



JAMES R. ROEBUCK

State Representative ♦ 188th Legislative District



REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

208 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202188 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2188 • (717) 783-1000

4712 Baltimore Ave. • Philadelphia, PA 19143 • (215) 724-2227 • Hours: Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri., 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Thurs., 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

2009-10 STATE BUDGET UPDATE

STATE PASSES RESPONSIBLE BUDGET FOR 2009-10

After a long, difficult process, the Pennsylvania legislature voted to pass a \$27.8 billion General Fund budget on Oct. 9.

This is by no means a perfect spending plan, but it is the first time in my tenure as a state representative

that an approved budget calls for an expenditure of fewer funds than in the previous year's budget.

While keeping spending at a minimum, I fought along with my Democratic colleagues to make sure we continue to provide services to the

residents of Pennsylvania and at the same time prohibit broad tax increases.

I regret the severity of some of the cuts to programs that I support. However, I believe we passed a budget that is fiscally and morally responsible.

NEW BUDGET INCREASES STATE EDUCATION FUNDING DURING ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Although we were faced with many tough choices during the budget process, I felt that an area that could not be compromised is education.

That is why I am pleased that the budget includes a \$300 million increase in the state's funding for basic education. Philadelphia's basic education funding this year has risen to \$1.01 billion - a \$78.22 million or 8.4 percent increase; this 8.4 percent increase includes both state money and federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Under the Senate's budget proposals, the Philadelphia School District would have received no increase in the basic education subsidy.

The budget also maintains our early childhood educational initiatives. Funding for Pre-K Counts and Accountability Block Grants will allow the continuation of the early education programs proven to help children learn.

Pre-K Counts brings quality half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten to disadvantaged children across Pennsylvania. House Democrats protected this important program by funding it at \$86.4 million.

Accountability Block Grants support vital programs in school districts, such as full-day kindergarten and class size reduction. House Democrats worked to fund this program at \$5.4 million.

TAXES ON ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS STOPPED IN BUDGET AGREEMENT

One of the proposals on the table for the state budget that I opposed was a tax on tickets to arts and cultural events, including museums and performing arts venues.

Taxes on the arts are not the best way to raise revenue for the state budget. I and many other House Democrats fought this and other misguided tax proposals and were successful in eliminating them from the final state budget plan.

We also restored \$11 million in funding for the arts, which the Senate wanted to cut.



Rep. Roebuck meets with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan during the secretary's visit to Philadelphia in September.

COLLEGE CREDIT LEGISLATION ENACTED AS PART OF BUDGET

The state budget includes a new measure that doubles the number of credit hours community college students can transfer to state-owned universities.

This new law increases from 30 to 60 the number of transferable credits

from a community college to a state university. It will help students maximize their credits and open the door of higher education to many struggling families, especially during these tough economic times.

For more information about the

credit transfer system, you can visit the PA TRAC Web site at www.patrac.org. The site allows students to easily find which credit hours can transfer to another college.



BILL COSBY, ROEBUCK JOIN CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY'S CALL ME MISTER PROGRAM

The Call Me MISTER program is an innovative approach that aims to attract and train African-American male students to become teachers in elementary schools.

The program started at Clemson University in South Carolina and now operates in seven states.

Last year, I secured a \$1 million state grant to establish a Call Me MISTER Program at Cheyney University.

The program is off to a strong start. To date 24 "misters" have become a part of the initiative at Cheyney. Earlier this fall, the university welcomed Bill Cosby as the honorary

chairperson of the Call Me MISTER Advisory Council.

I look forward to working with the council to make sure the program continues to help as many students as possible. I believe it will have a substantial impact in producing quality teachers for our public schools.

I am also pleased to report that I received the President's Award for Outstanding Educational Leadership from Cheyney President Michelle R. Howard-Vital for my work in establishing the Call Me MISTER Program at the university.



Rep. Roebuck joins Bill Cosby at the state Capitol for a rally this summer in support of increasing education funding.



