



# State Representative **Dante Santoni, Jr.** 126th Legislative District



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**SUMMER 2011**

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## 2011-12 Budget: A Bad Deal for Working Families

I voted no on the 2011-12 state budget because it is unnecessarily harsh, even for these tough economic times.

Negotiated without any Democrats at the table and passed without one Democratic vote, the partisan budget puts too big a burden on working families. The record profits of gas companies drilling in Pennsylvania and other big businesses have been protected and new big tax breaks that we cannot afford have been handed out.

Instead of shared pain, hardworking families like yours are being forced to shoulder the entire burden of this budget. For every dollar given out in a corporate tax break, that is a dollar less for full-day kindergarten across the state or for supporting our poorer neighbors who are chronically ill. Gas companies have been given a pass and now tuition has gone up at our public universities.

The worst part of this budget is that \$560 million in additional revenue was left on the table. It could have been used to mitigate the painful cuts to education and human services.

I have received hundreds of emails, letters and calls, asking me to support a reasonable budget deal, and it was with those sentiments in mind that I voted against the budget. I will continue to fight for responsible fiscal governance in the fall. Please let me know how this budget is affecting you and your family.



*Rep. Santoni joins Democratic House Leaders at a Capitol news conference encouraging use of the Rainy Day Fund to mitigate budget cuts to education and other essential services.*

*Rep. Santoni is interviewed by Channel 69 TV about the governor's budget proposal.*



### Education took biggest hit in budget cuts

**FACT: WITH INCREASED STATE FUNDING, PA WAS THE ONLY STATE TO SEE MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS THE BOARD OVER THE PAST DECADE. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?**

The 2011-12 state budget slashed nearly \$1 billion in funding for public schools, the largest cut in Pennsylvania's history. The five districts in the 126th Legislative District will receive \$13.6 million less than they did in the previous year.

Higher education statewide saw a \$200 million cut. Already that has resulted in a 5 percent increase in tuition for Penn State and students at state universities such as Kutztown face a 7.5 percent increase.

School District	Dollar Difference	Percent Difference from 2010-11	Cut Per Students from 2010-11
Antietam	-\$301,988	-9.0%	-\$390
Exeter Township	-\$743,820	-8.6%	-\$285
Muhlenberg	-\$321,969	-6.8%	-\$164
Oley Valley	-\$285,066	-7.3%	-\$285
Reading	-\$11,916,179	-9.7%	-\$1,028

## Slots revenue up for 2010-11; table games revenue strong

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board reported that tax revenue from slots play was up nearly \$100 million for the 2010-11 year, allowing the state to continue to help lower local property taxes, aid volunteer fire and emergency services companies, and give a boost to economic development projects.

The total slots revenue for 2010-11 was \$1.284 billion, a 7.8 percent increase over the previous year.

The Gaming Board also reported that tax revenue from play at table games during the recently completed fiscal year totaled \$81.4 million. Pennsylvania started offering table games at its casinos in July 2010.

The gaming industry now employs more than 14,000 people while spending hundreds of millions of dollars to purchase goods and services from Pennsylvania businesses.

# SENIOR INFORMATION

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate application deadline extended until Dec. 31

The deadline to apply for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended from June 30 to December 31, 2011.

The program provides state rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2010 to eligible Pennsylvanians aged 65 or older; widows and widowers aged 50 or older; and people with disabilities, aged 18 or older. The income limit to qualify is \$35,000 for homeowners and \$15,000 for renters. Applicants must count all sources of income toward the limit but only half of any Social Security, Supplemental Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits count toward local income.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650 but supplemental rebates for qualifying homeowners can be up to \$975. Applications are available on Rep. Santoni's website ([www.pahouse.com/Santoni](http://www.pahouse.com/Santoni)) or in his constituent service office and his staff can assist you in completing the forms.

Last year more than 603,000 homeowners and renters across the state received more than \$281 million in property tax and rent rebates as a result of this program. If you think you are eligible, please apply now.



## Official state I.D. card available

Under some circumstances, seniors no longer need a driver's license. The State Transportation Department offers an official state identification card that can be used as legal identification in place of a driver's license. The forms are available in my local office, online at [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us) or by calling PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services Customer Care Center at 1-800-932-4600.

## PACE and PACENET

PACE and PACENET help seniors pay for their prescription drugs. PACENET has a monthly premium if you are **not** enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan, which will be cumulative if not met each month. If you are not enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan, your monthly premium begins with your first prescription claim and the premium is paid at your pharmacy.

### To be eligible for PACE, you must:

- Be age 65 or older and a Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days prior to applying.
- Not be enrolled in the Department of Public Welfare's Medicaid prescription drug program.
- Have an income of \$14,500 or less if you are single or an income of \$17,700 or less for a married couple.

### To be eligible for PACENET, you must:

- Be age 65 or older and a Pennsylvania resident for at least 90 days prior to applying.
- Not be enrolled in the Department of Public Welfare's Medicaid prescription drug program.
- Have an income of between \$14,500 and \$23,500 for a single person, or between \$17,700 and \$31,500 for a married couple.

For additional information and to obtain an application, visit my constituent service office or check online at [www.aging.state.pa.us](http://www.aging.state.pa.us) and click on "Prescription Assistance."

## Reduced-fee vehicle registration

If you are retired and receiving Social Security or other pensions and your total annual income from all sources is \$19,200 or less, you qualify to register your passenger vehicle or light truck (9,000 pounds or less) for a \$10 processing fee per year instead of the annual registration fee.

