



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Fall Update



### CAPITOL OFFICE

220 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202055  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055  
(717) 787-5142

### DISTRICT OFFICES

239 Longfellow St.  
Vandergrift, PA 15690  
(724) 567-6982

620 N. Chestnut St.  
Derry, PA 15627  
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building  
901 Jefferson St.  
Latrobe, PA 15650  
(724) 539-7560

## Petrarca named Chairman of House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

I am pleased to report that I was appointed Democratic chairman of the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee for the 2011-12 legislative session.

Agriculture is not only a vital part of our state's economy, it is a vital part of our state's history and culture. Many of our traditions are steeped in the farming lifestyle. I look forward to doing all I can to preserve the family farm in Pennsylvania and to better the economic and educational condition of our communities.

The Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee reviews all legislation relating to agriculture and rural development. We also oversee the Commonwealth's Farmland Preservation program, which is the largest of its type in the country. Westmoreland County ranks second in Pennsylvania in this program. Additionally, we oversee the State Food Purchase program and the Farmers Market Nutrition and Senior Farmers Market

Nutrition programs, which provide support to senior citizens and those enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children program. The committee also oversees the Pennsylvania Dog Law and weights and measures, and regulates the amusement park industry in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's 63,000 farm families continue to be the stewards of more than 7.7 million acres of farmland. With \$6.1 billion in cash receipts annually from production agriculture, Pennsylvania farmers and agribusinesses are the leading economic driver in our state.

In addition to production agriculture, the industry also raises revenue and supplies jobs through support services such as food processing, marketing, transportation and farm equipment. In total, production agriculture and agribusiness contribute nearly \$61 billion to Pennsylvania's economy.



## Did you know? Pennsylvania agriculture is #1

■ Pennsylvania's 2,300 food-processing companies are number one among the 50 states in the value of shipments of canned fruit and vegetable specialty products, chocolate and cocoa products,

potato chips and pretzels.

■ Pennsylvania leads the United States in mushroom production, with an annual production of more than 425 million pounds, valuing more than \$330.7 million per year.

■ Pennsylvania ranks number one among the 50 states in the production of export grade hardwood.

■ Pennsylvania's forest products account for nearly \$700 million of the state's many exports.

## Petrarca works to save tax dollars

Since being elected in 1994, I have returned more than \$165,000 in unused expense money to the state. This money is available for legislative expenses, postage (including newsletters), and the operation of district offices. I have never flown to Harrisburg, nor do I lease a car at taxpayer expense. It is my firm commitment that our tax money be spent wisely.

## Fall legislative schedule to include Marcellus Shale, state stores, prevailing wage and school vouchers

### Marcellus Shale

This fall, the legislature will once again debate the issue of Marcellus Shale gas drilling. Much more discussion will focus on the report released this summer by the Governor's Advisory Commission and the governor's recent proposal to require an impact fee and direct 75 percent of revenue to county and local governments. Pennsylvania continues to be the only major gas producing state that does not have an extraction tax or an impact fee.

The governor's report also recommended "forced pooling," which essentially means that drillers are allowed to remove natural gas from beneath properties of owners

who refuse to lease their mineral rights. I do not and will not support any legislation that will undermine property owners' rights.

If an impact fee is instituted, I continue to feel that the majority of these dollars must go to local governments and to areas like ours where the drilling is occurring. These dollars should help us deal with road repairs and health and safety issues, including water safety and other environmental protection issues caused by drilling activities.

### Privatization

The legislature may also take up the issue of privatizing wine and liquor sales. The

debate may focus on House Bill 11, which calls for closing the current 609 state liquor stores in favor of 1,250 licenses that would be auctioned. Proponents claim that this auction would raise \$2 billion. The bill would also replace any current markups and tax with a gallonage tax – a variable tax rate based on the type of drink and alcohol content. By my calculation, to raise \$2 billion these licenses would have to sell for approximately \$2 million each. There are not too many small businessmen and women in our area who could afford that. In addition, the proposed gallonage tax is one of the highest in the nation.

*Continued on next page*

# FALL UPDATE

Continued from previous page

In 2009-10 alone, the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board returned just under \$482 million to the state treasury. In addition, the agency returned \$4.5 million in licensing fees to local communities. The LCB employs 4,000-5,000 Pennsylvanians.

