



State Representative

76th Legislative District

# Mike Hanna

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## A state budget destined to fail

The ink was not even dry on Pennsylvania's spending plan for 2014-15 before speculation began on how soon it will force the state to freeze spending or cut programs.

Approved largely along party lines, the \$29.1 billion blueprint is being called "The Big Gimmick" because of its reliance on more than \$1.75 billion in unsustainable revenue sources and gimmicks.

Options were available other than doubling down on policies that produced a \$1.7 billion budget deficit – most states were enjoying surpluses – and job creation numbers that have dropped Pennsylvania from seventh in the nation to 46th.

The spending plan:

- Flat-funds local schools' basic education subsidies;
- Includes total education funding – excluding pensions – that remains less than what was approved in 2008-09, the fiscal year before federal stimulus funding;
- Diverts \$30 million from the Volunteer Fire Companies Loan Fund;
- Raids \$95 million from the Small Business First Fund;
- Cuts \$1.9 million from the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs;
- Provides no new funding for county-run human service programs, retaining Gov. Tom Corbett's 10-percent funding cut for a third year; and
- Raids \$100 million in funds intended for property tax relief to prop up the General Fund.

The state budget is the same stale mix of more tax cuts for the rich and more spending cuts and fewer services for the rest of Pennsylvania.

I could not support the plan. Pennsylvania deserves better.

Mark my words: Pennsylvania will face bigger headaches in future years because of the failures of this budget.



*Clinton County Veterans Affairs Director Bill Bechdel stopped by my booth at the 4th Annual Veterans Expo in June at the Beech Creek American Legion. My staff and I featured resources for veterans at the popular and informative expo sponsored by the county VA office.*

## Pension pain School cuts, not benefits, at fault

Pension costs are being blamed for increased school property taxes. This blame game is incredibly misleading.

Property taxes have been rising because of the \$3 billion in education funding cuts instituted over the previous three years. With just months to go before an election, policy makers are suddenly looking to deflect the blame elsewhere.

The author of the pension bill supported by the governor admits that it will not save money for the state or school districts in the near term. It's about gradually shifting young teachers and other public workers to a different kind of pension plan.

**Continued on next page**

# Meeting the challenges to higher education head on

Higher education in Pennsylvania is facing many challenges, including declining state funding and increasing tuition.

This spring, a troubling proposal to allow select schools to withdraw from our state system of universities made headlines.

As a member of the State System of Higher Education's Board of Governors and a proud alumnus of Lock Haven University, I know full well the educational and economic importance of our state schools.

I reject proposals that would eviscerate Pennsylvania's state system of universities. State System universities, including Lock Haven, remain the lowest-cost, four-year college option in the state.

However, we won't bolster higher education by dithering and side-stepping the challenges it faces.

My House Resolution 777 would modernize and streamline higher education by having a select Higher Education Action Committee move forward on proposals to revitalize higher education in Pennsylvania.

The committee would be charged with delivering

within six months concrete plans based on the recommendations presented in 2012 by the governor's Advisory Commission on Postsecondary Education.

## The proposals would:

- Identify baseline funding and a funding mechanism to provide

long-term fiscal predictability;

- Consolidate resources and eliminate redundancies to highlight education options;

- Improve tax policies that spur job-training programs; and

- Bolster proven programs such as the

Pennsylvania Targeted Industry Program to enhance student access.

The governor's commission made many legitimate recommendations to change the landscape of higher education in the commonwealth, and it's time to act on them now.



*I welcomed PASSHE Chancellor Frank Brogan, center, and his family to the House of Representatives. Joining me are House Speaker Sam Smith and state Rep. Matt Baker.*

## Pension pain School cuts, not benefits, at fault

*Continued from previous page*

It has NOTHING to do with reducing today's school property taxes.

Workers have never missed a payment, and they have earned the right to a secure retirement.

The pension plan being sought in

some circles would cut retirement benefits for many future employees by 40 percent or more! We need to boost household incomes, not slash them.

