



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DOM COSTA
21ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
Spring 2018



Capitol Office: 217 Irvis Office Bldg. • P.O. Box 202021 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2021 • (717) 783-9114

District Office: 6808 Greenwood St., Suite 2 • Pittsburgh, PA 15206 • (412) 361-2040
(at the corner of Morningside Ave. and Greenwood St.)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Costa honored by ACHIEVA for fighting for people with disabilities

I was humbled and honored to be recognized among the 2017 recipients of the ACHIEVA Awards at a ceremony that was held on Dec. 4 at the Sheraton Station Square in Pittsburgh. Receiving the Excellence in Legislative Award was truly a great accolade. The mission of ACHIEVA is to create a community where disability makes no difference. The organization also supports and empowers individuals with disabilities and their families.



The awards are given to individuals, organizations and community groups who have worked on behalf of people with disabilities. I will continue to fight in Harrisburg, through legislation and in future budgets, for the rights of caregivers, care providers, patients and families for a better tomorrow.

Last April, Allegheny County legislators, including me, attended a Provider Alliance meeting where we learned about the different provider rates proposed by the Office of Developmental Programs based on geographical areas. Our county rates were up to 11 percent less than those in southeast counties. By reaching out to the Department of Human Services Secretary Ted Dallas and Deputy Secretary Nancy Thaler with the Office of Developmental Programs, I urged them to establish rates for each service statewide, after I realized the negative outcomes associated with the proposed rate structure. Eventually, statewide rates were established.

I sincerely appreciate all of the work that ACHIEVA does. I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Nancy Murray for nominating me for this award and to congratulate all the other award recipients.

Railway crossing in Etna is public

Last August I attended the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission hearing where it was determined that the Bridge Street Crossing in Etna underneath the 62nd Bridge railroad lines is a public crossing. A sign that stated the crossing was private had been put up in error, according to Norfolk Southern, which agreed to remove it.

As a former law enforcement officer, I believe that it is imperative that the crossing is safe for the community's usage. I've worked alongside the Etna Borough and various other stakeholders in the planning process since the beginning. I'm excited that, as a result of our hard work, the space was deemed public and the proposed Riverfront park and trail has a better chance of moving forward.

I look forward to continuing to work with the borough and stakeholders on the Riverfront development. I'm optimistic about continuing to work with the borough, as well as other entities on the Riverfront park and trail. As the project advances, there's now the assurance of pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR REP. DOM COSTA'S UPCOMING EVENTS



Job Fair

March 16

My annual Job Fair will be Friday, March 16, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 1000 Ross Municipal Drive in Ross Township, PA 15237. Come meet with many employers hiring in and around the Pittsburgh area. Those attending are encouraged to bring several copies of their resume and to dress professionally. Applications will be accepted on site.

Pathways to Pardons Event

March 22

From 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday, March 22 I will host a Pathways to Pardons Town Hall meeting with Lt. Gov. Mike Stack in Etna at Fugh Hall, 27 Crescent St. The event is FREE and open to the public, and designed to inform constituents of the pardon process with time allotted for Q&A.

There will be experts on hand to discuss pardons, as well as limited access orders, and expungements.



It was great meeting and spending time with my constituents at the Capitol during the holiday season on Nov. 30, 2017. I really enjoyed showing them around our beautiful state Capitol.

Domestic Violence Forum

March 27

I will be hosting a forum on Domestic Violence at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 27, in the Multipurpose Room of Goodwill in Lawrenceville, 118 52nd St.

The event will include a panel with Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas – Family Division Judge David Spurgeon, Sabrina Korbel, supervisor of the Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh's Civil Law Project; Allegheny County Deputy District Attorney and Supervisor of the Domestic Violence Unit, Mike Sullivan; and a domestic violence survivor.

Unclaimed Property Event

April 10 & 11 and June 12 & 13

I will host an Unclaimed Property Event from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 10 at my District Office, 6808 Greenwood St., Suite 2, Pittsburgh and Wednesday, April 11th at the Ross Municipal Building, 1000 Ross Municipal Drive in Ross Township from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. **[If you can't make it to this Unclaimed Property Event, there will be another opportunity on June 12 & 13 at the same time and location.]**

Each year, the state Treasurer's Office receives millions of dollars in unclaimed property. Unclaimed property is any financial asset that has been left with a bank, insurance company, business or organization without any activity for five years. It is estimated that nearly one in 10 Pennsylvanians has unclaimed property.

I encourage you to stop by my office so that my staff can help you search the database and assist you with filling out any paperwork, should you have unclaimed property. Please contact my office or visit www.patreasury.gov/unclaimed-property to search the database. There is no fee to retrieve unclaimed property.

Shredding Event

May 5

My next Shredding Event will take place from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday, May 5 at the St. Raphael School Parking Lot, 1154 Chislett St., Pittsburgh. Paper will be shredded on site. Bring all documents you no longer need that contain personal information. We cannot accept phone books, spiral notebooks, binders, floppy discs, CDs/DVDs, bound books, magazines, steel binder clips, steel ACCO fasteners and other hard metal or plastic materials.

