



# THE THOMAS *Report*



**Serving the 181st Legislative District**

**WINTER 2017**

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[www.facebook.com/RepWCurtisThomas](https://www.facebook.com/RepWCurtisThomas) • [www.pahouse.com/Thomas](http://www.pahouse.com/Thomas)

Dear Neighbors,

Since my last newsletter, much has happened both in Harrisburg and in Washington, D.C. While President Donald Trump has started his term with controversial cabinet picks and more hate-filled rhetoric, Harrisburg has been focused on the impending budget season and a multibillion-dollar deficit.

While the recent political atmosphere has been tense, I am cautiously optimistic that Harrisburg can buck the national trend in order to find compromise, close the deficit and move the state forward.

In the meantime, I will continue to fight for the democratic ideals of inclusion and social justice. While finding common ground with those who disagree with us is important, we will never concede our values and principles.

As always, if you would like to provide input on a legislative issue or need any assistance with state-related programs and/or services, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (215) 560-3261 or visit my office at 1415 N. Broad St., Suite 226A in Philadelphia. My staff and I are happy to help.

Sincerely,

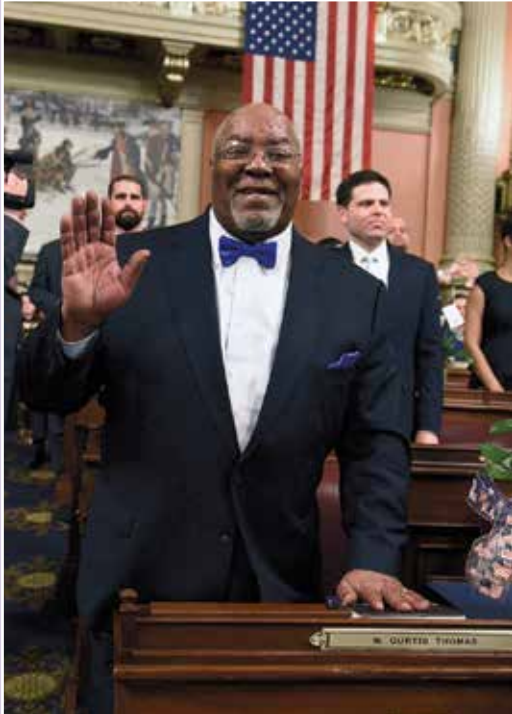
*W. Curtis Thomas*

W. Curtis Thomas  
State Representative  
181st Legislative District



**Rep. Thomas has been taking action:** speaking and standing up on the behalf of the community, making sure schools in the 181st Legislative District attend educational trips, keeping our streets clean, and supporting and advocating for at-risk children, families and communities.

State Representative  
**W. CURTIS THOMAS**



## THOMAS BEGINS 15<sup>TH</sup> TERM REPRESENTING 181<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT

In January, state Rep. W. Curtis Thomas took the oath of office to begin his 15th term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives swearing-in corresponds with the first Tuesday in January, every two years. This year is Pennsylvania's 201st legislative session.

"It is a great honor to continue serving the people of North Philadelphia in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives," Thomas said. "I know that many feel ostracized and marginalized by the current political atmosphere in Washington, D.C., but I think Harrisburg is capable of proving that the spirit of compromise and brotherhood is still alive and well."

Thomas' legislative interests include job creation and support for small businesses, public safety, criminal justice reform, and increasing cyber security throughout state agencies and municipal governments.

"Republicans may hold large majorities in both the House and the Senate, but I will not let political party get in the way of sensible and effective legislation," Thomas said. "I intend to work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle where we agree to move our state forward. That said, I am ready to stand in defense of the progress we have made."

## NEW 'SECOND CHANCE' LAW ALLOWS SEALING OF OLD CRIMINAL RECORDS

A criminal justice reform Rep. Thomas supported is now in effect. Act 5 of 2016 expands criminal record sealing for many low-level misdemeanors in Pennsylvania to provide ex-offenders greater opportunity to join the workforce.

Gov. Tom Wolf said, "This law is a commonsense, positive and unprecedented step to help Pennsylvanians with minor or dated criminal records have a fighting chance at opportunities for gainful employment.

