

# Rep. <sup>Rob</sup> MATZIE

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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### THE 16TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT SERVING BEAVER AND ALLEGHENY COUNTIES

Beaver County: City of Aliquippa, Boroughs of Ambridge, Baden, Conway, East Rochester, Economy, Freedom, Monaca, South Heights and Rochester and the Townships of Harmony and Hopewell.  
Allegheny County: Leetsdale Borough and Leet Township

#### Dear neighbors,

It has been over a year since I reached out to you with a newsletter. While it has always been my goal to keep you up to date about what is going on in Harrisburg and around the district, I did not think it was right to spend those funds during the budget impasse of last year. However, much has happened recently and I wanted to ensure you were updated with that information.

As you may already know, the biggest news for the region is Shell Oil's recent determination that it will build an ethane cracker plant in Potter Township.

I have long supported this proposed plant both locally and in Harrisburg. I was the lead Democrat in the House spearheading legislation to attract this facility to the region, and I reached across the aisle and worked with labor and the business community to gain passage of legislation key to the plant's success.

Make no mistake, this is the largest industrial investment in Southwestern Pennsylvania in a generation. The trickle-down effect this cracker plant will create will be tremendous.

The construction of the plant, which will process Marcellus and Utica shale ethane gas, is expected to require up to 6,000 workers. Work on the site has been ongoing and construction is set to start in the next 17 months, with a tentative completion date in the early 2020s.

I will continue to keep you updated about the cracker plant's progress. In the meantime, if you need assistance with any state service – or even if you just have a question – please feel free to contact my district office.

Sincerely,

*Rob*

Robert F. Matzie



The picture above shows an artistic rendering of the completed plant.

In July, I joined Gov. Tom Wolf, elected officials, labor leaders, business leaders and education officials at Penn State Beaver for a roundtable discussion on how Beaver County's workforce and infrastructure can prepare for the construction of the Shell ethane cracker plant.



# Pennsylvania tackling opioid, heroin epidemic head-on

## *Special session planned for the fall*

Pennsylvania is dealing with a major epidemic. According to the Centers of Disease Control, heroin and opioid overdose are the leading cases of accidental deaths, killing more Pennsylvanians than those involved in deadly crashes. This epidemic crosses all social, geographic and political lines.

A recent study by the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association provides a harsh reality: 7 Pennsylvanians die every day due to heroin or prescription opioid overdose. In 2014, nearly 2500 Pennsylvanians died from a drug overdose.

## 2016-17 state budget a step in the right direction

Over the summer, I supported the bipartisan passage of a state budget plan that funds education at record levels, without a broad-based tax increase. I will be the first to admit that this budget is far from perfect, but it is a solid step in the right direction – especially for our schools and students.

After the protracted impasse of last year, it is refreshing to see this compromise, especially as it contains historic education funding but doesn't add to our structural deficit.

The state spending plan includes a \$250 million increase for pre-K through 12 education funding, including \$200 million for K-12, \$30 million for pre-K and Head Start, and a \$20 million increase for special education.

The budget will also:

- Provide funding for three additional Pennsylvania State Police cadet classes;
- Transfer millions from the Oil and Gas Fund to the General Fund to give money to conservation programs, Growing Greener, and the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund; and
- Dedicate \$15 million to combat heroin and opioid addiction, including funds for emergency addiction treatment and behavioral health services.

While there are parts I dislike about the budget, in reality it is a workable compromise that will invest in our state without relying on a sales or income tax increase, and avoiding an impasse should prevent any future downgrades of the state credit rating.

Personally, my childhood friend Amy Scherfel-Watkins' son, Brooks, was a victim of a heroin overdose in Washington County last year.

Since then, Amy, her husband and her family have been telling the story about the devastation their family has endured, hoping to capture the attention of anybody and everybody.

As she told me, if they can help even one person, then their son's purpose here on earth will be fulfilled. I echo those statements and believe as a parent and a policy maker it is my duty to do all that I can to end this epidemic that is affecting families across Pennsylvania and our nation.

This fall, a special session will be held to focus lawmakers' attention on combating this crisis from every front possible.

Addiction is an issue that every part of this state is currently in the midst of battling. But rural and small-town Pennsylvania communities face very different challenges than communities in Philadelphia or even Pittsburgh. During the special session in the fall, I will do everything in my power to ensure that the rural communities are not overlooked.

I will continue working with my colleagues — both Democrats and Republicans — on bipartisan ways to address this crisis head-on.

I was proud to stand in solidarity with Gov. Tom Wolf and House Democratic and Republican lawmakers in June to detail progress that has been made on fighting the opioid epidemic.



## Matzie serving as Southwest Delegation Chairman

Last year, my fellow House representatives from the Southwest region elected me to serve as Chairman of the Southwest Delegation. I was honored to be entrusted with this crucial role and I have been seeking to work with those colleagues since then to improve the quality of life for citizens throughout Southwest Pennsylvania.

