FREE SHREDDING EVENT IS SEPT. 8

You're invited to a free document shredding event!
Please join me:
Saturday, Sept. 8
9 a.m. to noon
Tom Masano Auto Retailers
841 E. Wyomissing Blvd. • Reading

Bring any kind of documents with Social Security, credit card and bank account numbers you want shredded and recycled securely. Shredding your personal documents can help you keep your identity safe and can keep fire hazards out of your home! There is a five-box or bag limit, and please remove all paper clips.

Call my office at 610-376-1529 for more information.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver’s license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
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- Issues with insurance companies
- Consumer complaints

Any state government-related matter!

CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH BILL PASSES INTO LAW

Pennsylvanians renewing their driver’s licenses, identification cards and vehicle registrations online can now check a box to automatically make a donation to the Pediatric Cancer Research Fund, thanks to the passage of legislation that I spearheaded.

House Bill 46 was signed into law last year as Act 39 and established a check-off box on Pennsylvania’s state income tax form to allow taxpayers to designate a contribution for childhood cancer research. This is yet another major step in our fight to better fund research and find a cure for pediatric cancer.

I have also introduced several bills that would combine to raise over $10 million a year for pediatric cancer research without impacting the General Fund.

2018-19 STATE BUDGET INVESTS HEAVILY IN EDUCATION

I’m proud to share that this summer, I voted in favor of Pennsylvania’s 2018-19 General Fund budget, which was signed into law on time this year. I voted for the plan because it makes a strong investment in kindergarten through 12th grade education and school safety.

The investments we are making in our students today will pay dividends in the future as our young people will be prepared to go to college or enter the workforce as well educated, skilled and capable workers ready to support families.

The 2018-19 State Budget invests heavily in education:

- Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
- PACER prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies
FIGHTING AGAINST THE OPIOID AND HEROIN ADDICTION EPIDEMIC

The opioid and heroin addiction epidemic is one of the toughest challenges facing the commonwealth, with drug overdoses now the leading cause of accidental death. Our part of the state has been hit especially hard. In Berks County, 116 people died of drug overdoses in 2016, which represented a 70 percent increase in deaths from 2015.

The problem is growing at a rate no one has been able to predict or manage, but I’m supporting a bill that could help save lives going forward.

In June, the House passed H.B. 1887, which would limit fentanyl use to palliative care, medical emergencies, surgical procedures and cancer patients. This limit would remain in effect for two years as we work to reduce overdose deaths.

I supported this bill because fentanyl poses a special problem in the war against addiction. This powerful synthetic opioid—which the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration describes as 30 to 50 times more potent than heroin—is often added to heroin to enhance its effect.

Last year alone, statistics showed that fentanyl was present in 70 percent of overdose deaths in Berks County, up from just 19 percent the year before.

I believe that by limiting the use of fentanyl, this bill could reduce overdose deaths and provide relief for coroners, emergency medical service workers and law enforcement. The bill would also help us track our progress in fighting the epidemic by requiring annual reporting on overdoses that involve fentanyl and on reductions in its distribution.

I look forward to reporting favorably on its progress.

PRE-K EDUCATION INVESTMENTS ADD UP FOR REGION

Early-childhood education grants were awarded across Berks County in July, to school districts and other entities that serve children through Pre-K Counts and Head Start programs within the 127th Legislative District.

Funded through the state Department of Education’s Office of Child Development and Early Learning, these competitive grants will help to create nearly 2,125 pre-K seats and 490 pre-K slots statewide.

Area recipients are:

• Opportunity House
• YMCA of Reading and Berks County
• Berks Community Action Program Inc.
• Berks County Intermediate Unit 14
• Governor Mifflin School District
• Boyertown Area School District

This infusion will ensure that more kids from Reading and Berks County will be able to attend a pre-K program, enhancing their learning experience and eventually the economy around them. Studies show that for every dollar we invest in kids to attend preschool, we get seven back in economic gains and savings on public programs and prison spending.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides free, high-quality pre-K services to at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds. Children in families earning up to 300 percent of poverty, or a family of four earning $75,300 annually, are eligible to apply. Head Start is available to families at or below 130 percent of poverty, or a family of four earning $32,830 annually.

SAINT MARGARET SCHOOL RECEIVES GRANT FOR FRESH FOODS

Saint Margaret School was awarded a nearly $15,000 grant this summer to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to students during the school day.

Saint Margaret School was one of 200 Pennsylvania elementary schools to receive the grant.

Proper nutrition is essential to ensuring our students are performing at their highest potential. By providing students with a solid foundation, we are setting them on a path to success. I look forward to working with school officials to guarantee our students benefit greatly.

Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and was first introduced in Pennsylvania in 2004. The program’s mission is to provide healthier food choices in school lunches, to expand schools’ variety of fruits and vegetables and to impact a student’s overall health.

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECEIVES $751,695 GRANT

I was proud to announce in June that the Pennsylvania Department of Education awarded a $751,695 Adult Basic Education Direct Service grant to Reading Area Community College.

The grant will help the college provide adult education and literacy services.

Grants like these are the kinds of public-private partnerships that net results in our community. Literacy and continuing-education classes are good for families looking to succeed and contribute to the economy.

Reading Area Community College is an outstanding resource and ally for those goals, and I’m pleased that the state saw fit to invest in their mission.

I look forward to providing more opportunities for funding in our community.

PENNСYЛIANIA GLASSWORKS RECEIVES $100,000 PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Pennsylvania Glassworks Co. received $100,000 from the Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Northeastern Pennsylvania in June.

This industry leader from right here in Berks County produces beautiful decorative architectural cast-glass panels. Their process allows architects and designers to apply custom glass wall panels, windows and doors with deep sculptural patterns and imagery cast directly into the surface of the glass.

Congratulations to Pennsylvania Glassworks! Their work is another part of what makes our region — and Pennsylvania — known across the country as a leader in highly skilled crafts.

It’s a pleasure to bring these types of investments to our region, and I look forward to finding more opportunities for area businesses.

The Ben Franklin Technology Partners is an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and is funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority.

Since beginning operations in 1983, BFTP/NEP has created 18,056 jobs for Pennsylvania and retained 31,840 jobs, helped to start 511 companies and developed 1,733 products and processes. The Pennsylvania Ben Franklin network has returned $3.60 to the state treasury for every $1 invested in the program.

PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM DEADLINE EXTENDED

Some good news about an important state program: The deadline to apply for the state Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended through Dec. 31.

The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. Your income must be $35,000 or less if you’re a homeowner and $15,000 or less if you’re a renter. For purposes of calculating income, half of Social Security income is excluded. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may also file rebate claims on behalf of claimants who lived at least one day in 2017 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

The maximum standard rebate is $650, although supplemental rebates for certain qualifying homeowners can boost rebates to $975.

My office has applications for the program and can help you apply for free. Please bring proof of local (county, borough and school) property taxes or rent paid and proof of income, such as a 1099 form.

To learn more about the program, visit revenue.pa.gov, click on the “Tax Information” tab at the top, and scroll down to “Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.”

REAL ID UPDATE

Pennsylvania received a REAL ID enforcement extension through Oct. 10, 2018. Extensions are expected to continue to give PA time to comply with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005, which was passed to improve domestic security after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Currently, Pennsylvania driver’s licenses and IDs do not possess the advanced anti-counterfeit security features required by the REAL ID law. No one will be forced to obtain a REAL ID if they choose not to. However, a non-compliant license or ID will be insufficient for air travel or federal facility access once REAL ID has been made available.

A U.S. passport or other federally approved ID will be required for such activities if you do not choose to acquire a REAL ID.

REAL ID will cost $30 in addition to the standard renewal fee for a regular license or ID (currently $30.50).

If you would like a REAL ID, please note that customers who obtained their first license or ID card before September 2003 will need to visit a licensing facility with documents verifying their identity.

PennDOT might need to verify:
• Proof of identity (original or certified copy of a birth certificate with a raised seal or valid U.S. passport)
• Proof of Social Security number (Social Security card)
• Proof of all legal name changes (marriage license or court order issued by your county’s family court)
• Two proofs of current, physical PA address (current, unexpired PA license or ID and a no-more-than 90-day-old bank statement or utility bill with the same name and address)

PennDOT has advised customers to begin gathering the required documents as soon as possible, especially if they will need to obtain replacement documents.

You can contact my office for more information or for help gathering any documents.
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I specifically welcomed the increase in basic and special education funding for the Reading and Governor Mifflin school districts.

At a time when the Reading School District is considering a 4 percent tax increase to make up for the $3.8 million deficit, I am proud to be able to bring an additional $5,031,122 home for the district, and hopefully this funding can help them avoid a tax increase, as well as provide our students with the resources they need to achieve great things.

I was also able to get Governor Mifflin a 2.5 percent increase in basic education funding.
We also made a $60 million investment in school safety, and this budget begins to replenish the Rainy Day Fund for the first time since 2006.
We are providing more funding for child care, fighting the opioid crisis, reducing the waiting list for people seeking services for intellectual disabilities and at my urging, we are increasing the reimbursement rate for nursing homes in Berks County.
I admit, I am disappointed that we did not make any progress on property tax elimination and that only 7 percent of K-12 education funds will be distributed through the fair funding formula.
Otherwise, this budget is a win for the citizens of the commonwealth and our district.

The investments we are making in our students today will pay dividends in the future as our young people will be prepared to go to college or enter the workforce as well educated, skilled and capable workers ready to support families.

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This is yet another major step in our fight to better fund research and find a cure for pediatric cancer.
Pediatric cancer is the leading cause of death by disease among children in the United States. Children in Pennsylvania and throughout the country are fighting for their lives, and we have to do everything we can to support the research that could save them.
I have also introduced several bills that would combine to raise over $10 million a year for pediatric cancer research without impacting the General Fund.
I have also sponsored H.B. 404 to establish a Pediatric Cancer Research registration license plate with proceeds supporting pediatric cancer research, and H.B. 408 to establish $10 million in tax credits for businesses to contribute to research institutions pursuing a cure for pediatric cancers. Both bills remain in committee.