"Too many first-time and low-level offenders are serving their time and unable to improve their lives after leaving the system because they have a criminal record. And, they are too likely to return to the system. We still have more to do to break this cycle; it is robbing too many of their lives and it is costing taxpayers far too much."

Act 5 allows people who have served their punishment — and remained free of arrest, prosecution or conviction for 10 years — for nonviolent misdemeanors, to petition the court for their record to be sealed from public view, but still available to law enforcement and state licensing agencies.

### Pennsylvanians may be eligible if all the following apply to them:

- Convicted of a second- or third-degree misdemeanor;
- Free of arrest and conviction for a period of 10 years;
- Never convicted of certain crimes (felonies, first-degree misdemeanors or second-degree simple assault);
- Have fewer than four misdemeanor convictions; and
- All fines and costs associated with the case have been paid.

Act 5 does not provide orders of limited access for any felony or first-degree misdemeanor. It also does not cover certain misdemeanors, such as sex offenses.

A petition must be filed with the court of common pleas in the county where the charge originated. Petitions may be acquired through the PA Courts website at <https://is.gd/PARecordSeal791>.

Thomas plans to support additional criminal justice reforms in the new legislative session that has just begun.



# NEW STATE LAWS DESIGNED TO COMBAT OPIOID CRISIS

Rep. Thomas is proud to report that in late 2016, the legislature took several steps forward in fighting the opioid and heroin epidemic that continues to affect every community – urban, suburban and rural - throughout Pennsylvania. Gov. Tom Wolf signed several bills into law that are designed to fight back against this public health crisis.

As part of the package, Act 123 of 2016 authorizes state and federal agencies and health care facilities to serve as drop-off locations for unused, unwanted and unexpired drugs. The law also allows pharmaceuticals that are collected at disposal events to be incinerated at permitted facilities, instead of solely being disposed of as hazardous waste.

OTHER NEW LAWS INCLUDE:

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Act 125 of 2016 – Limits opioid prescriptions for minors and in hospital emergency rooms;

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Act 126 of 2016 – Requires continuing education for current doctors and training for new health care professionals on safe opioid prescribing and addiction treatment; and

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Act 124 of 2016 – Requires prescribers to register with the Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and check the database each time they prescribe opioids or certain other drugs to patients.

Thomas commends Gov. Wolf’s leadership in calling for swift legislative action on the above laws, and hopes that the spirit of bipartisanship will continue throughout 2017-18 on this very important topic.

TWO PHILADELPHIA TREATMENT FACILITIES NAMED ‘CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE’

Rep. Thomas applauds Gov. Wolf’s action in naming 20 locations across Pennsylvania as Centers of Excellence - facilities where patients receive treatment for opioid addictions. The centers coordinate care for their patients with Medicaid, and treatment is team-based and “whole person” focused, with the explicit goal of integrating behavioral health and primary care.

Locally, Wedge Medical Center and Temple University have received the distinction of a Center of Excellence. Rep. Thomas said these providers are ahead of the curve when it comes to promoting recovery and serve as models to other such centers across the state.

In addition, Temple University was a recent recipient of a \$500,000 state grant to administer the Temple Wedge Opioid (TWO) Treatment Program. The program allows providers to offer state-of-the-art drug treatment options to pregnant women, such as counseling and specialized prenatal consultations.

## HEALTH CENTERS NEAR YOU

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health operates eight health centers that are located in neighborhoods throughout the city. The centers are staffed with doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care professionals to provide diagnostic services, prenatal care, immunizations, dental care, laboratory tests, and a variety of other important medical services. The following is a list of the health centers located in various communities throughout the city:

Health Center 2

The South Philadelphia Health & Literacy Center  
1700 S. Broad St., Unit 201  
Philadelphia, 19145  
215-685-1803

Health Center 3

555 S. 43rd St.  
Philadelphia, 19104  
215-685-7504

Health Center 4

4400 Haverford Ave.  
Philadelphia, 19104  
215-685-7601

Health Center 5

1900 N 20th St.  
Philadelphia, 19121  
215-685-2933

Health Center 6

301 W. Girard Ave.  
Philadelphia, 19123  
215-685-3800

Health Center 9

131 E. Cheltenham Ave.  
Philadelphia, 19144  
215-685-5701

Health Center 10

2230 Cottman Ave.  
Philadelphia, 19149  
215-685-0639

Strawberry Mansion Health Center

2840 Dauphin St.  
Philadelphia, 19132  
215-685-2400

**PLEASE NOTE:** The centers accept Medicare, Medicaid, HMO plans, and most other insurance options. A small fee based on family size and income will be charged for anyone uninsured. They also take walk-ins, but appointments are encouraged.