Since 2011, almost \$3 billion in school funding has been slashed while corporations have gained \$2.1 billion

in unaffordable and ineffective tax breaks. That's the real link between education costs and property taxes.

The pension arguments are nothing but election-year sound bites, and desperate ones at that.

# IT'S OFFICIAL!

## Piper J3 Cub is Pennsylvania's official aircraft

*“The Piper Cub: Born in Pennsylvania, proven in battle and flying high and proud to this day.”*

A multiyear effort to acknowledge the exploits of the Piper Cub, and the people who made the engineering marvel, bore fruit this summer as the Piper J3 Cub was named the official aircraft of Pennsylvania.

My House Bill 1989 was signed into law June 26, making the designation official immediately.

The legislation lets the world know that Lock Haven gave birth to the plane whose popularity in peace and war remains unparalleled 77 years after it first began production.

The region's manufacturing prowess amazes to this day. It is hard to fathom the dedication and professionalism that it took to produce the 20,000 Piper Cubs built between 1937 and 1947, as the local workforce prevailed through the Great Depression and the tough years of World War II.

It is the stuff of legend: crafting a new Piper Cub every 20 minutes. The production feat enabled 80 percent of all American World War II pilots to receive their initial flight training in the plane.

The Piper Cub earned its fighting wings as a “hedgehopper” during reconnaissance missions over the bloodied hedgerows of France.

Pennsylvania is proud of the Piper Cub and the people who built it.



*On top, Carmen Banfill, Sentimental Journey treasurer; Clinton County Commissioner Jeff Snyder; Cal Arter, Sentimental Journey president; Kim Garlick, Sentimental Journey secretary; and Clinton County Commissioners Pete Smeltz and Joel Long join me as we celebrate the naming of the Piper J3 Cub as the state's official aircraft. Above, I show H.B. 1989, which was signed into law on June 26.*



# Clinton County's 175th birthday party continues

## Eleanor Kodish Day celebrated May 30

It's been a yearlong celebration but some of the best events to celebrate Clinton County's creation on June 21, 1839, are still to come.

In October, the Flaming Foliage Festival & Parade is on tap as well as the Sentimental Journey Breakfast at the William T. Piper Airport.

A complete listing of county events celebrating its birthday is available on my website, [www.pahouse.com/Hanna](http://www.pahouse.com/Hanna).

One highlight of the birthday celebration was Eleanor Kodish Day on May 30.

The "matriarch of Avis" was honored for her dedication to hundreds of children during her 27 years as teacher and principal at Avis Elementary School.

After graduating from Mansfield State Teachers College in 1947, Eleanor returned to the university in 1983 to deliver the commencement address. Along the way, she also was named "Outstanding Educator" by the Mansfield Alumni Board, which she served as a board member.

She's also co-authored three children's books and been a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an honorary organization for women educators, since 1975.

Service to the community is Eleanor's trademark. Among the groups she has served in various capacities include the Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, the Ross Library and the Susque View Nursing Home.



*I was proud to gather with Eleanor Kodish and her family on May 30 to celebrate Eleanor Kodish Day in Clinton County. We gathered in front of the Avis Fire Hall soon after Eleanor completed her duties as grand marshal of the annual Avis Fire Company parade.*

And, Eleanor wasn't about to let Clinton County's 175th birthday pass without adding her unique talents. She volunteered at the Heisey Museum's Kids Camp this summer to help mark the celebration.

For all she does, Eleanor Kordish deserves at least an entire month!

## Reduced Vehicle Registration Fees

If you are retired and have a total income less than \$19,200, you may be eligible for a reduction in your vehicle registration fee.



PennDOT registration fees usually cost \$36, but this program provides the registration to you at a discounted rate of only \$10. Applications are available at my offices or on PennDOT's website: [www.dmv.state.pa.us](http://www.dmv.state.pa.us).

## Hunting and Fishing Licenses

If you are 65 or older, you are eligible for reduced-fee hunting and fishing licenses from the Game Commission and Fish & Boat Commission.

A senior hunting license is only \$13.70 yearly or \$51.70 for a lifetime.