To apply, obtain Form MV-371 "Application for Retired Status," from any notary, tag service or the Bureau of Motor Vehicles' website, [www.dmv.state.pa.us/pdotforms/mv\\_forms/mv-371.pdf](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/pdotforms/mv_forms/mv-371.pdf). Complete the form and include it with your regular registration renewal, along with a check or money order for \$10 made payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For more information, call PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services at 1-800-932-4600.

## Safe Driving Classes

Older Berks County residents can be better prepared to meet the challenges of the road and cut insurance costs by taking a senior citizen driver improvement class.

Sponsored by Rep. Santoni, a four-hour class is scheduled for people who have taken the course within the last three years. First-time participants, or those who have not taken the course in the past three years, must attend two four-hour sessions to receive credit for the course. It qualifies motorists **55 or older** for a discount of 5 percent or more on their car insurance premiums.

Additional information and applications can be obtained by calling Santoni's constituent service office at 610-921-8921.

### Upcoming Renewal Classes

**Tuesday, Sept. 20**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Muhlenberg Township Recreation Bldg., 3025 River Rd.

**Monday, Oct. 10**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1375 Friedensburg Rd., Stony Creek.

**Tuesday, November 8**, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.  
Muhlenberg Township Recreation Bldg., 3025 River Rd.

### First Time Participants

**Tuesday, Oct. 11 and Oct. 18**, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.  
Muhlenberg Township Recreation Bldg., 3025 River Rd.

## Bipartisan effort makes changes to Liquor Code

Rep. Santoni, Democratic chairman of the House Liquor Control Committee, applauded the 177-24 passage of legislation (H.B. 148) which amends the Liquor Code to update the laws regarding catered events, the sale of wine at farmers' markets, and the registration of beer brands by small brewers.



**Rep. Santoni listens to testimony at an April 4 Liquor Control Committee Hearing on changes to the Liquor Code.**

The House voted to concur in Senate amendments.

"This legislation was negotiated across party lines and by members of both the House and Senate and brings up-to-date the laws that govern hundreds of small businesses throughout Pennsylvania. I believe it streamlines the laws and makes them effective, more efficient and easier to follow."

The legislation provides that a restaurant, hotel or eating place licensee can acquire a catering function permit. This would allow the use of such a license at a catered event off the licensed premises to sell wine, liquor and malt or brewed beverages.

The legislation would require that the Liquor Control Board employ a malt beverage compliance officer to investigate reports of unregistered brands of malt or brewed beverages being sold by licensees.

In addition, H.B. 148 allows small brewers to register up to 20 brands of beer for a single reduced fee of \$150 annually, as long as each produced brand is 100 barrels or smaller in size. This allows for the specialty brews offered at many of these businesses and helps put the brewers into compliance.

H.B. 148 adjusts the way a tavern can organize its "happy hour" promotions and expands the hours of sales for airport restaurant licensees. It allows wineries to participate in more than one farmers' market at any given time and an unlimited number throughout the year. The bill increases fees for special occasion permits, the establishment of off-premises catering permits and farmers' market permits.

The bill was enacted as Act 11-2011 on June 28.

## Privatization of wine and liquor sales again being considered by General Assembly

Rep. Santoni, Democratic chairman of the House Liquor Control Committee, has warned Pennsylvania taxpayers not to be fooled by a House Republican plan to privatize the Commonwealth's state store system.

Rep. Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny, has uncorked a bad liquor policy for Pennsylvania, according to Santoni. His plan caters to big business while cutting jobs of hard-working citizens without lowering the price of alcohol or increasing revenues to the state.

H.B. 11, sponsored by Rep. Turzai, calls for closing the current 609 state liquor stores (Wine and Spirit Shops) in favor of 1,250 licenses being auctioned off. Rep. Turzai claims the sale would bring in \$2 billion. The bill would also replace the 30 percent LCB markup and the 18 percent "flood tax" with a gallonage tax – a variable tax rate based on the type of drink and alcohol content.

In order for the license auction to bring in \$2 billion, they'd have to sell for approximately \$2 million each, according to Santoni. There are not too many small businessmen and women who have that kind of cash. In addition, the proposed gallonage tax rate is one of the highest in the nation.

Santoni said the state system works well in providing local jobs and in providing a good selection of wine and spirits at a good price.

In 2009-10, the PLCB returned just under \$482 million to the state treasury. In addition, the agency returned \$4.5 million in licensing fees to local communities.

House Republicans want to sell the state goose that lays the golden egg, according to Santoni, who said the LCB is a self-sustaining agency that returns millions of dollars to the state treasury every year. This plan may look good on paper, but in reality it will not be good for Pennsylvania.

**Rep. Santoni, Democratic chairman of the House Liquor Control Committee, asks questions about the proposal to privatize the state's wine and liquor sales.**



**Rep. Santoni asks questions at a House Policy Committee hearing April 14 on the privatization of the state's wine and spirit stores. Committee Chairman Rep. Mike Sturla, D-Lancaster, is left.**



### My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
  - Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
  - Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
  - Birth and death certificates
  - Problems with the Department of Public Welfare (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
  - Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
  - Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
  - Property tax/rent rebate problems or questions
  - Problems or questions about the state lottery
  - PACE cards for senior citizens
  - Consumer complaints
  - Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
  - Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Any question about state government!**



**Click on this QR code to watch a video of Rep. Santoni talking about the bill.**



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## Rep. Santoni greets schools from his district at the state Capitol

*Antietam High School students – taken March 2*



*Other Antietam High School students – taken on April 12*



*Holy Guardian Angels School students – taken April 12*



*Fairview Christian School students – taken Feb. 10*

*John Paul Center for special learning – taken May 5*



*Mublenberg Middle School students – taken May 25*

*Mublenberg High School students – taken March 2*



*St. Catherine of Siena school students – taken April 27*



*Mount Penn Elementary School students – taken April 7*