## PA. NOW OFFERING EXPANDED WINE SALES, CONSUMER CONVENIENCE

**UPDATE:** In August, Gov. Tom Wolf signed a bill into law to become Act 39 of 2016. In addition to expanding wine sales into restaurants and grocery stores, the law gives 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.

Rep. Thomas voted against the legislation because he was concerned about the unintended consequences it may create with the numerous “stop and go” stores throughout Philadelphia.

Due to other laws, these stores have been able to acquire restaurant licenses, despite the fact that many sell little more than candy and chips. However, Thomas said he was ready to work with his colleagues from Philadelphia to ensure these stores aren’t harming the community or skirting around safety laws.

Thomas is calling on Gov. Wolf to address in his budget the enforcement of current laws on the books and quality-of-life issues impacted by what some are calling the largest expansion of liquor sales since prohibition.

# MEDICAL MARIJUANA LAW IMPLEMENTATION MAKES PROGRESS IN PA

With Gov. Tom Wolf’s signing of Act 16 of 2016, Pennsylvania became the 24th state in the country to legalize medical marijuana.

Rep. Thomas voted for the law because he said it’s a commonsense way to help people who are suffering in their daily lives — from children who are experiencing daily seizures, to veterans enduring post-traumatic stress disorder and many others who need this medication to relieve their pain.

Statistics show states that have legalized medical marijuana have shown a decrease of nearly 25 percent in annual prescription drug overdose deaths. The statistics also show that there have been zero overdose deaths from marijuana.

Once the regulations are in place, doctors will be able to prescribe certain forms of cannabis to people who meet the proper requirements and suffer from one of the 17 approved medical conditions. Under the new law, medical marijuana cannot be smoked, but can be prescribed in pill, oil, topical or liquid form.

Until the law is fully implemented, the legal use of medical marijuana in Pennsylvania is limited to children. A parent or guardian can bring medical marijuana from another state for a child, but the parent or guardian must first obtain and carry a Pennsylvania “safe harbor” letter to possess the drug legally. The state has already approved more than 150 applications for safe harbor letters.

To learn more, visit [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov), click the “Pa. Medical Marijuana” link, then click “Patients and Caregivers.”

Pennsylvania is continuing to make progress toward full implementation of the law, which is expected sometime next year. The state Department of Health will accept applications from prospective medical marijuana growers/processors and dispensary operators until March 20, 2017. More information on that is also available at [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov).

# JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know has lost their job and currently seeking employment, there are services here in the City of Philadelphia that can help you find a new job or train for a new one.

Pennsylvania CareerLink provides assistance to people seeking employment and training services. Funding for training may be available through the Workforce Investment Act.

Here is a list of PA CareerLink offices within a five-mile radius in and around Rep. Thomas’ district:

- PA CareerLink Suburban Station**  
1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. Suite 200  
Philadelphia, 19103  
[215-557-2592](tel:215-557-2592)
- PA CareerLink Philadelphia North**  
4261 N. 5th St.  
Philadelphia, 19140  
[215-967-9711](tel:215-967-9711)
- PA CareerLink Philadelphia West**  
3901 Market St.  
Philadelphia, 19104  
[215-473-3630](tel:215-473-3630)
- PA CareerLink Philadelphia Northwest**  
5847 Germantown Ave.  
Philadelphia, 19144  
[215-987-6503](tel:215-987-6503)

If you are looking to pursue higher education, special programs, state grants and educational loans are available through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, or PHEAA. You can visit its website at [www.pheaa.org](http://www.pheaa.org).

## REP. THOMAS’ OFFICE CAN HELP 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
- Birth and death certificates
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Getting answers to your 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
- PACE/PACENET prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups

