



Tongelle COOK-ARTIS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 200TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

104 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202200 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2200 (717) 783-2178
1536 E. Wadsworth Ave. • Philadelphia, PA 19150 (215) 242-7300
Email: TArtis@pahouse.net Website: www.pahouse.com/Cook-Artis

SUMMER 2016

A message from Rep. Cook-Artis

It truly is an honor to serve you and the community as your state representative since I was sworn in April 5. I have been focused on Harrisburg and on the 200th Legislative District, working on issues that impact you and your family.

As you read through this newsletter, you will learn about state programs and services that could benefit you and your family. You also will find a list of services that my office can assist you with and learn how I voted on certain pieces of legislation.

I am pleased to have been a part of a bipartisan budget agreement that was passed on time, with the revenue package voted on a short time later, and sent to Gov. Tom Wolf to sign into law. The budget avoided another damaging and expensive impasse for county agencies, schools and nonprofits, without broad-based tax hikes.

I remain committed to representing you in Harrisburg and working on issues important to you. Please remember that my district office is located at 1536 E. Wadsworth Ave., Philadelphia 19150; the office hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Stop by anytime if my staff or I can be of assistance.



Rep. Cook-Artis joins lawmakers in calling for equal pay for women in Pennsylvania.

Construction coming soon for Lincoln Drive

In early 2017, the Philadelphia Streets Department will begin its construction project on Lincoln Drive between Ridge and Wayne avenues. The project will include repaving the roads, barrier and guiderail improvements, and traffic signal and drainage improvements.

Work will be done nights and weekends, so you can expect lane closures and delays during that time. Detours will be posted. The Streets Department's intent is to maintain traffic on Lincoln Drive during the morning and evening commutes.

The Streets Department said construction is contingent on the opening of the Walnut Lane Bridge, which is anticipated for this fall. The work on Lincoln Drive is expected to be completed in early 2018.



Pennsylvania battles heroin and opioid addiction

Pennsylvania is dealing with a major epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control, heroin and opioid overdoses are the leading causes 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: seven Pennsylvanians died every day due to heroin or prescription opioid overdose. In 2014, nearly 2,500 Pennsylvanians died from a drug overdose – 611 in Philadelphia County.



Rep. Cook-Artis joins lawmakers and Gov. Tom Wolf to announce the bipartisan work being done to combat heroin and opioid addiction in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has taken several important steps to combat the heroin and opioid crisis. Dr. Rachel Levine, the physician general, signed a standing order for naloxone, making access to this crucial anti-overdose drug available to all Pennsylvanians. State troopers are equipped with naloxone for when they arrive first

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Heroin and Opioid Battle

on the scene of a drug overdose. This life-saving drug is also available in public high schools across the commonwealth at no cost. Pennsylvania has developed a prescription drug monitoring program to help detect and prevent prescription fraud and abuse.

Gov. Tom Wolf has been hosting roundtable discussions with state lawmakers, local officials, law enforcement, emergency responders and health care professionals to discuss ways to work together to combat the opioid abuse and heroin use epidemic. A bipartisan task force was formed to study the opioid problem in the commonwealth and recommend legislation. A special session of the legislature has been scheduled for the fall to focus lawmakers' attention on combatting this crisis.

I will continue working with my colleagues – both Democrat and Republican – on bipartisan ways to address this crisis head on. Pennsylvanians are counting on us to make it happen!

Gun ordinance-challenge law unconstitutional

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court in June rejected a request to reinstate a law that gave groups like the National Rifle Association the right to challenge local gun-control ordinances in court. This was a huge victory for the people of Philadelphia.

Last year, Commonwealth Court had declared Act 192 of 2014 unconstitutional, ruling that it violated the single-subject rule and the original purpose requirement in Article III, Sections 1 and 3 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, which prohibits the inclusion of amendments on subjects unrelated to the main topic of the proposed legislation. House Speaker Mike Turzai and Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati appealed this ruling to the state Supreme Court.

The state's high court ruling ended a long fight and relieved the city after it was put in an extremely tough predicament. Act 192 forced Philadelphia and more than 30 municipalities across the commonwealth to make the hard decision to suspend or rescind essential public safety policy or dedicate already thinning resources to defending these laws. These municipalities again can now pass reasonable, constitutional gun control measures.

The ruling also is a big win for public safety and I applaud Sens. Vincent Hughes, Lawrence Farnese, and Daylin Leach; former representative and Philadelphia City Councilwoman Cherelle Parker; and Rep. Ed Gainey for not backing down from the fight.

SEPTA Key photo ID cards available in my district office

My district office is ready to assist older residents with obtaining their SEPTA Key photo ID cards. Appointments are required. Please call my office at 215-242-7300.

SEPTA Key is the modern fare payment and collection system being unveiled by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority. It offers seniors an alternative to using their Pennsylvania driver's license or state-issued ID card.

The new Key cards will have contactless chips, so all riders will have to do is pass it across the face of the validator to pay for their ride.



Additional fee for vehicle registration

In April, PennDOT began implementing a \$5 Local Use Fee in Philadelphia County when you register your vehicle or renew the registration. This fee is in addition to the \$36 regular registration, for a total payment of \$41.

The money will be used by the county to repair roads and bridges and other transportation projects.

For more information, you can visit PennDOT's website www.dmv.pa.gov.

Medical marijuana now law in Pennsylvania

I voted for legislation Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law in April that allows the medically appropriate use of marijuana in Pennsylvania. This new law is long overdue and I hope it will help many seriously ill children and adults.

Many of the law's parts will take effect over the next year and a half, but one important note is that 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 that 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>.

All patients will be required to receive a Department of Health Medical Marijuana ID card.

Among the 17 approved medical conditions are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ■ HIV/AIDS | ■ Epilepsy or intractable seizures |
| ■ ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) | ■ Parkinson's disease. |
| ■ Cancer | |

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

I voted 'No' on restrictive abortion bill

As a member of the Women's Health Caucus, I voted no on a bill that would ban abortion options beyond 20 weeks of pregnancy. The current law is 24 weeks. House Bill 1948 would criminalize the safest medical procedure for abortion at 14 weeks.

This bill is about human life and it wouldn't protect women or their unborn children. In fact, it would put a



Rep. Cook-Artis joins members of the Women's Health Caucus to call for a repeal of Pennsylvania's strict abortion law.

woman's life at risk because it would eliminate the dilation and evacuation abortion procedure. That process, according to medical professionals, is necessary for abortions after 14 weeks because there are bone fragments that must be removed.

Without this procedure, a woman would be forced to carry what amounts to medical waste in her body, putting her health in danger.

Government should stay out of the personal and private medical decisions of women when it comes to consulting with their doctors in regard to their own pregnancies.

Pension reform bill not good for public employees

I voted against a bill amended and passed in the House that would have maintained benefits for current public employees and retirees while changing the pension structure for most future state and school employees. The Senate voted against the House amendments.

I believe S.B. 1071 would have threatened the retirement security of current and new state and school employees. While the bill would have protected retirement security for current employees, I don't feel it would have done enough. I feel there was still some hidden cost that was not addressed or disclosed.

We should not dictate how an individual's retirement should be portioned out. Everyone deserves a secure retirement and I will advocate to make it happen in a fair manner.

Video gaming terminals would harm Philadelphia and surrounding communities

I stood with my Democratic colleagues from Philadelphia and voted against an amendment that would have resulted in an explosion of gambling across the commonwealth because of the harm it would cause Philadelphia and because it would further embolden nuisance bars throughout the city.

The amendment was offered to a bill to regulate the fantasy sports industry in Pennsylvania and protect consumers using their services. The amendment would have allowed the use of video gaming terminals at liquor establishments and truck stops. However, that amendment failed.

If the legislation had become law with that amendment included, revenues from casinos and the lottery would have been impacted. I was concerned not only about the saturation of these machines in many of our businesses, but also about the consequences they would have on our community and our children.

