



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

W. Curtis

Thomas



181ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

301 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202181 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2181 • (717) 787-9471

530 W. Girard Ave. • Philadelphia, PA 19123 • (215) 560-3261

Thomas makes impact on 2011-12 state budget

In March, Gov. Tom Corbett presented his state budget plan for fiscal year 2011-12. In response to the plan, Rep. Thomas developed an alternative proposal that would have restored many of the cuts planned by Republicans.

Thomas was deeply concerned by the cuts the governor proposed. Funding for programs ranging from education and public safety to community development were slashed under Corbett's plan. Thomas said he was troubled by the fundamental shift in priorities that these cuts represent.

Thomas said that his alternative budget would have put children, families and communities first by restoring funding for vital programs that were cut under Corbett's proposal, including the areas of health care, education, public safety, community and economic development, housing and job training. Thomas' plan represented a strategic reallocation of funds that would have restored critical program funding while avoiding tax increases and preventing unnecessary mandates on local governments.

Some highlights from Thomas' plan included:

- Restoring the School Accountability Block Grants with an appropriation of \$250 million
- An additional \$163 million to support the state-related colleges and universities (including Temple University, Lincoln University, Penn State University and the University of Pittsburgh)
- An additional \$100 million to support the State System of Higher Education
- Restoring the Housing & Redevelopment Assistance program with an appropriation of \$10.5 million
- Restoring the Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP) with an appropriation of \$5 million

After several months of negotiations, the governor signed a state budget for 2011-12 on June 30. After reviewing the final document, Thomas is pleased to announce that his Republican colleagues agreed to his proposals on several critical issues:

- The PA School Accountability Block Grants were restored with an appropriation of \$100 million. Corbett had originally scheduled this line item which funds kindergarten, pre-K and special education programs for elimination. The School District of Philadelphia will receive \$21.6 million of the restored funding.
- An additional \$224 million was appropriated to support state-related colleges and universities. Corbett had proposed a 50 percent cut to these schools. The increased funding limits overall cuts to 19 percent.
- An additional \$180 million was appropriated to support the State System of Higher Education. Corbett had proposed a 50 percent cut to these schools. The increased funding limits overall cuts to 18 percent.

"Although we were not able to mitigate all of the governor's cuts, by getting out in front of the debate, my colleagues and I were able to ensure that some of our funding priorities were retained in the final budget for 2011-2012," Thomas said.



Rep. Thomas, joined by several of his colleagues, unveils his state budget plan at a news conference in the state Capitol.

Thomas bill on tax assessors approved by Urban Affairs Committee

The House Urban Affairs Committee has approved House Bill 84, introduced by Rep. Thomas, which would require Philadelphia property assessors to be certified. Under the bill, current tax assessors from the Board of Revision of Taxes would have four years to become certified by the state Board of Certified Real Estate Appraisers.

In 66 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, the Assessors Certification Act requires tax assessors to acquire certification from the state Board of Real Estate Appraisers. This bill would bring tax assessment in Philadelphia in line with the standards implemented in every other county in Pennsylvania.

Thomas said Philadelphia's current exemption from the Assessors Certification Act has contributed to reported problems with property valuations performed by the city's former Board of Revision of Taxes. Thomas' bill would add a professionalism and accuracy that is lacking, help to restore confidence in the assessment process, build on the reforms put in place by the voters last year, and preserve the jobs of existing city property assessors.

■ **House Bill 84 awaits consideration by the full House.**

House passes bill to support Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund

As Democratic chairman of the House Urban Affairs Committee, Rep. Thomas worked with his colleagues from both parties to gain support for House Bill 639. This bill would enable the city of Philadelphia to increase funding for the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund by as much as \$4 million per year.

The Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund is used to support the

development of new affordable homes, repair of existing homes and provide funding for foreclosure and homeless prevention programs. Across Philadelphia, nearly 5,000 low- and moderate-income families, seniors, disabled and homeless people have gained access to expanded housing opportunities through the fund.

In the 181st Legislative District, the Housing Trust Fund has provided funding for eight different projects which have built and/or renovated 190 units of affordable housing:

Developer:

Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM)

Mt. Tabor CEED

Nueva Esperanza, Inc.

Women's Community Revitalization Project

Project Name:

Hogar de Esperanza/Proyecto Escalera

One APM Plaza

Pradera Homes Phase II

Sheridan Street Green Building Initiative

Mt. Tabor Senior Cyber Village

Hunting Park HRP

Evelyn Sanders Townhouses I

Evelyn Sanders Townhouses II

This legislation would ensure that the Housing Trust Fund has the necessary funding to continue serving the community. Rep. Thomas has been an ardent supporter of this legislation and was the primary Democratic sponsor of the original Housing Trust Fund.

■ **House Bill 639 awaits consideration by the state Senate.**

House passes bill to combat urban blight

Rep. Thomas worked with his colleagues on the Urban Affairs Committee to ensure support of House Bill 1022 as it moved through the House. The bill, which was introduced by state Rep. Jake Wheatley, D-Allegheny, would provide another tool that can be used to combat urban blight.