A senior fishing license is only \$11.70 yearly or \$51.70 for a lifetime.

You can contact my offices for more information or visit any local hunting/fishing license retailer.



# My offices have Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications

The annual Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is under way, and the first checks for property taxes or rents paid in 2013 began arriving in July.

My offices have applications. Please ignore any offers to help you file an application for a fee because my offices can help you file for FREE.

The program is open to Pennsylvania residents 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people 18 or older who have a disability. 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 toward their total income.

The maximum property tax or rent rebate for most qualifying Pennsylvania residents is \$650.

Here's another tidbit of good news: The deadline to apply for rebates for property taxes or rents paid in 2013 has been extended until Dec. 31.

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## I'm working to improve the rebate program

The state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is a popular and valuable program for hundreds of thousands of residents.

I am supporting several enhancements to the program. I voted for legislation that would:

- Permanently extend the program's deadline to Dec. 31. The program's regular deadline is June 30, but the state regularly extends the deadline until the end of the year. This would make the extension permanent.
- Double the amount of death benefits that may be exempted when considering income for program eligibility. Current law exempts the first \$5,000 of death benefits. The bill would increase that amount to \$10,000.
- Allow an executor to apply for the rebate on behalf of a deceased applicant if the individual was eligible for the program on the date he or she died. Currently, deceased applicants must have lived the entire year for which their claim is filed.

Since the program's inception in 1971, more than \$5 billion has been distributed to older adults and adults with disabilities. The legislation is currently being considered by the Senate.

I also am supporting legislation to allow certain federal employees who are ineligible for Social Security to exclude half of their Civil Service Retirement System pension when applying for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.



*I received an award from Amy Wolfe, director of the Trout Unlimited Eastern Abandoned Mine Program and the Pennsylvania Eastern Brook Trout Habitat Initiative, for my longstanding support of the Kettle Creek Watershed.*

## Grants benefiting Clinton and Centre counties

It's always gratifying to see worthwhile local projects receiving support from various state programs, and even regional and national groups.

Recent grant awards in the 76th Legislative District include:

The city of **Lock Haven** was awarded a \$4,567 state grant based on its recycling efforts.

**Centre County** received a \$43,245 grant to help pay for costs of updating the county's solid-waste management plan.

The **Penns Valley Conservation Association** was selected for a \$3,000 state environmental grant to support the group's education projects in the Penns Creek watershed.

The **Clinton County Solid Waste Authority** received a \$249,999 grant for its curbside and leaf waste recycling programs.

The **Centre County Recycling and Refuse Authority** was awarded

\$249,020 for its curbside and drop-off recycling programs.

The state Department of Environmental Protection awarded a contract to reclaim mining property in **Snow Shoe Township** that was abandoned more than 50 years ago.

The DEP awarded a \$100,000 grant to the **Clinton County Conservation District** to repair stream banks damaged by last year's flooding.

The Dominion Foundation announced a \$3,250 grant to the **Clinton County Conservation District** to support the district's weeklong Conservation Summer Day Camp.

The **Lloyd Wilson Chapter of Trout Unlimited** was awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to support the chapter's mission of preserving, protecting and enhancing waterways in north central Pennsylvania.



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## Stay tuned! Second drug/alcohol awareness event is planned

My staff and I are preparing a second drug, alcohol and tobacco awareness event to be held in the district.

The Mountaintop Community Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Awareness Event that I hosted in April showed the community's concern about such issues.

They are problems that require all of our input and attention.

Please stay tuned for information about the coming awareness event.

I recently added my support to House Resolution 955, which recognizes August 2014 as "National Medicine

Abuse Awareness Month" in Pennsylvania.

I also eagerly supported House Resolution 659, which establishes a House Opioid Addictions Task Force to tackle opioid prescription drug misuse and abuse. The task force's recommendations should give us new tools and insights to combat drug problems locally.

I thank everyone who has joined the effort and invite everyone to participate in future discussions and events.

We can't sit back and watch drug abuse tear apart our communities.



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 click on "E-MAIL ALERTS"

## MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation

- 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
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups