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To learn more, visit www.health.pa.gov, click the “Pa. Medical Marijuana” link, then click “Patients and Caregivers.”

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  Philadelphia, 19140
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- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
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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) 550-3261 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
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.
THOMAS BEGINS 15TH TERM REPRESENTING 181ST 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 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 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.

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.

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:

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

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 1
  1700 S. Broad St., Unit 201
  Philadelphia, PA 19145
  215-685-7503

- Health Center 2
  555 S. 43rd St.
  Philadelphia, PA 19110
  215-685-7504

- Health Center 3
  4400 Haverford Ave.
  Philadelphia, PA 19110
  215-685-7601

- Health Center 7
  1900 N 20th St.
  Philadelphia, PA 19121
  215-685-2933

- Health Center 8
  2840 Dauphin St.
  Philadelphia, PA 19132
  215-685-2400

- Health Center 9
  131 E. Chelten Ave.
  Philadelphia, PA 19144
  215-685-5701

- Health Center 10
  2230 Cottman Ave.
  Philadelphia, PA 19149
  215-685-0639

- Strawberry Mansion Health Center
  2840 Dauphin St.
  Philadelphia, PA 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 will also 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 orskirt 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.
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“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 the system because they have a criminal record. And, their time and unable to improve their lives after leaving,” Thomas said. “I intend to work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle where we agree to move and effective legislation,” Thomas said. “I intend to work with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle where we agree to move and effective legislation.”

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://fs.gd/PARecordSeal791.

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  - 215-685-7003

- 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
  - 215-685-3400

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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.

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