



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JOHN Yudichak

119TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Summer 2009



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PA PROPERTY TAX RELIEF CONTINUES

Yudichak says that's good news for local seniors, homeowners

Money from slots gaming has produced approximately \$770 million in revenues for the state, enough to give homeowners much needed property tax cuts.

In this sluggish economy where so many people are struggling to make ends meet, it is great news that many homeowners will see a break on their property taxes again this year.

The 2006 Taxpayer Relief Act created the Property Tax Relief Fund, which uses gaming revenues to reduce property taxes for homeowners. State law requires the budget secretary to certify the balance in the Property Tax Relief Fund on April 15 each year.

In 2008, gaming helped to lower property taxes for nearly 2.7 million households across the Commonwealth, with about 110,000 seniors seeing their school property taxes eliminated.

Once again this year, 110,000 seniors will pay no school property taxes thanks to gaming revenues, and nearly 580,000 seniors will be eligible for additional relief.

In addition to delivering property tax relief to Pennsylvania homeowners, the law enacted the state's first limits on school boards' ability to raise property taxes. Already this year, more than three-in-four school districts plan to keep property tax increases at, or below, the rate of inflation.

Pennsylvania also provides a Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program that is funded by the state lottery. For more information on this program, please contact my constituent service office in Nanticoke at 570-740-7031.

Yudichak seeks changes following Luzerne County corruption scandal

On April 2nd, Sen. Lisa Baker, R-20th District, state Rep. Craig Dally, R-Northampton, and I participated in a news conference to outline legislative efforts geared towards addressing the corruption in Luzerne County Juvenile Court. Former Luzerne County judges Mark A. Ciaverella Jr. and Michael T. Conahan pleaded guilty to accepting \$2.6 million in kickbacks for helping two private juvenile detention centers secure \$30 million in county contracts.

I am deeply sorry that these families were forced to endure this level of public corruption, and I will aggressively seek a remedy to this situation and restore public confidence in our courts. For this, I plan on co-sponsoring a House bill that would eliminate the ability for a juvenile, parent, guardian or custodian to waive legal representation in juvenile delinquency and truancy proceedings.

In addition to fixing the juvenile system, we must ensure that this corruption does not happen again, and that effort should begin with the pension forfeiture of these corrupt judges. I recently co-sponsored H.B. 632 and eagerly supported H.B. 1182 which would allow for the forfeiture of pension rights at the time a public official pleads guilty, rather than waiting until sentencing as is the case under current state law.

Ciaverella has applied to receive a \$6,800 monthly pension, even though he has admitted to wrongdoing. Conahan has been collecting an \$8,073 monthly pension benefit from the state since he retired in January 2008.



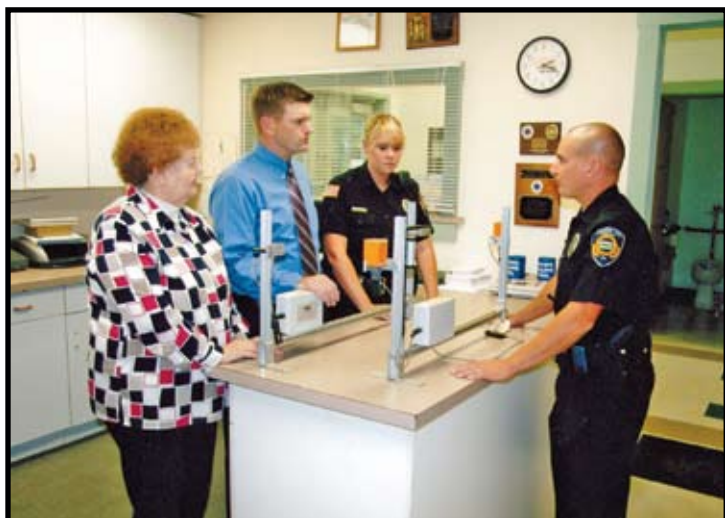
Rep. Yudichak participates in an April news conference at the state Capitol addressing the corruption in the Luzerne County Juvenile Court.

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YUDICHAK ANNOUNCES LOCAL

Luzerne County receives over \$800,000 in state grants



Fairview Twp. receives DCED Revitalization funding for Enrad Wireless speed-timing system. Pictured from left: Alice Dans, Fairview Twp.; Rep. Yudichak; Fairview Twp. police officers Jocelyn Wadzin and Dennis Monk.



Wright Twp. receives DCED Community Revitalization funding for a security monitoring system for the recreation park and facility. Pictured from left: Wright Twp. Police Chief Joseph Jacob, Wright Twp. employee Dan Frascella, Rep. Yudichak, Wright Twp. employees Louis Welebob and Joan Malkemes.

In the past few months, we have helped secure over \$800,000 in grants for our district. Here are a few highlights of our local awards:

\$400,000 Growing Greener Grant for Earth Conservancy. The grant will help with the cost of reclaiming and reutilizing a former strip mine site located in the city of Nanticoke. The 37-acre site was used by the Blue Coal Co. as a strip mine area and was left in an environmentally degraded state when the company declared bankruptcy in the mid-1970s.

\$334,000 Volunteer Fire Company/Volunteer Ambulance grants. To be shared by 37 local volunteer fire/EMS companies to help our first responders buy equipment, improve their facilities or take important training so they can be at the top of their game.

\$41,531 Monroe County Local Share Account for Newport Township. The grant will allow Newport Township to reconstruct the Coal Street Playground in Glen Lyon.

In addition:

- **Hanover Township was awarded funding through the DCED Community Revitalization Program for computer and network equipment and installation.**
- **Rice Township was awarded funding through the DCED Community Revitalization Program for repairs to their recreation facilities from damage caused by a tornado.**

Opening of Rose Tucker Center at Mercy

On March 20, we officially opened the new Rose Tucker Center at Mercy on Washington Street in Nanticoke.

The more spacious center features several interactive rooms including a computer room with accompanying computer classes, a puzzle room and an exercise room featuring several "Healthy Steps" fitness programs.

The center was appropriately named in honor of Rose Tucker who passed away shortly after the opening – she will be greatly missed by all. Tucker spent most of her life in Nanticoke serving as a county commissioner. She dedicated her life to the community by advocating for women and children, promoting health and human service initiatives and volunteering her time and efforts to several causes.

The size, quality and uniqueness of the center, in addition to its working collaboration and partnership with Mercy Special Care Hospital, make it the first of its kind in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. This unique partnership also allows the center to provide a variety of health and wellness services, including blood pressure testing, diabetes screening, laboratory services, dietary counseling and mental health services.

The Rose Tucker Center at Mercy is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Rep. Yudichak and Rose Tucker cutting the ribbon to officially open the new Rose Tucker Center at Mercy.

AL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Major downtown revitalization project gets the green light

January 13 now marks an historic moment in the rich history of Luzerne County Community College and Nanticoke as the LCCC's Board of Trustees officially initiated a three-phase overhaul to the business district of the city on that date.

The \$25 million revitalization effort will serve as a catalyst for future economic growth in the South Valley region by bringing more than 200 jobs into downtown Nanticoke and a steady circulation of more than 300 students on the city's Main Street corridor.

The project is a result of careful planning, dedication and good, old-fashioned teamwork among the Luzerne County commissioners, LCCC, city officials and the state.

At the January public meeting, the board finalized a lease/purchase agreement for the Kanjorski Center, a property managed by the Nanticoke Municipal Authority. In 2005, Health Now Corp. vacated the Kanjorski Center leaving the property without a major tenant.

The LCCC/Municipal Authority agreement, which represents Phase I of the three-phase downtown revitalization, will bring the college's Health Science Program to the currently vacant 42,000-square-foot Kanjorski Center. LCCC enjoys a strong reputation as a provider of health-care education and it produces more health-care professionals than any other institution of higher education in northeastern Pennsylvania.

LCCC announced its intention to construct a new \$7.5 million Culinary Arts Institute. Representing Phase II of the historic revitalization effort, the institute will be located in the heart of downtown Nanticoke on the corner of Main and Market streets. The culinary/food service program is one of LCCC's most rapidly growing programs. The building will occupy the former site of the Nanticoke Senior Center and the Susquehanna Coal Building, a property donated to the Nanticoke Housing Authority by the Ken Pollock family.

With a grand opening set for the 2010 fall semester, Phase I and Phase II of the project will insert more than 450 college staff, faculty and students directly into downtown. Both the

health-care science facility and culinary arts facility will feature outreach programs to engage the community in their operations. Furthermore, the LCCC commitment to downtown provides Nanticoke and the South Valley with a strong anchor tenant that will attract new businesses to the area.

Phase III of the revitalization effort features the construction of a new action-sport park and greenscape for Lower Broadway, renovation of the historic Patriot Square and \$8 million in overall streetscape and safety improvements to Main and Market streets.

The three-phase downtown revitalization effort is a concept conceived from a strategic plan outlined by the South Valley Partnership. The SVP is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to regional solutions, and comprises three adjoining municipalities: Nanticoke, Newport Township and Plymouth Township.

Funding for the SVP plan was secured through the support of the state Department of Community and Economic Development, the Nanticoke Area Development Corp., PNC Bank, and myself.

The community-focused strategic plan gathered and analyzed physical data, market statistics and resident input through regular review meetings in an attempt to better understand the region and provide the appropriate solutions to arrive at long-term sustainability. Combining the recommendations produced from the strategic plan with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Keystone Principles, the SVP sought to establish LCCC as a sensible and sustainable anchor tenant to Nanticoke's downtown.

The three-phase downtown revitalization project is a perfect combination of hard work, proper planning and the ability to recognize the importance and value the downtown provides to the local community – a vision shared by the Rendell administration, the Luzerne County commissioners, Luzerne County Community College, the city of Nanticoke, the SVP, and myself.

Plymouth – a borough on the grow

In May, Plymouth Borough was awarded funding through the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP).

The grant, provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, provides local governments with financial assistance to prepare comprehensive community development plans.

The program will provide Plymouth with the required technical assistance to carefully and properly plan for downtown revitalization. The resulting study will also allow Plymouth to properly utilize the \$1.25 million Local Share Account (Luzerne County) grant awarded in 2007.

Yudichak appointed to PHEAA board of directors

"We welcome Representative Yudichak to the board. I've known John for many years and he will bring a fresh voice to the board, which allows us to further our new approach in addressing the education issues facing our students and their families," said state Rep. William Adolph Jr., R-Delaware, PHEAA board chairman on the appointment of Rep. Yudichak.

On March 19, I was appointed to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency board of directors by House Speaker Keith McCall.

PHEAA is a national leader in creating greater access to higher education. For Pennsylvania to compete in the world economy, we must continue every effort to make a quality college education more affordable for every Pennsylvanian.

In addition to serving on the PHEAA board, I am a member of the House Education Committee and serve as chairman of its Subcommittee on Basic Education.

Yudichak addresses Rt. 309 dangers



Rep. Yudichak meets with PennDOT to discuss Rt. 390 dangers. Pictured from left: Dennis Giordana, PennDOT; state Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski, D-Luzerne; David Cerski, Ashley Borough police chief; Rick Oravic, Ashley Borough mayor; Rep. Yudichak.

I recently met with representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to discuss Route 309 in Ashley, which was the scene of a fatal accident on May 10. Also at the meeting were fellow state Reps. Eddie Day Pashinski, D-Luzerne, and Karen Boback, R-Luzerne, and state Sens. Raphael Musto, D-14th District, and Lisa Baker, R-20th District.

The problem comes when motorists stop to make a left turn into a local restaurant. The site is just after a curve, and other drivers coming around that corner have no idea someone is stopped and have no time to react.

Such was the case on May 10 when a motorist was stopped on Route 309 waiting to turn into the restaurant and was hit from behind by another vehicle.

Serious accidents have been an ongoing problem in this area. The PennDOT officials and I met to discuss the dangers and ways that this section of Rt. 309 can be made safer.

Yudichak working to reform property tax reassessment

Pennsylvania's system of property tax reassessment is fragmented and unfair. While in one county property is reassessed regularly, another county may not reassess for decades, meaning those residents are paying taxes on information that is years old.

In an effort to bring fairness and consistency to property reassessments, I am working with state Reps. Frank Dermody, D-Allegheny, and David Levdansky, D-Allegheny/Washington, to prepare legislation that would remove property tax reassessment from county control and make it a state responsibility.

Luzerne County continues to face hardships after spending \$9 million on its first reassessment in 40 years – and they're not alone. Regions such as Allegheny County, Bedford County and Philadelphia have recently struggled with reassessment.

Working with Reps. Dermody and Levdansky, I would like Pennsylvania to adopt the reassessment system in Maryland, where statewide reassessments are done on a regular basis. This helps to keep assessed values more in line with the actual market. Currently, Pennsylvania has no time requirements on reassessments.

Several news stories have recently been done concerning county reassessments, including articles in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, as well as a report on WTAJ. Visit my Web site at www.pahouse.com/Yudichak to read the stories, learn more about the issue or sign up to receive e-mail updates on this effort. You may also call my local office at 570-540-7031 for more information.