Rep. Roebuck receives the President's Award for Outstanding Educational Leadership from Cheyney University President Michelle R. Howard-Vital.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT FOR CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS TO PREVENT CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT

The state Department of Public Welfare is looking for volunteers to serve on eight new Citizen Review Panels that will help protect children from abuse and neglect.

The CRPs will be comprised of people with expertise and interest in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Members will work together to evaluate practices, policies and procedures to make recommendations each year on how to improve child welfare services in Pennsylvania. The CRPs will also develop public outreach strategies and prepare annual reports on their activities and recommendations.

If you are interested in applying to be a CRP member, please visit the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Training Program's Web site at www.pacwcbt.pitt.edu/CAPTA.htm or call Ms. Kimberly Early at 717-783-2554.

FUN PA FACTS FOR KIDS AND ADULTS TOO!

Pennsylvania's official symbols include:

- STATE ANIMAL: *Whitetail Deer*
- STATE GAME BIRD: *Ruffed Grouse*
- STATE INSECT: *Firefly*
- STATE DOG: *Great Dane*
- STATE FISH: *Brook Trout*
- STATE FLOWER: *Mountain Laurel*
- STATE TREE: *Hemlock*

STATE POISED TO APPROVE NEW GRADUATION PLAN: 'Keystone Exams'

The State Board of Education has developed new graduation competency assessments — or Keystone Exams.

As chairman of the House Education Committee, I worked with my fellow legislators and various education stakeholders to rework this plan to ensure that it will best suit the needs of Pennsylvania's students and schools.

The new plan provides more flexibility for school districts when choosing appropriate and acceptable assessments, and provides model curricula and diagnostic tools for

school districts to utilize. It also consolidates and reduces the amount of student testing, and costs \$40 million less than originally proposed. I believe that the revised plan promotes greater accountability of students in meeting academic standards, while preserving local control for school districts in determining high school graduation for their students. I believe this plan will enhance local school district efforts to help students reach academic proficiency and result in more timely remedial efforts for struggling students.

As you may have seen in recent

news reports, the plan was approved in October by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission. The next step is approval from the state Attorney General's Office before the plan can be implemented. Once it is approved, this year's seventh-graders would be the first class of high school seniors affected by this plan.

For more information on the Keystone Exams, visit www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/regulations/8860 and click on "Chapter 4 Proposed Graduation Requirements."

HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE NOW

If you have trouble paying your winter heating bills, the Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) can help.

LIHEAP provides cash grants to help low-income-families heat their homes, as well as crisis grants for heating emergencies. A family of four with an annual income of up to \$33,075 can qualify for assistance.

You can obtain an application by calling the Philadelphia County Assistance Office. The number is 215-560-1583. Applications are also available through local utility companies, community service agencies and on the state Department of Public Welfare's Web site: www.dpw.state.pa.us/servicesprograms/liheap.

As always, please contact my office with questions about this or any state-related issue. LIHEAP runs through March 15.

PROTECT YOUR HOME AGAINST RISING ENERGY COSTS

As many of you know, rate-caps on electricity will be expiring next year, and as such, we should all expect to see our PECO bills increase. While the exact rate of increase is not yet known, there are simple steps we can all take to lower electricity bills by reducing our usage.

WINTERIZE YOUR HOME:

- Make sure you have weather stripping on doors and windows, and if you have a drafty window, try installing a heavy curtain to help insulate the room.
- Wrap your hot water heater in an insulated blanket.
- Set your thermostat between 66 degrees and 68 degrees in the winter.

CONSERVE ENERGY:

- Turn off and unplug appliances that are not in use.
- Make sure to unplug cell-phone and other chargers when not charging the device.
- Turn off lights in areas of the home you are not using.