House Bill 1022 would reduce the statute of limitations for an adverse possession claim from 21 years down to 10 years. This would allow a property that has been abandoned by the owner to be re-titled in the name of someone who has a long-standing relationship to the property faster than is provided for under existing law. It would apply to individuals who have occupied single-family homes on a half acre or less for the full 10 years.

The bill is intended to address cases where individuals and families reside in homes to which no one has clear title, such as when the landlord has disappeared or died, or there is an inheritance that never went through the legal process.

Thomas said the legislation is the result of bipartisan efforts and recommendations from a workgroup that he established during the 2009-10 legislative session that included legislators, legislative staff and stakeholders, including the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania and Regional Housing Legal Services.

Thomas said this bill offers an important tool for municipalities across Pennsylvania that are faced with managing blighted and abandoned properties.

■ **House Bill 1022 awaits consideration by the state Senate.**



District Events

181 Coordinating Council meeting

On March 3, Rep. Thomas hosted the first 181 Coordinating Council meeting of 2011 at Zoar United Methodist Church. The council includes representation from every neighborhood in the legislative district, including **Yorktown, East Poplar, West Poplar, Northern Liberties, Ludlow, Fairhill, Hartranft, Kensington South, Logan and Hunting Park**. This diverse group of community, civic, institutional, business and faith-based leaders was established by Thomas as an opportunity for leaders to become educated on the issues facing the 181st Legislative District.

At the March meeting, representatives from the **Pennsylvania Housing and Finance Agency, Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, Office of Housing and Community Development and the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office** were present to speak with community leaders on issues related to housing, crime, safety and education.

A highlight from the most recent meeting was a presentation by Belinda Mayo of the City of Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development detailing the community outreach programs funded across the 181st Legislative District by OHCD.

Thomas hosts crime and safety meetings across the district

In March, Rep. Thomas hosted a series of emergency meetings to discuss ways to address crime in the 181st Legislative District. The meetings, at Concilio (the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations) and Prince Hall Grand Lodge, were held in response to a large number of homicides which have occurred since last October.

At these meetings, Thomas brought together community organizations and neighborhood leaders with representatives from the 6th, 22nd, 25th, 26th, 35th and 39th Philadelphia police districts, and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. The participants collaborated on ways to promote communication and conflict mediation among neighbors and on after-school youth activities for children and teens in the neighborhoods.

One major question at these meetings was how residents can protect their identity but still report criminal activity. Community leaders learned about the following electronic methods:

CITY-WIDE POLICE TIP FORM:

Residents can use the Philadelphia Police Department's main website to submit a tip at:

www.phillypolice.com/forms/submit-a-tip.

DISTRICT EMAIL ADDRESSES:

Each police district has an email address that is checked daily for information about local criminal activity. The email addresses for police districts that serve residents in the 181st

Legislative District are:

police.co_06@phila.gov

police.co_26@phila.gov

police.co_22@phila.gov

police.co_35@phila.gov

police.co_25@phila.gov

police.co_39@phila.gov

These electronic reporting methods will allow residents to anonymously report criminal activity from any location with an Internet connection, including public locations such as a library.