## Prevailing Wage

The House may also consider prevailing wage legislation. The House Labor and Industry Committee recently passed a bill that lessens the prevailing wage law by moving the threshold to \$185,000 from the current \$25,000 on the cost of projects that would be subject to the law.

## School Vouchers

School vouchers remain a top priority for the Corbett administration. Much of the focus continues to be on Senate Bill 1 and the implementation of a voucher for distressed schools in Pennsylvania.

## Petrarca votes 'no' on state budget that makes devastating cuts to health, education and safety for Pennsylvania citizens

### Local School District Funding Decreases in 2011-12 State Budget

#### Blairsville-Saltsburg Area

\$823,509 decrease, or 8.3 percent

#### Derry Area

\$1.19 million decrease, or 9.4 percent

#### Greater Latrobe Area

\$1.4 million decrease, or 12.9 percent

#### Kiski Area

\$1.8 million decrease, or 10.7 percent

#### Leechburg Area

\$375,483 decrease, or 8.5 percent

I voted no on the state budget that was signed on June 30 because it shows an incredible lack of foresight into the best interests of Pennsylvania's future and a shocking misplacement of priorities with devastating cuts. This year's state budget severely reduces funding to public schools, sharply cuts funding to public universities, slashes Medicaid programs for seniors and the disabled, and will result in more than 11,000 job cuts for Pennsylvania workers.

The budget includes more than \$1 billion in cuts to public schools, \$200 million in cuts to state-owned and state-related universities and more than \$650 million taken from Medicaid programs and other

health care services for seniors, the disabled and the chronically ill.

I agree that some spending cuts are necessary to achieve a balanced budget, but what makes this budget especially harsh is the fact that we had more than \$785 million in surpluses that could have been used to restore some of the funding from these painful cuts. We must live within our means, but be careful how we do it. As many of you know, I've never voted for a tax increase in my career. The legislature must continue to find ways to cut waste and fraud, but our senior citizens and children deserve better. These areas are not the places to balance the budget.

## Higher education becoming more and more out of reach in Pennsylvania

The U.S Department of Education recently released a report outlining the highest tuition rates of public, four-year or above institutions of higher learning in the nation:

■ Penn State University holds the No. 1 spot with an annual tuition rate of \$14,416.

■ University of Pittsburgh holds the No. 2 spot with tuition at \$14,154.

■ Penn State's branch campuses take up 19 of the other spots in the top 30 most-expensive tuition in the country.

## My legislation to boost organ, tissue donation

Although Pennsylvania continues to make great strides, I have introduced legislation that would further establish Pennsylvania as a leader in organ and tissue donation awareness and transplantation.

My bill (H.B. 100) would establish uniform and consistent regulations for donating organs and tissue for transplantation, therapy and research. This proposal conforms to the provisions of the National Organ Transplant law as well as federal regulations.

As a member, by gubernatorial appointment, of the Pennsylvania Organ Donation Advisory Board for the past 16 years, I have seen the Revised Uniform Anatomical Gifts Act enacted in 43 states and District of Columbia, and under consideration in three additional states and Puerto Rico. Making Pennsylvania's law consistent with federal law and the laws in other states will help us to better facilitate donations by avoiding the confusion and uncertainty of differences in laws from state to state.



Rep. Petrarca speaks at a Capitol news conference in support of his bill to establish uniform and consistent regulations for organ donation.

My legislation would ultimately continue to move Pennsylvania forward in saving lives and giving hope to those waiting for the gift of life.

## Facts and Figures

■ During the past 10 years, the organ transplant waiting list has more than doubled in the United States.

■ Nationally more than 104,000 men, women and children are waiting for an organ transplant that can save their lives. Eighteen of them die each day because an appropriate match isn't found in time.

■ The organ transplant waiting list in Pennsylvania includes more than 7,900 people. Still thousands of others wait for a tissue transplant that will greatly enhance the quality of their lives.

■ One organ, tissue and eye donor may save up to eight lives and help more than 50 people.

■ The greatest need is for kidney transplants, with more than 87,000 people on the waiting list.

Following this, the liver, lungs and heart, respectively, are in greatest demand for transplantation.