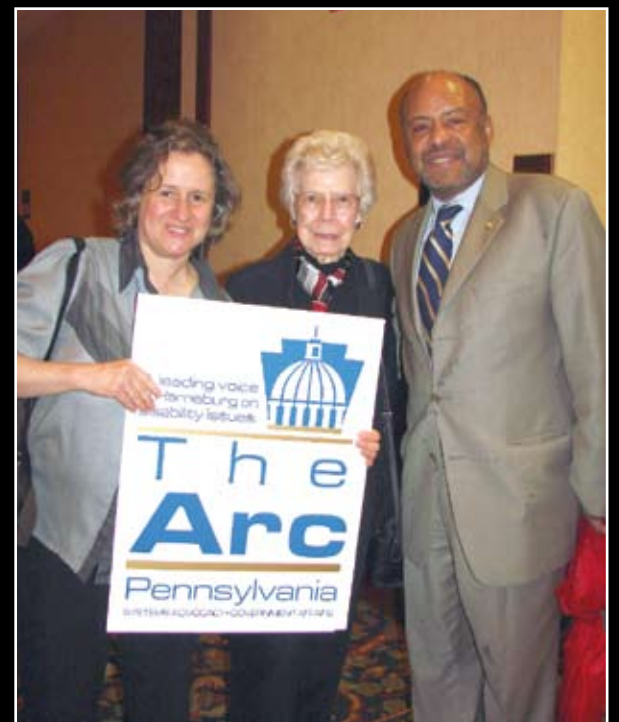
In this economy, no one wants to hear about increases in prices, but if you take action to reduce the amount of energy you use, you can keep utility bills under control. For more tips on how to save on your energy bills this winter, visit www.turnsealsave.org.

ARC OF PHILADELPHIA CONDUCTING FIRST ADVOCACY TRAINING EVENTS

The Arc of Philadelphia is conducting Special Education Advocacy Training for attorneys, educators, other professionals, advocates and family members.

The training is the first of its kind in Philadelphia and can lead to Act 48 credits, NSEAI certification and continuing education credits. The presenter is nationally recognized expert Dr. Marie Lewis. I am scheduled to attend one of those sessions.

For more information, please contact Arc of Philadelphia at 215-229-4550 or visit www.arcpddc.org.



Rep. Roebuck meets in Harrisburg with representatives from Arc of Philadelphia to discuss issues relating to people with developmental disabilities. Roebuck is pictured with Fran Sugarman and Eleanor Elkin.



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JAMES R. ROEBUCK
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lpo • jc • 1209

PLANNING FOR THE 2010 U.S. CENSUS

The countdown to the 2010 Census has begun, and the U.S. Census Bureau is looking to national, tribal, state and local officials and community leaders to ensure an accurate count.

With Census Day approaching, the Census Bureau has already launched a critical national effort that affects the apportionment of congressional seats, and how the federal government annually allocates \$300 billion in federal assistance to state, local and tribal governments.

The 2010 Census will ask for name, gender, age, race, ethnicity, relationship and whether the householder owns or rents their home. The form should take only about 10 minutes to complete, and answers are protected by law and strictly confidential. The participation of community leaders, organizations and local governments can help make the 2010 Census the most accurate census in our nation's history.

For information about forming a Complete Count Committee, please contact the Census Bureau's Philadelphia Regional Office at 833 Chestnut St., Suite 504, (215) 717-1800 or 1-800-262-4236. For more information about the 2010 Census, please visit www.census.gov/2010census.

I urge all of my constituents in the 188th Legislative District to make sure they are counted on April 1, 2010.

CHIP OFFERS FREE OR LOW-COST INSURANCE FOR YOUR CHILD NOW

The Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, can provide all uninsured children with access to affordable health coverage.

CHIP is open to all uninsured children — no child will be turned away. There's no waiting list; there's no income limit; and there's no excuse not to take advantage of CHIP and make sure your child is covered for their medical needs. For more information about CHIP or help applying, contact my office or visit my Web site: www.pahouse.com/Roebuck.



Rep. Roebuck hosts an Education Committee hearing at the Community College of Philadelphia to address math and science education. Pictured after the hearing with Roebuck are (left to right) Velda Morris, co-chairwoman of the Urban STEM Strategy Group; Jamie Bracey, co-chairwoman of Urban STEM Strategy Group; and Jeremiah White Jr., chairman of iPraxis.



Rep. Roebuck and Mayor Nutter are pictured in front of the Lincoln statue, a gift from the city of Beijing in honor of the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and China. The presentation was made during Philadelphia's celebration of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday in July.