

STATE REPRESENTATIVE Jaret Gibbons

10TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



SPRING 2015

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Wolf's budget offers bold new ideas for Pennsylvania

This past March, new Gov. Tom Wolf introduced his first budget proposal to a joint session of the General Assembly. After four years of misguided priorities and smoke-and-mirrors gimmicks from the previous administration, the Wolf budget takes a new approach aimed at rebuilding Pennsylvania's middle class, increasing educational opportunities, improving Pennsylvania's job market and creating a more efficient government.

One of the most devastating cuts of the previous administration was the billion dollars in education funding slashed from the budget. This lack of funding has not only hurt the education of Pennsylvania's children, but also increased the property tax burden on homeowners and small-business owners. Simply put, this cannot continue.

Thankfully, the Wolf budget looks to reinvest \$1 billion back into Pennsylvania's educational system. This budget will help take the burden off children and middle-class families and invigorate the school system. Gov. Wolf is also looking to reinstitute a balanced funding formula for education, which was previously abandoned. Pennsylvania has the most inequitable school funding in the country, and Rep. Gibbons supports Gov. Wolf's goal of fixing this tremendous problem.

Pennsylvania's higher education funding also took a hit, leading to increased tuition and colleges and universities cutting programs. The Wolf budget looks to provide a combined \$140 million more in funding to community colleges, state colleges and universities, and state-related universities.

While Pennsylvania has seen a dip in its unemployment rate recently, more can be done to bring good-paying jobs into the state. Gov. Wolf will try to do just that, as his budget has several key ideas on how to bring jobs back to Pennsylvania.

One goal of the Wolf budget is to cut the Corporate Net Income tax in half. Currently, Pennsylvania has the second-highest CNI rate, but cutting it in half would make it the tenth-lowest. This would encourage businesses to move back

into Pennsylvania to take advantage of a friendlier business climate.

Rep. Gibbons agrees that it's time to reinvest in Pennsylvania's education system and bring back good-paying, middle-class jobs. The budget is far from finished, and the only guarantee is that there will need to be compromises from both sides. With a structural deficit of over \$2 billion, there are no easy decisions. However Rep. Gibbons will continue to fight for the people of the 10th Legislative District and work to ensure the right decisions are made to benefit all Pennsylvanians.



Rep. Gibbons met with Gov. Tom Wolf and several other legislators to discuss budget issues and priorities in the new legislative session.



Joined by his family, Rep. Gibbons was sworn in to his fifth term representing the 10th Legislative District in January.

Rep. Gibbons' offices have Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications

Rep. Gibbons' constituent service offices have received Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program applications from the state Department of Revenue – and his staff is ready to assist!

The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because rebates are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid annually. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2014 and met all other eligibility criteria.

The oft-extended deadline to apply for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2014 is June 30, 2015, and the rebates normally are distributed beginning on July 1. So, the sooner you file, the sooner you will receive your money!

Please ignore any offers to assist with filing the application for a fee. My offices offer help at no charge, and the Revenue Department does not charge a fee to process your application.

Applications also are available online at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling 1-888-222-9190.

It's time to raise the wage in Pennsylvania

As Pennsylvania's economy slowly recovers from the economic downturn that occurred seven years ago, it's time that state government acts to give Pennsylvania's workers a boost by raising the minimum wage. Every state surrounding Pennsylvania has already increased its minimum wage. In January, the minimum wage rose to \$8.25 an hour in New Jersey, \$8 in New York and \$7.95 in Ohio — while here in Pennsylvania it remains at the federal level of \$7.25 an hour, unchanged since 2009. Rep. Gibbons believes it's imperative that each and every worker in Pennsylvania can count on a livable, family-sustaining wage in exchange for a fair day's work.

There are several proposals to raise the minimum wage in Pennsylvania anywhere from \$8.75 to \$10.10 per hour. For example, House Bill 250, introduced by Democratic state Rep. Patty Kim, would raise Pennsylvania's minimum wage in two steps: first by raising the state minimum wage from \$7.25 per hour to \$9 per hour, and then to \$10.10 per hour one year later. H.B. 250 would also include a cost-of-living adjustment to ensure that the minimum wage keeps up with the rate of inflation. This bill would increase the wages of 1.2 million Pennsylvania workers, of which 87 percent are adults and 61 percent have family incomes below the national average.

Raising the minimum wage would help struggling families pay their bills and reduce their reliance on government assistance programs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 14 percent of Pennsylvanians are living in poverty. If H.B. 250 becomes law, the earnings of a full-time worker would increase by more than \$5,900, to \$21,008. This would help boost a family of three above the poverty line, which is \$19,790, and reduce poverty by 9 percent statewide. Additionally, the increased consumer spending from higher wages is projected to create nearly 6,000 Pennsylvania jobs.

If the minimum wage had kept up with inflation since the 1960s, it would already be well over \$10 per hour. Instead, each year that passed without an increase in the minimum wage was essentially a pay cut for those earning it. Studies also show that three out of four Americans support a raise in the minimum wage. In addition, 29 states plus Washington, D.C. have now raised their minimum wage, leaving Pennsylvania in the minority of states that have not.

