding. We successfully restored \$11 million, which benefits groups right here in Centre and Clinton counties, including the Clinton County Arts Council, Downtown Lock Haven Inc. and Millbrook Playhouse Inc.

Instead of taxing arts and small games of chance, I supported a severance tax on the extraction of natural gas from our state's Marcellus Shale region, which was ultimately defeated by the Senate. However, I will continue to support and fight for a severance tax on the gas companies that are utilizing our forest lands, roads and water to extract this natural resource, rather than be forced to cut vital state programs to pay for this development or worse, burden the residents of Pennsylvania with these costs.

## Hanna calls for constitutional amendment to protect Pennsylvanians from future budget impasses

We all became aware that this was a very difficult budget year with many challenges in finalizing a spending plan for the Commonwealth. This year's budget process was long and arduous for all Pennsylvanians, which is why I believe it is important to analyze it and learn from it to avoid impasses like this three-month delay in the future.

That is why I have introduced two pieces of legislation that would help to prevent future budget impasses like the one the General Assembly was locked in this year.

The first measure (H.B. 2052) would amend the state constitution to require that all 253 state legislators, as well as the governor, stand for reelection in the next general election if they fail to enact a budget by June 30 of any year.

I also introduced a measure (H.B. 2051) that would involve the current House and Senate standing committees more in the budget process by requiring the majority and minority chairmen of the House and Senate standing committees to submit a combined report to their respective Appropriations Committee chairman offering budgetary recommendations.

As lawmakers, we are accountable to you, our constituents, and these measures would ensure that we accomplish our critical task of passing a state spending plan in a timely manner to avoid pay stoppages and service program interruptions.

Both measures are currently awaiting discussion by House committees.

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## Agriculture committee holds public hearing on dairy industry



*Rep. Hanna (center) and other members of the state House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee hold a public hearing at Penn State Fayette in Uniontown to discuss current issues affecting Pennsylvania's dairy industry.*

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**Get up to date and stay in contact with Rep. Hanna by visiting his Web site at [www.pahouse.com/Hanna](http://www.pahouse.com/Hanna).**



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# Mike Hanna

76<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

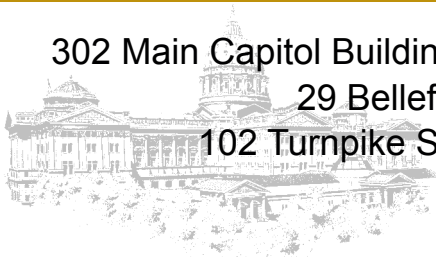
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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE • FALL 2008

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### Legislative Update:

*A look at Rep. Hanna's legislative initiatives in Harrisburg:*

**H.B. 1330** would transfer the responsibility for the regular inspection of commercially used parking meters to local government units, such as cities, boroughs or townships. Under current law, the Department of Agriculture is responsible for the inspection of thousands of the more than 100,000 meters in the Commonwealth annually. This bill is awaiting discussion in the Senate.

**H.B. 1667** would amend the Right-to-Know Law to exempt a person's date of birth from public access by including date of birth among the various types of personal identification information that are currently exempt from access under the law. This bill is awaiting discussion in the House.

**H.R. 418** was adopted by the House to recognize the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Kennel Club. In line with the updated dog law (Act 19 of 2008) enacted by the state General Assembly last year, the AKC is the only purebred registry in the country with an ongoing routine kennel inspection program, and dedicates nearly \$6 million annually to its compliance programs to ensure the accuracy of its registry and the care and condition of dogs raised by breeders of AKC dogs.