It is my hope that the delegation can be a useful body that focuses on regional issues and develop solutions targeted for our communities. Pennsylvania is a large and diverse state, but together I know we can work to improve it for this region and beyond.

# Medical marijuana now legal in Pa.

Pennsylvania this spring became the 24th state to legalize marijuana for medical purposes.

I voted to legalize medical marijuana and allow doctors to prescribe the treatment they see fit to help heal their ailing patients. The measure, Senate Bill 3, was signed into law by the governor in April and took effect in May.

S.B. 3, now Act 16 of 2016, establishes an independent, 12-member State Board of Medical Cannabis Licensing to oversee growers, with indoor and secure facilities and regulated dispensaries across the state. Doctors will be able to prescribe marijuana in pill, oil, vapor or liquid form. Patients will not be able to legally obtain marijuana to smoke and will not be allowed to grow it on their own.

I am glad that patients in this state, including Leah and Olivia McGurk of Beaver County, are one step closer to being able to legally acquire the medicine they need. The McGurk family fought for the passage of this bill and are a true inspiration that I will never forget.

As of May 16, a parent of a child who suffers from one of the qualifying illnesses will be immune from prosecution for possessing medical marijuana which was legally purchased in another state. Caregivers

must apply for a Safe Harbor letter and carry it with them whenever medical marijuana is being transported outside the home. You can apply by going to <https://apps.health.pa.gov/PASafeHarbor/>.

Regulated medical marijuana will help bring relief to tens of thousands of children, adults and senior citizens suffering from serious medical problems, including epilepsy, chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, HIV/AIDS, Lou Gehrig's and Parkinson's diseases, and glaucoma.

At long last, Pennsylvania can provide another tool for doctors to help patients, including countless suffering children, who are battling debilitating and life-threatening illnesses.



Last year, I met with the McGurk family from Beaver County, who advocated for the new medical marijuana law.

## Expanded wine sales, improved convenience on tap for Pa.

I supported legislation that the governor signed into law that will allow the sale of wine-to-go in restaurants and grocery stores and make the sale of wine and liquor more convenient for Pennsylvania consumers.

I did have some reservations on how to vote for the legislation because I am worried about the possibility of job losses, not to mention the potentially negative impact on some small businesses, most notably beer distributors. I will continue to work on potential changes to further modernize alcohol sales in Pennsylvania.

Act 39 of 2016 will give the Liquor Control Board more flexibility to set competitive prices, offer discounts and set state liquor store hours in ways that are better and more convenient for consumers. It also will permit the direct shipment of wine by licensed producers to consumers at their homes.

And, the measure is projected to increase state revenues by almost \$150 million in the fiscal year that began July 1.

Pennsylvanians could see wine in grocery stores, select restaurants and hotels by the end of the year.

## Day for Disabled Pennsylvanians

Last year, the House adopted my resolution that urges the governor to issue a proclamation to observe Jan. 30 as "Pennsylvanians with Disabilities Day." In addition, the resolution asks also asks the governor to appoint a committee to investigate and recommend ways the state can commemorate Pennsylvanians with Disabilities Day on an annual basis.

The date Jan. 30 was chosen for this awareness day to mark the birthdate of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who suffered paralysis from the waist down due to contracting polio.

I introduced this resolution with the intent of honoring the amazing lives led by those with disabilities all across our state.



# Feds should entrust Pennsylvania with sports betting decision

In June, the state House of Representatives adopted my resolution that urges the federal government to lift the ban on sports betting.

House Resolution 619, which was adopted 140-59, urges Congress to repeal the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992 which prohibits sports betting in every state except Nevada, Oregon, Montana and Delaware.

In the week before the vote, the National Hockey League announced the awarding of a franchise to the City of Las Vegas. This shows just how drastically public opinion and policy has shifted over time and should deliver the killing blow to the notion that professional athletics cannot coexist with legal sports wagering.

Pennsylvania responsibly oversees and regulates various forms of gaming throughout the state including the lottery, slot machines and horse racing. But an arbitrary law, not revisited by the federal government in more than two decades, prevents us from seriously considering sports betting. While discussions would be needed about how sports betting would work in the Pennsylvania, I think it verges on ridiculous that the federal government would prevent us from even exploring the option.

I would feel uncomfortable with forcing any state to allow sports betting if that isn't what the people of that state wanted, but the current prohibition is not only burdensome for the states that are interested in exploring the option but also ineffective, as we know unregulated sports betting is readily available in our communities and online.

It is estimated that sports betting in the United States totals \$400 billion per year, with only 1 percent of those bets taking place in legal form.



In June, I called on my colleagues in the House to support my resolution and send a message to federal officials that Pennsylvania is capable of making its own decision on sports betting.

## The Quips take over Harrisburg

In April, I welcomed the Aliquippa High School boys' basketball team to Harrisburg for the presentation of an official citation to honor them for their historic perfect season and state championship title.

After being recognized on the floor of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, it was my privilege to take the Quips on a tour of the state Capitol. I arranged for them to meet with Gov. Tom Wolf, who was also eager to congratulate the team for their impressive accomplishments.