Rep. Gibbons joined fellow legislators and supporters at a rally to raise the minimum wage.



Property tax relief a necessity in Pennsylvania

Property tax reform has long been talked about in the halls of the Capitol. But for all the years that the discussion has taken place, no one has been able to come up with a plan to truly reform burdensome property taxes. The situation further worsened over the past four years. As former Gov. Tom Corbett stripped funding from education, school districts were forced to increase millage rates and collect more money in property taxes.

Rep. Gibbons believes this situation cannot continue. The time has come to finally make serious progress in reforming Pennsylvania's antiquated property tax. Gov. Tom Wolf has a plan in his state budget to reduce property taxes. State Rep. Stan Saylor of York County has also introduced his own plan. There has also been repeated talk of reintroducing the Property Tax Independence Act, a bill that was House Bill 76 last session, and known as House Bill 1776 two sessions ago.

No property tax relief plan is perfect, and each forces concessions to be made. But it is evident that something must be done. To the right are brief outlines of several plans to reduce the property tax burden that Pennsylvania homeowners currently face.

Gov. Wolf's Plan

- The governor's plan would provide \$3.8 billion in total local tax relief yearly starting after the first year, resulting in approximately a 50 percent reduction in school property taxes for the average homeowner.
- It would raise the state's Personal Income Tax rate from 3.07 percent to 3.70 percent.
- It would also raise the state's Sales and Use Tax rate from 6 to 6.6 percent and include new services.
- Districts with a high tax burden and low income would benefit the most.
- Rent rebates would be provided for households with income up to \$50,000. This includes about 876,000 renting households.

House Bill 860 (Saylor)

- This bill would provide approximately \$4.9 billion in annual local tax relief which would result in approximately a 50 percent reduction in school property taxes for homesteads across the state in the first full year of implementation.

Proposed property tax reduction under Gov. Wolf's plan:

School District	2014-15 Average Household Property Tax Bill	Proposed Tax Reduction for Average Household	Proposed Percent Reduction for Average Household
Big Beaver Falls Area SD (Beaver County)	\$1,107	\$1,007	91%
Blackhawk SD (Beaver County)	\$1,543	\$868	56.3%
New Brighton Area SD (Beaver County)	\$1,052	\$933	88.7%
Riverside Beaver County SD (Beaver County)	\$1,601	\$1,114	69.6%
Slippery Rock Area SD (Butler County)	\$1,504	\$753	50.1%
Ellwood City Area SD (Lawrence County)	\$1,095	\$803	73.3%
Laurel SD (Lawrence County)	\$1,119	\$829	74.1%
Mohawk Area SD (Lawrence County)	\$978	\$694	71%
New Castle SD (Lawrence County)	\$746	\$746	100%
Wilmington Area SD (Lawrence County)	\$1,378	\$710	51.5%

- It would raise the state's Personal Income Tax rate from 3.07 percent to 3.70 percent.
- It would also raise the state's Sales and Use Tax rate from 6 to 7 percent.
- It would put every dollar raised from the increase in the PIT and SUT rates toward reducing property taxes.
- Includes safeguards to ensure these reductions would stay in place.
- Funds generated from the PIT would go toward reducing millage rates, while funds generated from the SUT would go toward homesteads and farmsteads.

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Gov. Wolf accepts Medicaid expansion

Shortly after taking office, Gov. Tom Wolf announced his intention to expand Medicaid under the federal Affordable Care Act. This move does not require legislative approval, but will impact the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians who will now be able to acquire health care coverage.

According to some studies, Medicaid expansion will create between 35,000 and 40,000 jobs, cover hundreds of thousands of uninsured Pennsylvanians, and bring additional federal money back to our state. As of the end of April, 121,234 individuals had been transferred into the new expanded Medicaid program. By the end of September 2015, an additional 137,723 individuals are expected to be transferred. This infusion will help defray the current budget shortfall being experienced due to a lack of vision from the previous administration.

At the time of his announcement, Gov. Wolf provided a few frequently asked questions about the Medicaid expansion changeover, which are included to the right. As always, contact one of Rep. Gibbons' offices if you have questions about this or any state-related program.

Who qualifies for coverage under Medicaid expansion?

In addition to individuals who qualified previously, Pennsylvanians ages 19 to 64 with incomes up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level may be eligible for coverage under Medicaid expansion.

How does Medicaid expansion differ from Healthy PA?

Medicaid expansion allows for eligible adults to be placed into one streamlined adult package. This will increase continuity of care and reduce unnecessary processes to make individuals eligible for uncomplicated health care coverage faster.

What does this mean for individuals who are in the Private Coverage Option?

The department is currently working on a plan to transition individuals into one streamlined adult package without interruption to their coverage and services.

What kind of coverage will be provided?

Medicaid coverage meets national standards for coverage. This includes primary care doctors, preventative care, prescriptions and behavioral health parity.

Who will pay for the expansion?

