

Rep. *J. Santarsiero*

santarsiero

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

LOWER MAKEFIELD/YARDLEY BOROUGH/MORRISVILLE

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Dear Neighbor:

I hope this finds you and your family well and off to a good start for 2016.

Last year, we endured the longest state budget impasse in memory because of disputes on how to get the state's fiscal house back in order after four years of growing budget deficits.

I continue to push for ending state deficits and restoring funding to local schools so we can lessen the reliance on local property taxes while still delivering a quality public education for students.

I also remain committed to enacting a reasonable natural gas severance tax so that gas drillers pay their fair share to invest in the services that make our communities strong and grow the economy.

February marks the beginning of the budget process for the 2016-17 fiscal year. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to enact a full state budget that also addresses the remaining components of the 2015-16 spending plan without undoing environmental safeguards.

In December, I voted against House Republicans' bad Fiscal Code bill (a budget-related bill), because it would interfere with Pennsylvania's ability to comply with federal greenhouse gas regulations and force officials to restart the process for updating Pennsylvania's oil and gas drilling regulations.

I went one step further, as well, and immediately circulated legislation that would repeal the anti-environment language in the Fiscal Code, should it become law. The Republican bill awaits action in the Senate.

As a strong proponent of environmental regulation of the oil and gas industry in Pennsylvania, I oppose this effort to derail regulations aimed at protecting residents from the misuse of toxic chemicals, large volumes of water, land disturbances and pollution. Without these regulations, environmental, health and financial burdens would fall to residents and taxpayers instead of to the companies responsible for the actions.

Further, the bill strikes \$12 million from the Alternative Energy Investment Fund and spends it on fossil-fuel infrastructure. The fund promotes the development and use of alternative and renewable energy. It also supports the implementation of energy-efficient and reduced-energy consumption applications and programs.

Transferring the \$12 million out of the AEI Fund amounts to another sweetheart deal for the oil and gas industries. If we don't put reasonable safeguards in place for Pennsylvanians, there is no incentive for these industries to protect our water, air and public health.

As always, I encourage you to follow me at Facebook/RepSantarsiero and on Twitter @RepSantarsiero and to sign up to receive occasional email updates at www.pahouse.com/Santarsiero. You may call my district office at 215-493-5420, as well.

Sincerely,

Important work to curb gun violence continues

From Sandy Hook to San Bernardino, gun violence has unfortunately only become more routine. That is the case despite the fact that there are meaningful things that we can do to prevent those who want to kill from easy access to high-powered firearms.

My Pennsylvania House Bill 1010 would provide universal background checks for all firearms purchases. Once enacted, it would close Pennsylvania's loophole that allows the private sale of long guns without a background check to find if the purchaser has a serious mental illness or a criminal record. H.B. 1010 has become the most popular gun safety measure in the Pennsylvania House, garnering Democrats and Republicans and representatives from every region in the state as co-sponsors.

I first introduced H.B. 1010 in early 2013 and gained the support of 60 co-sponsors. In July 2013, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the general issue of background checks for firearms purchases, and I brought two mothers who lost

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Important work to curb gun violence continues

children at Sandy Hook to testify in support of universal background checks.

With the new legislative session in 2015, I worked with a newly formed Law Enforcement Caucus to re-introduce H.B. 1010 and to include language to allow gun-show purchasers to get one background check for all sales before the same licensed dealer within 48 hours or the length of the gun show, whichever is less.

I am also proposing an expansion to Pennsylvania's background checks to ban people on the federal terror watch list and no-fly list from purchasing a firearm in Pennsylvania. It makes no sense that we can ban someone suspected of links to terror groups from flying on an airplane, but we can't ban that same person from purchasing firearms.

We know that the gun manufacturers have a lot of money and power. But we also know that we cannot be silent. We will prevail.

Scudder Falls Bridge project moves forward with new sound study

Many of us travel the Scudder Falls Bridge daily or weekly for work, school, family, healthcare or other visits and we all look forward to having an updated and improved bridge within the next few years that relieves congestion, improves safety and increases capacity. This long overdue bridge replacement project was first announced more than a decade ago when I was a Lower Makefield Township supervisor. Since then, I have kept in regular communication with the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission to follow the project's progress, and I have advocated for the necessary improvements to this important transportation link, while at the same time giving a strong voice to protect the nearby neighborhoods from traffic noise.

We were all very pleased early on when the commission agreed to build noise-

abatement walls along eligible sections of the I-95 corridor on the bridge's Pennsylvania side. However their plan left two "gap" areas along the highway, so I have continued working with many neighbors to request the noise-abatement walls continue through those gaps.