In March, the Quips defeated Mastery Charter School North 68-49 to win the 2015 PIAA State Class AA Boys' Basketball Championship.



Additionally, Head Coach Nick Lackovich was named Class AA Coach of the Year by the 2015-16 Pennsylvania Sports Writers. Seniors Chucky Humphries and Jassir Jordan were also recognized with Class AA first-team honors.



# PennDOT selling drivers' data is a bridge too far

What if I told you that your favorite app or website was collecting your personal information and selling it to the highest bidder? It probably wouldn't thrill you, but I bet you wouldn't be shocked.

While the idea of anyone selling our personal information may be unseemly, it is a reality of the world we live in. If you don't want that company to sell your information, you are free to delete their app or stop using their website.

But what if I told you that some or all of the personal information that you provide to PennDOT is sold to third parties, who then can turn around and resell that information at a profit? And that you're powerless to stop it?

PennDOT sells personal data such as information on drivers, registrations and titles to other individuals and businesses. While this is nothing new – in fact, this practice has gone on for decades – the practice has ramped up since passage of the transportation funding plan in 2013, which made the sale of consumer data easier and more lucrative. This year, PennDOT, which is the only state agency that sells consumer information, is estimated to rake in over \$40 million on these transactions alone.

The third parties have the authority to resell that information for an unspecified fee and without payment of any additional fee to PennDOT. Recently, in a published internal Office of the Budget audit, it was revealed that Sterling Infosystems, one of the third-party vendors, had been ignoring security procedures laid out by the state, putting your personal information in jeopardy.

In 2013, I raised concerns over this very issue, but the selling of data to third parties continues. This problem needs fixed, and it needs fixed now. I've recently re-introduced legislation, H.B. 2039, which would prohibit third parties from being able to sell personal driver and vehicle information for profit. This practice simply needs to stop. Selling data when consumers are paying for services from the government is simply bad policy.

In fairness, there are appropriate situations where PennDOT should – and in fact is required by federal law to – provide information: at the request of an insurance provider, for example. My legislation would allow for this necessary sharing of information. But, in my judgment, it is unacceptable for PennDOT to become a clearinghouse of personal data for anyone willing to pay the right price.

## Legislation update

### *Digital textbooks could save money*

I am working on a proposal that would require publishers to offer an identical digital equivalent for any college textbook sold within the state. I am always looking at ways



to make higher education more affordable in Pennsylvania. While the cost of tuition continues to increase at colleges and universities across the country, Pennsylvania should be focused on providing attainable, quality education that can attract students both from within the commonwealth's borders and beyond.

### *Earthquakes*

I am working on a proposal that would require insurers in Pennsylvania to cover all types of earthquakes for homeowners who have purchased earthquake insurance, including earthquakes caused by human activity such as methods used to find natural gas deposits.

Recent seismic testing caused several structures in the district to sustain damage, but homeowners were initially informed that their claims would not be covered despite having earthquake riders as part of their homeowners'

insurance. My proposal would clarify this situation and ensure that homeowners who have purchased earthquake insurance aren't on the hook for damages due to the origin of any seismic activity.

### *Setback requirements for drilling near dams*

I am working on a proposal that would prohibit the drilling of unconventional gas wells within 4,000 feet of any existing dam or reservoir. Additionally, the proposal would prohibit the drilling of unconventional gas wells within 2,000 horizontal feet of any existing water well, surface water intake or water supply extraction point used by a water purveyor without the written consent of the water purveyor.

I want the natural gas industry to be successful in Pennsylvania because that means that Pennsylvania will be successful. My proposal, based on the expert analysis of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, would allow these companies to continue their operations without significant risk of them damaging our water and waterways.

### *Opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement*

I have co-authored a resolution with Reps. Stephen Barrar and Dan Miller that would urge Congress to reject the Federal Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP is the latest in a line of poorly designed trade deals that have destroyed our manufacturing base and negatively impacted our middle class, both in our state and across our nation.



**STATE REP. ROBERT F. "ROB" MATZIE**

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## INSIDE:

- Cracker plant moves forward
- Fighting for your privacy
- Pennsylvania tackling opioid epidemic head-on

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In February, it was my honor to present Michael Knecht, site administrator at Old Economy Village, an official citation from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives recognizing the 100th anniversary of this landmark's designation as a state historic site. As a commissioner for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, I am very familiar with Old Economy Village and we are lucky to have it in the district. If you have never visited, I encourage you to do so and there has never been a better time. To celebrate its centennial, Old Economy Village is hosting special events, including free admission on Sundays throughout the year. Visit [www.oldeconomyvillage.org](http://www.oldeconomyvillage.org) for more information.

## Matzie's office can help you with:

Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications

Information on financial aid for higher education

Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds

Voter registration and absentee ballot applications

Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation

Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)

Getting answers to your Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems

Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones

Complaints and problems with insurance companies

Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications

Consumer complaints

PACE/PACENET prescription-drug cards for senior citizens