**For more information on how to become an organ donor, visit [www.donatelife-pa.org](http://www.donatelife-pa.org).**

# House passes bill to enhance Pennsylvania agricultural product promotion

## PA Preferred® logo is a symbol of quality



By a unanimous vote, the House approved a measure, now law, that provides for the licensing and use of the PA Preferred® trademark for Pennsylvania's agricultural commodities.

House Bill 1424 gives the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) the tools it needs to effectively administer the PA Preferred® program and encourage more licensees to promote locally grown and produced Pennsylvania commodities under the PA Preferred® label.

The Pennsylvania Preferred Act will grow jobs by helping Pennsylvania farmers, producers and processors connect more consumers with high-quality local agricultural products.

Producers, processors, retailers and even restaurants that use qualifying menu items may apply for a license to use the trademark.

I want to emphasize that the use of the trademark does not create new governmental costs. There are no taxes or mandates involved in the PA Preferred® trademark licensing program and participation is always purely voluntary. The trademark is a recognized symbol of quality that participants can use to promote their own qualifying products.

The PA Preferred® program began in 2004. The PDA initiated the program to set standards for excellence and to expand consumer markets for

high-quality Pennsylvania products. The Pennsylvania Preferred Act memorializes the trademark and associated guidelines, ensuring the stability of the program's infrastructure, to encourage additional private sector investment by new and existing licensees.

Agriculture is the top industry in Pennsylvania, providing jobs and feeding our population, so in these tough economic times it's great to have this opportunity to build on that success by improving market conditions, while keeping government involvement and spending to a minimum.

This legislation was signed into law Oct. 5 as Act 78.

## Save \$ with electric choice

On Jan. 1, 2011, rate caps expired for all Pennsylvania electric utility customers.

While this has resulted in rate increases, customers do not have to pay the prices charged by their current supplier. Customers still have the ability to choose between their current electric distribution company (EDC) and competitive supply prices for the generation portion of the bill. You can now compare the EDC price to a

competitive supplier price to find the best option. In some areas, an EGS's rate is as much as 10 percent cheaper than the default service price offered by the utility.

It is important to remember that you DO have a choice when it comes to your electricity. At my urging, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) held two hearings earlier this year to hear residents' feedback and concerns

about the Peoples Natural Gas Company's proposal to increase its natural gas distribution rates. I asked the PUC to investigate after many of my constituents received notice of the outrageously high rate increase from People's, formerly Dominion.

Visit [www.papowerswitch.com](http://www.papowerswitch.com) to learn more about electric choice and to shop for a supplier.

## Petrarca successful in keeping forensic psychiatric unit at Torrance State Hospital

I am happy to report that I was successful in my fight against the closing of the state Department of Public Welfare Regional Forensic Psychiatric Unit at Torrance State Hospital in Derry Township.

In his budget address this past March, Gov. Corbett proposed that the two remaining forensic units in Pennsylvania – at the Torrance and Norristown state hospitals – be privatized. This proposal also would have cut 401 jobs, 180 at the Torrance unit alone.

I fought against this proposal that would have left more than 400 Pennsylvanians without jobs. In addition, these two remaining units serve so many Pennsylvania residents and are a vital resource to our court system. It was important to preserve funding for them in this budget since privatization would not have been a cost savings.



Rep. Petrarca participated in the Derry Township Agricultural Fair in July.

## Sign up for email updates

Sign up to receive email alerts about my legislative activities in Harrisburg and state-related issues that affect your life. Visit my website at [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca), click "Contact Me" and fill out the form.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

## Joseph A. Petrarca

220 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202055  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055

Website: [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca)  
Email: [petrarca@pahouse.net](mailto:petrarca@pahouse.net)

lpo.ts.1011

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Joseph A. PETRARCA

Website: [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca) • Email: [petrarca@pahouse.net](mailto:petrarca@pahouse.net)

#### CAPITOL OFFICE:

220 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202055, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055  
(717) 787-5142

#### DISTRICT OFFICES:

239 Longfellow St., Vandergrift, PA 15690  
(724) 567-6982

620 N. Chestnut St., Derry, PA 15627  
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building  
901 Jefferson St., Latrobe, PA 15650  
(724) 539-7560



Fall Update

## 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.

## Route 22 completion

I fought hard to make this a reality and keep tax dollars in our part of the state. Rt. 22 is a success story of which I am proud.



Rep. Petrarca joins Gov. Corbett at a bill signing at the state Capitol.