I did support an amendment by Rep. Rosita Youngblood that would authorize iGaming and slot machines at international airports, among other forms of gaming expansion, but not video gaming terminals. That proposal was successfully amended into the bill.

Apply now to receive your Property Tax/Rent Rebate

The deadline to file a 2015 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program application is Dec. 31 and my office is here to help!

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates can boost rebates up to \$975.

My offices can help with the applications. Please don't assume you are not eligible. Half of Social Security income is discounted, and claimants are not disqualified from rebates solely because of Social Security cost-of-living adjustments.

To find out if you qualify or if you need assistance with filling out your application, please visit my office.





Honoring our veterans

In May, I joined my colleagues to present citations to Luther McNeal and Dr. Lewis Brown, who are World War II veterans.

Dr. Brown and his wife live in our district in the West Mount Airy community of Philadelphia.

A huge thank you to both of these gentlemen for their service to our country.

Celebrating the talents of our young people

In June, I was honored to welcome students and faculty from Henry H. Houston School in the West Mount Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia – which is in our district – along with artists from LiveConnections, a music nonprofit in Philadelphia. The students partnered with the organization on a year-long project, resulting in a CD, “A Day in My Life.”

Every student from kindergarten to eighth grade contributed to this project. They wrote songs and poems, composed music, created a dance video and performed the songs on the CD. Their songs express their powerful social conscience, strong ties to family ancestry and big questions about the future.

Too many schools in Philadelphia and the commonwealth are without strong arts programs. This project shows the power high-quality arts programs have to motivate engaged learning, creativity and critical thinking. It demonstrates the excellence that results when community partners like LiveConnections commit to supporting public education.

This project is a reminder of these young people’s outstanding contributions and how important it is to



Rep. Cook-Artis with students and faculty from Henry H. Houston School, along with employees of LiveConnections, during their visit to the state Capitol.

support the arts in our schools. It also shows what the children of Pennsylvania can achieve when they have the power to be innovators, artists, musicians and thinkers.



Celebrating the sisterhood of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

In May, members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority spent the day at the state Capitol as part of its annual Delta Day. I joined Rep. Joanna McCClinton in co-sponsoring H.R. 879 that corresponded with Delta Day and was unanimously adopted by the House of Representatives.

The sisters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. have such a staunch history in community activism and leadership. They are well-represented internationally, nationally and statewide. There are active chapters in all four corners of the state and at many of the schools in the State System of Higher Education.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. was founded Jan. 13, 1913 at Howard University by 22 collegiate women. It is one of the largest African-American women’s organizations in the world.

Reps. Cook-Artis and Joanna McCClinton pose for a photo with the ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. during Delta Day at the state Capitol.

HAPPENINGS IN THE 200TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Congratulations to the graduating class of John F. McClosky Middle School.

Rep. Cook-Artis (left) poses for a photo during the shredding and e-recycling event that she co-hosted with Councilwoman Cherelle Parker. The event helped more than 300 people safely get rid of unwanted documents and electronics.



Rep. Cook-Artis, along with Vernon Price from the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and Capt. Sekou Kinebrew from the 14th District of the Philadelphia Police Department, answers a resident's question during a 22nd Ward Community & Public Safety Meeting in June.



Thank you to everyone who joined Rep. Cook-Artis and Councilwoman Cherelle Parker for the Wadsworth Avenue Beautification Project on July 16.



Get All the Latest Updates

Connect with Rep. Cook-Artis on social media – you'll get the latest updates on community news, local events and legislative updates.

 @RepCookArtis

 www.facebook.com/RepCookArtis

Website: pahouse.com/Cook-Artis

Meet the District Office staff

Kathryn McKenzie-Zeigler: Chief of Staff

Robert Anderson: Legislative Assistant

Tyrone Hill: Legislative Assistant

Lesley Young: Legislative Assistant





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P.O. Box 202200
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2200

lpo.kl.0816



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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
- 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)
- 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
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies

Any problem with state government!