You may bring up to five, average-size boxes of paper documents to be shredded – boxes will be given back to you on site as we have no way to dispose of them. No taxpayer money is used to pay for the service, which is not available to businesses. Please be aware that the shredding equipment cannot be operated in the rain. Should there be rain in the forecast, please call my office at (412) 361-2040 the morning of the event, and listen to the voicemail for an update.

Sheriff Bill Mullen's Project D.U.M.P. will also be at this Shredding Event. You may bring any unwanted and/or unused prescription drugs to the event and a Deputy Sheriff will be on hand to safely and securely dispose of them.



Rep. Costa during last year's Shredding Event held on May 20, 2017.



Costa hosts House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on neighborhood revitalization

Pittsburgh has undergone tremendous growth and as the city continues to expand, it is important that affordable housing remains a part of the revitalization of our neighborhoods. This past October, I hosted a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing at the Teamsters Local 249 Union Hall, in the Lawrenceville section of Pittsburgh, to discuss affordable housing and rebuilding neighborhoods within the city.

The hearing generated good discussions from city officials and redevelopment professionals about opportunities to improve neighborhoods, while also developing more affordable housing. We discussed ways to properly rejuvenate communities without displacing residents and business owners. It is very important to find ways to ensure that there still is affordable housing for people who want to stay in their communities and/or for those who want to move out of them.

I requested the hearing because while I believe it is imperative that new life needs to be brought to our aging neighborhoods, I don't believe it should come with the consequence of creating extremely inflated and unaffordable housing costs.



Costa introduces bill to protect employees' gratuities

In January, I introduced a bill (H.B. 2003) that would protect gratuities earned by employees. In the legislation, I define gratuity and who it belongs to, to ensure that tips left by guests are given to the employee it was intended for and not used in other ways.

Tipped wage workers work extremely hard and for long hours to earn their gratuities. Therefore, employers should not be allowed to use tips to cover their costs of operation.

In Pennsylvania, the minimum cash hourly wage for tipped employees is \$2.83 and the basic combined cash and tip minimum wage rate is \$7.25, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Ultimately, I hope that going forward, advanced technology is not used to possibly short workers. They should be able to take home all of the tips they have received.

PA HOPE (Heroin Opioid Prevention and Education) Caucus

I am proud to be among the members of the PA HOPE Caucus. Sadly, more Pennsylvanians die from opioid overdoses than fatal vehicle accidents, according to the state's Department of Health.

Addiction is real, but recovery is possible through access to high quality prevention and treatment for those suffering from alcohol and drug abuse. In January, Gov. Tom Wolf declared the opioid crisis a statewide emergency. I commend and fully support Wolf's stance in making Pennsylvania a national leader in this fight.

This is a bipartisan issue and both the Senate and the House have come together to work across party lines in order to provide policy initiatives and outreach for Pennsylvania families who have been touched by the drug epidemic.

Should you or someone you know need help with heroin or a prescription drug problem, call 1-800-662-HELP or visit www.pahopecaucus.com for a list of resources.



Last September's Annual Children's Safety Fair included state, local, federal and county public safety departments, as well as numerous nonprofits who provided families with vital safety information. The event was held at the Dougherty Veterans Baseball Field in Etna and was our biggest and best attended one so far! Thanks to everyone who attended and hope to see you at our next event this fall!

Money invested into the 21st Legislative District in 2017

It may be a new year, but in 2017 we had a lot to be thankful for! Serving as your legislator means that I work for you, and last year I worked tirelessly to help secure several grants that were awarded for different projects within our district.

Through hard work and dedication, I was able to get over \$5 million invested in the district.

Notable funding included a \$2.5 million award from the state to Riverfront 47, which was obtained through collaborative efforts with Sen. Randy Vulakovich.

Additionally, three community investment organizations within our district were selected to receive financial assistance following Gov. Tom Wolf's approval of \$17.9 million in funding through the Department of Community and Economic Development's Neighborhood Assistance Program. The three organizations, noted below, were awarded monies to invest in projects that serve distressed areas or support conservation efforts.

Below is a list of some of the grants I fought for:

- **\$2.5 million** in state funding was awarded to Riverfront 47, a proposed commercial development of the former AXCON Corp. site along the Allegheny River in Sharpsburg, Aspinwall and O'Hara Township.
- **\$1.5 million** for transportation improvements along Main and 19th streets in Sharpsburg Borough.
- **\$250,000** for a planning and design study of the Sharpsburg, O'Hara, Aspinwall (SOA) Riverfront Trail Project.
- **\$25,000** was obtained with state Sen. Wayne Fontana, D-Allegheny, for improvements to Sharp's Landing, a part of the Three Rivers Water Trail that includes a public boat and kayak launch, and site amenities for picnics and other outdoor activities.
- **\$125,000** to Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to design improvements for Arsenal Park in the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh, a community park located 10 minutes from downtown.
- **\$300,000** from the Gaming and Economic Tourism Development Fund, obtained by Rep. Hal English, R-Allegheny, and I to rehabilitate Fall Fun Park in Shaler Township after it suffered storm damage in 2015.
- **\$112,500** in funding to the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, located in Sharpsburg, to create an urban "farmhouse." The greenhouse will produce and sell fresh, locally grown produce to area residents and restaurants year-round.
- **\$180,000** to the Lawrenceville Corp. in Pittsburgh to improve resource access to nearly 300 senior citizens; create 200 parking stalls and six bicycle corrals; complete an Arsenal Park Master Plan; connect 200 residents with the Children's Health Insurance Program; increase parent engagement in school by 25 percent and more.
- **\$160,000** to the Bloomfield-Garfield Corp. in Pittsburgh to invest in affordable housing, remove blights and reconstruct public infrastructure.
- **\$300,000** state grant through the Department of Community and Economic Development's PA Small Water and Sewer Grant program, to separate storm water flows from a combined sewer system at Ravine Street in Sharpsburg and a \$150,000 grant to replace water lines in Reserve Township.
- **\$75,900** grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection was awarded to AKS Inc. in Etna to upgrade its fleet of diesel-powered school buses.
- **\$1.5 million** in state funding for a roadway project in the Sharpsburg Borough through the Multimodal Transportation Fund.



In August I participated in the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Southwestern Veterans Center's Pride & Honor Vietnam Veteran Pinning Ceremony. I want to thank all of the men and women who have served and are serving in our military. To them, I say thank you for your sacrifice!



ALCOSAN's Clean Water Assistance Fund can help families pay their bills

In order to assist low-income families in paying their sewage treatment bills, the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority has created the Clean Water Assistance Fund.

The Fund is available to ALCOSAN service area residents living in the 83 municipalities it serves, who are homeowners, (tenants who have accounts in their own names) and who meet family income limits set by the federal government.

To apply, you can visit our office or one of the social service agencies in the region to fill out an application. Be sure to bring a copy of your water/sewage bill, including ALCOSAN charges, the Social Security numbers of all household members, and proof of your household's monthly income.

The grant will be a credit applied to your account by the agency that bills you for your water sewage treatment. For more information, visit the Dollar Energy Fund's website at www.dollarenergy.org/ or call (800) 375-1388.

PWSA offers help with paying water bills

To help ease the burden of the water rate increase, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority adopted the "Bill Discount Program," a customer assistance program designed to provide customers with financial relief if they are having difficulty paying their water bill.

Customers are eligible if they are at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The program is managed by Dollar Energy Fund, and they will work with PWSA customers to determine eligibility.

If approved, you will receive a 50-percent reduction of your fixed or minimum monthly water charges for one year. Eligible customers may be asked to verify income on a yearly basis.

Animal Abuse Law Overhaul



I've introduced legislation that would add animal fighting to the list of offenses under the state's racketeering provisions. Under H.B. 1197, it is my hope that the bill would enhance investigations, enforcement and prosecution of organized animal fighting within the Commonwealth. I am making every effort to bring H.B. 1197 up for a vote in the Judiciary Committee by April so it can be voted

by the full House and hopefully become law soon after. We must work to be the voice of our animal friends. Stay tuned....

By safeguarding our animals through stricter laws, I'm proud to say the Commonwealth improved more than any other state last year in animal protection, jumping to No. 24 from No. 44, according to a report from the Animal Legal Defense Fund. Hopefully, with the passage of my H.B. 1197, Pennsylvania could climb even higher in its rating this year.

Last August, Libre's Law, which is named after a rescued emaciated puppy, went into effect essentially overhauling animal abuse violations and penalties. I enthusiastically voted in favor of this legislation.

For more information on the law, visit my web page at www.pahouse.com/DCosta.



On Oct. 13, 2017 my Senior Fair at the Ross Township Community Center, 1000 Ross Municipal Drive, was another successful event. We provided free health screenings, flu and pneumonia shots, CPR classes, and plenty of free giveaways. We had over 60 vendors providing information from agencies across the Commonwealth that are available to help seniors and their families. It was a wonderful way to spend the day, meeting and talking with constituents.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DOM COSTA
P.O. Box 202021
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2021

lpo.kl.0218



Thanks to everyone who attended the Perrytown Place Ice Cream Social last August. Annually, I host Senior Ice Cream Socials to bring valuable information to seniors. Last year's socials were focused on senior safety and to warn them against scams. They were great events and I love spending time with the seniors in my district. I want to thank Deputy Sheriffs Jason Tarap and Joe Cirigliano, and Phillip Little from the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office for their help with these events.

2017 Property Tax/Rent Rebate forms now available

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program applications for the 2017 tax year are now available at my office – and my staff is ready to help you file yours for free! You never have to pay someone to prepare your rebate application!

Applications also are available online at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling 1-888-222-9190.

The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded, and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2017 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

The deadline to apply for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2017 is June 30, 2018, and the rebates normally are distributed beginning July 1. So, the sooner you file, the sooner you will receive your money!