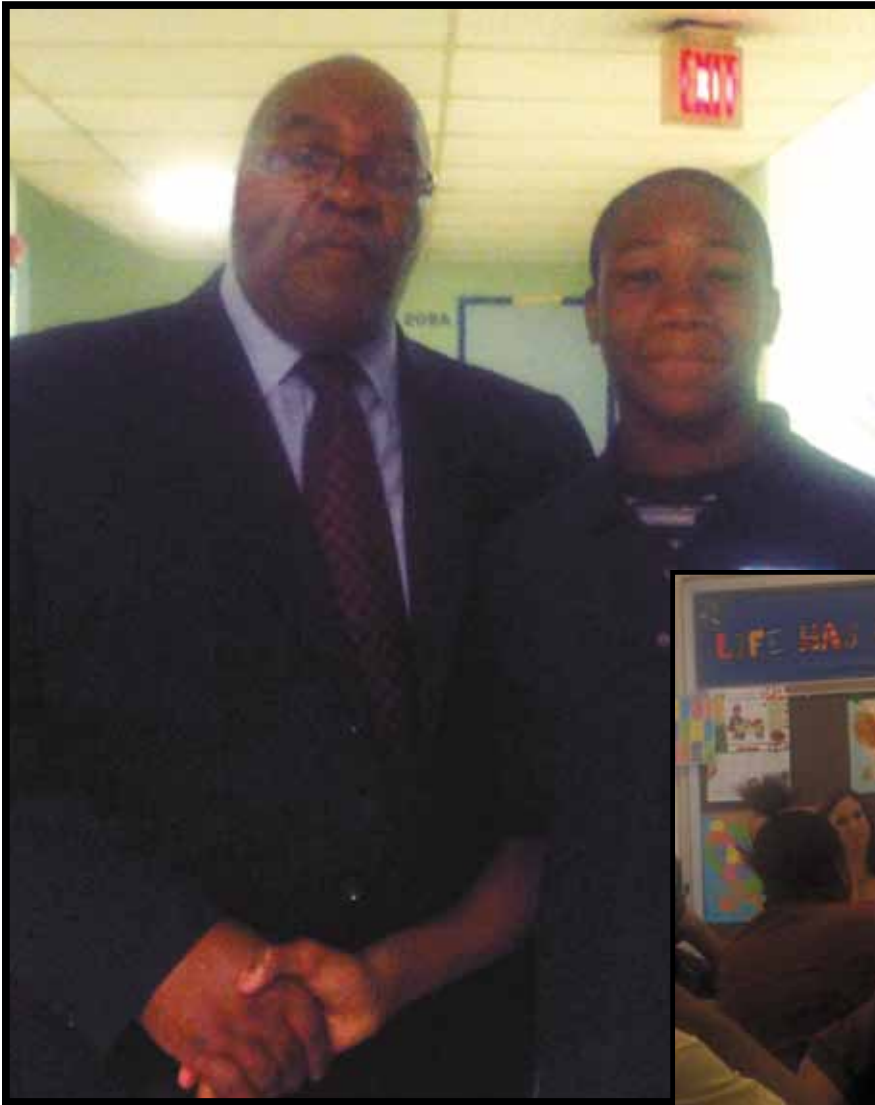
Celebrating Women's History Month

In recognition of Women's History Month, Rep. Thomas held his annual breakfast to honor local women on March 26 at the Honorable William H. Gray Annex. The theme for this year's breakfast was women in law enforcement and emergency services. Honorees included members of the Philadelphia and Temple University police departments and the Philadelphia Fire Department. In recognition of their dedicated service to the community, the honorees were treated to an awards breakfast and presented a commemorative plaque.

Honorees from the Philadelphia Police Department included: **Denise Dixon**, District 22; **Shanna Moore**, District 22; **Melissa Creamer**, District 25; **Kelly Robbins**, District 25; **Christine Leader**, District 26; **Michelle Moran**, District 26; **Tanya Brown**, District 6 and **Danielle Walsh**, District 6. Honorees from the Temple University Police Department included: **Rebecca Key-Gaskins**; **Ama Jones and Magaliz Torres**. Honorees from the Philadelphia Fire Department included: **Sherea Carter**; **Donna Coleman**; **Angela Cummins**; **Kimberly Facenda**; **Krystle Moore**; **Jacquelyn Murphy**; **Tamika Price**; **Starlette Rawls**; **Sadie Smith** and **Brenda Waggoner**.

District Events

Thomas addresses students at Hartranft Elementary School Career Day



On May 20, Rep. Thomas addressed students at the annual Career Day at John F. Hartranft Elementary School. Thomas attends the event every year and uses it as an opportunity to speak with young people about running for office and careers in public service.



Thomas hosts Senior Expo

On June 2, Rep. Thomas hosted his 2011 Senior Expo. This event was held at the Althea Gibson Tennis Center and focused on health and quality-of-life issues affecting seniors. Guests received free health screenings and learned about insurance and prescription-drug coverage, SEPTA transit options for seniors, wills and estate planning, and special programs for seniors offered by utility companies. At the end of the day, more than 100 seniors were treated to a cookout hosted by Rep. Thomas' staff and volunteers.

181st LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OFFICES

Capitol Office:
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District Office:
 530 West Girard Avenue
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Website: www.pahouse.com/thomas



IMPORTANT TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

State Government

PACE Cardholder Service	1-800-225-PACE (7223)
Property Tax/Rent Rebate Info	1-888-222-9190
Unemployment Compensation	1-888-255-4728
Workers' Compensation Helpline	1-800-482-2383

Emergency & Special Needs

CDC Hotline (AIDS/Immunizations/Autism/STDs).....	1-800-342-2437
Coalition Against Rape	1-888-772-PCAR (7227)
Crime Stoppers.....	1-800-4PA-TIPS (472-8477)
Domestic Violence Hotline.....	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline (care facilities)	1-800-254-5164
Elder Abuse Reporting Hotline (in-home)	1-800-490-8505
Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).....	1-866-857-7095
Legal Aid Locator (AARP national network)	1-888-687-2277
Mortgage Assistance	1-800-342-2397
PA Department of Health	1-877-724-3258
Poison Control Center	1-800-222-1222
Senior Law Helpline.....	1-877-727-7529

Children & Youth

Healthy Kids Helpline (PA CHIP)	1-800-986-KIDS (5437)
National Runaway Switchboard.....	1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)
PHEAA Student Grants/Loans.....	1-800-692-7392
Special Kids Network (referral service)	1-800-986-4550
Teenline (crisis intervention).....	1-800-722-5385