I am grateful the commission announced it will perform another sound study to measure the noise levels at these gap areas and a few other points not examined before. Unlike the previous sound study, this one will take into account the afternoon rush and other time periods and will be conducted during the winter months when trees are without their leaves. Hopefully this study will produce the data needed to convince the DRJTBC that additional noise abatement is needed.

I look forward to sharing the results of this study and the commission's actions soon through email, Facebook or Twitter, so please sign up for my email updates and follow me on social media.

As revealed during a December public open house held by the commission at the William Penn Middle School, the replacement of the nearly 55-year-old bridge has been in final design since March 2015. Preparations have stepped up along the heavily commuted 4.4-mile portion of the I-95 corridor between Route 332/Yardley-Newtown Road exit and Bear Tavern Road/Route 579 exit in New Jersey. Full construction activities are expected to get under way in early 2017 with a completion date estimated four years later.

Additional information can be found at www.scudderfallsbridge.com.

Giving back to our first responders

I support legislation in the House to exempt current and prospective volunteer and paid firefighters, as well as emergency medical responders, from the \$10 Pennsylvania State Police criminal background clearance fee and the \$10 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services child-abuse clearance fee. Also under House Bill 1081, first responders who have been residents of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years would not be subject to the FBI criminal background clearance requirement.

After recent changes were made to our child abuse laws, some firefighters and EMS providers are now being required by their employers and organizations to also remit \$27.50 for the FBI clearance. On top of the state fees, such fees to serve can add up. Volunteers and other emergency service personnel already sacrifice to serve, and they deserve to be spared such fees.



Thank you to everyone who helped bring Carry the Load to our area in April. Carry The Load provides active ways to honor the countless military, law enforcement, firefighters and rescue personnel who dedicate their lives to keeping our country safe. For more information on the program, visit: www.carrytheload.org.

Recommendations needed to make flood insurance affordable

Pennsylvania is among the 10 highest states for flood insurance payouts between January 1978 and March 2011, ranking eighth at \$773 million, according to the National Flood Insurance Program. As the federal Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act eliminates the subsidy paid for flood insurance premiums, those bills are expected to increase dramatically for residents over the next several years.

Additionally, the recently enacted floodplain mapping has drawn new flood zone lines, including many residences that were not previously in a flood plain and which may have never experienced a flooding claim to their property.

I have worked together with federal, state and local officials on flood prevention projects and to advocate for ways to make flood insurance more affordable, especially for those homeowners who purchased their home many years before flood insurance was required.

These problems are not unique to our communities along the Delaware River and Neshaminy Creek – they are evident in pockets of every county across the state.

To address this, I introduced House Bill 1299 to create the Flood Insurance Premium Assistance Task Force in Pennsylvania. I am proud to have bipartisan support for my bill as we work to have the bill considered in the House Insurance Committee.

The task force would study the impact of Biggert-Waters on flood insurance premiums, the new FEMA flood maps that classify new flood zones and the federal discount program to identify areas and neighborhoods that need additional assistance to keep flood insurance premiums affordable.

The task force's recommendations would include:

- Potential programs that provide premium discounts;
- Potential programs, whether through the mechanism of premium discounts or other relief, that create incentives for local governments to undertake or continue flood mitigation efforts; and,
- Implementation of necessary changes in state statutes and practices, policies and procedures relating to the administration of flood insurance.

I have heard from residents and Realtors from across the state about how important this issue is to the future viability of many neighborhoods. I continue to work with my colleagues as well as officials at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to advance this proposal.



During a May Morrisville School District board meeting, I had the pleasure of presenting a citation to Elizabeth Glaum-Lathbury, who was named Conservation Educator of the Year by the Bucks County Conservation District. I also had the pleasure of meeting the district's Science Symposium students.



In September, Makefield Elementary's kindergarten playground officially opened, thanks to the school's PTO for its support! The first-graders did a fine job of welcoming the new students. Go, Classes of 2027 and 2028!



I was honored to be a part of the Goodnoe Elementary School Rededication on Sept. 25. With me are former Newtown Township Supervisor Raymond "Skip" Goodnoe, Principal Nicole Crawford and the Goodnoe Grizzly. Goodnoe is named for Skip's parents, who served on Council Rock School Board for many years in the 1960s. Thanks to the Council Rock community for supporting this important project!



I had the honor in April of presenting a House citation to Pennsbury High School graduate Neha Gupta for winning the 2014 International Children's Peace Prize in recognition of her work promoting children's rights around the world. At 9 years old, Neha began fundraising efforts at Edgewood Elementary School in Lower Makefield Township to help needy children in India. Her effort, Empower Orphans, has since raised nearly \$1.7 million to help over 25,000 children.



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My Office Can Help You!

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap 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
- Birth and death certificates
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies

**Any problem with
state government!**



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