Federal funds will cover 100 percent of the cost of Medicaid expansion from 2014 to 2016, 95 percent in 2017, 94 percent in 2018, 93 percent in 2019 and 90 percent in 2020 and subsequent years.

What do I need to do if I am already covered under Healthy PA?

If you are already covered, your coverage will remain unaffected and you do not have to do anything at this time. As Pennsylvania transitions to the new comprehensive adult package, the Department of Human Services will notify you of any changes prior to those changes taking effect.

What do I do if I want to apply for health insurance?

If you do not have health care coverage, you can apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

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House Bill 76 of 2013-14 (formerly H.B. 1776 of 2011-12)

- This bill aimed to completely eliminate the property tax system in Pennsylvania for residential and commercial properties.
- It would have raised the state's Personal Income Tax rate from 3.07 percent to 4.34 percent.
- It would also have raised the state's Sales and Use Tax rate from 6 to 7 percent and include new services.
- It would have completely eliminated the property taxing ability of local school boards.



At this year's Pennsylvania Farm Show, Rep. Gibbons participated in the annual Master Dairy Showmanship Contest to promote the PA Dairy Industry.

Rep. Gibbons to introduce 'Daniel's Law,' aims to toughen penalty for distracted driving

Several years ago, Pennsylvania enacted a distracted driving law aimed at curbing the dangerous practice of texting while driving. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving led to 3,328 deaths and approximately 421,000 injuries in 2012. This irresponsible and reckless behavior has very real, and all too frequently, life-changing consequences.

One of those life-changing consequences came to a family in our area. Daniel Gallatin, a father, grandfather, military veteran and fireman of nearly 40 years, was killed in May 2013 while riding his motorcycle. He was hit from behind by a woman who was texting while driving. The woman pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter, reckless driving and texting while driving, but even the judge remarked during sentencing that changes need to be made involving the severity of the laws governing cell phone use while driving.

With that in mind, Rep. Gibbons plans to introduce Daniel's Law, which would enhance the penalties for distracted driving that results in a severe injury or death. Studies have shown that distracted driving can be just as dangerous as drunk driving. Rep. Gibbons' legislation would bring the penalty in line with similar drunk-driving offenses, such as homicide by vehicle and aggravated assault while under the influence, as well as involuntary manslaughter.

This is an opportunity and an obligation to send a message that distracted driving is unacceptable. Rep. Gibbons will fight to ensure that this legislation makes it to the governor's desk to be signed into law.

Current Anti-Texting Law Facts

What the law does

- The law prohibits as a primary offense any driver from using an Interactive Wireless Communication Device (IWCD) to send, read or write a text-based communication while his or her vehicle is in motion.
- Defines an IWCD as a wireless phone, personal digital assistant, smart phone, portable or mobile computer or similar device that can be used for texting, instant messaging, emailing or browsing the Internet.
- Defines a text-based communication as a text message, instant message, email or other written communication composed or received on an IWCD.
- Institutes a \$50 fine for convictions under this section.
- Makes clear that this law supersedes and preempts any local ordinances restricting the use of interactive wireless devices by drivers.
- The penalty is a summary offense. The law does not authorize the seizure of an IWCD.
- The violation carries no points as a penalty and will not be recorded on the driver record for non-commercial drivers. It will be recorded on commercial drivers' records as a non-sanction violation.
- The texting ban does NOT include the use of a GPS device, a system or device that is physically or electronically integrated into the vehicle, or a communications device that is affixed to a mass transit vehicle, bus or school bus.



Rep. Gibbons was honored to join fellow Masons in the General Assembly for a gathering in Harrisburg.

Rep. Gibbons was joined by former NFL running back Ricky Waters at a news conference to support expansion of the Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC).





STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Don't miss these upcoming community events!

Get a jump on spring cleaning by safely disposing of old bills and medical records

Do you have sensitive documents that need disposed of? You're invited to join Rep. Gibbons and his staff for a shredding event!

Bring any documents that contain personal information such as Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, medical records or banking account numbers.

All documents will be shredded on site and disposed of securely by a professional document disposal company. There is no limit to how many documents you can shred, but please remove paper clips prior to shredding.

Saturday, June 13

10 a.m. to noon

Beaver Falls High School parking lot
1701 8th Ave.

Beaver Falls, PA 15010



Stay informed by joining Rep. Gibbons for a town hall meeting

Town halls are a great way to stay informed about what's happening in the community and in Harrisburg. You're invited to join Rep. Gibbons at one of the following town hall events to receive a legislative update and ask any questions you have about state government programs.

Volant: 6 p.m. Thursday, May 28 at the Volant Borough Building, 525 Main St., Volant, PA 16156

Ellwood City: 4 p.m. Sunday, May 31 at the Ellport Community Center, 313 Burns Ave., Ellwood City, PA 16117

Enon Valley: 4 p.m. Sunday, June 7 at the Enon Valley Fire Hall, 95 Cass St., Enon Valley, PA 16120

New Brighton Borough: 6 p.m. Thursday, June 11 at the New Brighton Borough Building, 610 3rd Ave. #8, New Brighton, PA 15066

