



State Representative HELEN TAI

178th Legislative District



Serving as your representative in Harrisburg

September 2018

Fighting to protect communities from gun violence

In July, I was joined by families affected by gun violence as I announced a legislative package to provide commonsense checks to protect children and other community members against the illegal use of firearms.

I've introduced legislation that addresses the circumstances of a crime that happened right here in the 178th District – the brutal slaying of four young men last July. Cosmo DiNardo, who pled guilty to the murders, committed the slayings using a family member's firearm that he personally was not permitted to possess.

My legislation would aim to prevent similar tragedies by requiring the safe storage of firearms and the reporting of lost or stolen weapons. It also provides criminal penalties for those who fail to comply with the law.

I've proposed a package of legislation that would:

- Require gun owners to safely store firearms if a person who cannot legally possess a firearm lives in the owner's residence (H.B. 2597)
- Require gun owners to safely store firearms when not under the direct control of the owner (H.B. 2598)
- Require gun owners to report the loss or theft of a firearm within 24 hours of the discovery of the loss or theft; hold a firearm owner who fails to report the loss or theft of a firearm that is later used in commission of a crime civilly liable for any resulting damages (H.B. 2599)

I support a gun owner's Second Amendment rights, and at the same time, I also support practical steps to protect our schools and communities.

Safe storage could have prevented the deaths of Dean Finocchiaro, Thomas Meo, Mark Sturgis and Jimi Patrick.

The overwhelming majority of Americans – including gun owners – support commonsense gun safety laws. At a meeting sponsored by Bucks County Moms Demand Action, a panel of gun violence prevention advocates and gun owners agreed that we need to prevent those who should not have access to guns from obtaining them.

I am co-sponsoring several gun violence prevention bills, including bills that would require universal background checks, prohibit the use of bump stocks to accelerate the rate of fire, and strengthen the Protection from Abuse Act to ensure that domestic abusers relinquish weapons to the appropriate authorities in a more timely fashion.

It is absolutely critical that we act on these bills. Everyone should have the right to walk down the street and not feel the threat of gun violence.



"The bills being introduced ... by Rep. Tai are not about gun control, they're about being in control of your own guns! How many more lives have to be lost because of a negligent gun owner leaving a weapon where others have access to it?" – Mark Potash, father of Mark Sturgis. Sturgis and three others were killed by Cosmo DiNardo, who used a family member's firearm that he personally was not permitted to possess.

Keeping our children safe at school

As students get settled in the new school year, I wanted to provide additional details about school safety initiatives provided for in the 2018-19 state budget.

We devoted \$60 million to a school safety and security grant program, which will be open to school districts, intermediate units, charter schools and more. I have reached out to the New Hope-Solebury and Council Rock school districts to ensure we are maximizing the school safety grant funding for our communities.

Grants could be used for training programs, counseling, security planning or security-related technology, safety and emergency preparedness plans, programs to reduce community violence, and more. A new committee within the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency will administer the grants and establish school security assessment criteria.

Another \$600,000 in the Attorney General's budget will administer the Safe2Say anonymous school safety tip line.

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Moving toward renewable energy



Our environment is under assault in many ways, and we’re already experiencing the devastating consequences of climate change and our reliance on fossil fuels.

It’s well past time that we take steps to better protect our environment. And the good news is, there are ways we can do that while improving our economy.

I’m a co-sponsor of H.B. 2132, which would set a goal of transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. Scientists have warned that we must eliminate global warming pollution by 2050 to avoid a climate change tipping point from which the planet cannot turn back.

Through this legislation, we can not only address environmental issues but create more clean energy jobs and potentially create cost-savings for energy consumers.

This bill has been referred to the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, of which I am a member. I’ll continue to advocate for this and other ways we can protect our environment and work for safer, healthier communities.

Bill would prohibit insurers from denying pre-existing conditions

Imagine if you lost your health insurance. Now imagine you have high blood pressure. Then imagine if no other insurance company would write a policy for you because of that pre-existing medical condition.

Under the Affordable Care Act, health insurers are prohibited from denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions. However, a lawsuit filed earlier this year could allow insurers to do that if they so choose – and we need to make sure that doesn’t happen in Pennsylvania.

This year, 20 states filed a lawsuit against the federal government to challenge the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. The lawsuit could render the entire ACA invalid.

If the lawsuit is successful, millions of people across the United States and in Pennsylvania may be left without health insurance or face paying exorbitant premiums to keep coverage. However, by passing a state law, we can preserve the pre-existing condition protection in the instance that the entire ACA is invalidated by the courts.

I’ve co-sponsored H.B. 2552, which would prohibit health insurers from using an individual’s pre-existing medical condition to deny or exclude coverage under a health insurance policy.

I hope action will be taken soon on this legislation, in an effort to protect the health and well-being of all Pennsylvanians.

Time to act on #MeToo legislation

Reports from across the country have made it abundantly clear that we need to better protect workers from harassment – and the state Capitol is no exception.

I’ve co-sponsored H.B. 1965, which would clearly define sexual harassment in state law, install a bicameral nonpartisan Office of Compliance, require elected officials to reimburse taxpayer settlements for sexual harassment, and establish standard procedures to investigate claims made within the General Assembly. I’ve also co-sponsored several other bills, including measures to apply the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to all employers and improve workplace conditions by giving employees clearer descriptions of unacceptable behavior including sexual harassment, among others.

Despite overwhelming acknowledgement that we need to change our culture, the House voted in June to launch a year-long study on sexual harassment and misconduct in state government. I voted against that resolution – I don’t think we need more studies; we need action.

I hosted a policy committee hearing on this subject in late August, and I hope that we’ll see bills called up for action quickly.

Thanks for a great Senior Fair!

We had a great turnout at my first Senior Fair in August!

Seniors are such a valuable part of our community, and I was happy to host this event to help them connect with resources and opportunities available for them. We had 58 agencies and community organizations in one place, making it easy for seniors to connect with the services they need! Later in August, we were also scheduled to host a Seniors and Snacks event at the Northampton Senior Center.



My office is also always ready to help with senior services such as Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications or PACE prescription discount cards. Please reach out if you or an older adult you know need help with any state-related issue.



“We had a fantastic, informative, and memorable afternoon at the Senior Fair – it was fun and the food was yummy! It was very well thought-out and planned. We were amazed at the number of people who were there, and the exhibitors were very helpful! Lots of freebies!”

Marsha and Ronald Kushnier, of Richboro.

Around the 178th District and beyond



I had such fun reading “Pete the Cat” to children at the Free Library of New Hope and Solebury in July! Research shows that reading aloud to children helps them increase their vocabulary and learn language patterns, among other benefits. I’m happy to be able to help children learn the value of reading at a young age.

I was pleased to be part of a legislative panel at the Pennsylvania State Education Association’s 2018 Summer Leadership Conference. I will continue to fight for investments in education.



At a Northampton Township supervisors meeting in July, I presented Kate Loftus with a House of Representatives citation for earning her Girl Scout Gold Award. She spent more than 100 hours on workshops for elementary-age students, to teach them what it feels like to have a disability.



Thanks to the Solebury Township Board of Supervisors for presenting me with a plaque on Aug. 14 to honor my years of service as a member and chair of the Solebury Township Board of Supervisors.

Constituent Corner

■ 900 constituents served in the office

■ 4,500 constituent homes visited to share information about services

We’re thrilled to have been able to connect with so many of you! My staff and I are always ready to help with a variety of state-related issues.

“Thanks again for all the work you have done in digging for this information, Helen! I’ve never really had cause to engage with my representative before in any capacity, but I’m incredibly pleased with your follow-up and follow-through. Just fantastic stuff all the way around, really, and greatly appreciated.”

— Michael McLaren,
who reached out for grant information

“I am on the management board of our condo association, and one of the unit owners was having problems with bats. Pest control specialists told us that Pennsylvania law precluded them from doing anything until after August 1st, so I reached out to Helen Tai via her website. I was quickly notified that they had contacted the state Game Commission and shortly after that, a representative of the Game Commission made a site visit. The Game Commission issued a permit to install exclusions and the situation has improved. Helen’s staff acted quickly and followed up to ensure the matter was resolved.”

— Alan Wilson



Doreene Kaplan, constituent specialist, helps Ida Rummel with tax forms.

“Doreene did a good job, and I would recommend that others come to the office too!” — Ida Rummel of Richboro



Interns learn the ropes of state government

I was happy to host three local graduates as interns this summer. They learned to help constituents and spent a day with me at the Capitol in Harrisburg.

“My favorite part about interning here this summer was getting to know the responsibilities of a state representative and everything Rep. Tai does for our community.”

Duke Wu, 18, graduate of Council Rock North, attending Temple University with a major in business and Army ROTC

“My favorite part of the summer is knowing that I worked in a place where it is our job to help the community.”

Athena Hallberg, 19, graduate of Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, attending the University of Chicago, with a double major in history and creative writing

“My favorite part about this internship was going door-to-door, meeting constituents, and getting to know what they need and how I can help them.”

Isabella Scotti, 18, graduate of Council Rock South, attending Penn State University, majoring in physics



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First Telephone Town Hall a success

I hosted my first Telephone Town Hall in July, and I was happy to talk to so many of you!

More than 400 residents participated, and we had a great discussion about a number of issues, including natural gas drilling, the opioid epidemic, health care, and partisan gerrymandering in the redistricting process.

Telephone town halls are an easy way for us to connect – and you don’t even have to leave your home! You can weigh in with questions, leave me feedback afterward, and participate in polls.

I’ll host the next Telephone Town Hall at 7 p.m. Sept. 6. By the time this newsletter reaches you, I hope to have held my first in-person town hall – scheduled for late August – as well. I look forward to holding more of these events to receive your input.

Grants coming to the 178th District

I was thrilled to see more than \$2 million in state grants approved for improvements in the 178th District! Here are the details.

Alternative and Clean Energy Program grant: Council Rock School District was awarded \$2 million from the state’s Alternative and Clean Energy Program for energy-saving renovations and additions to Rolling Hills Elementary School in Northampton Township.

The project is expected to reduce energy and water consumption and earn gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

Green Light-Go: Northampton Township was awarded a \$208,850 Green Light-Go grant to modernize three traffic signals along Jacksonville and Almshouse roads, to include installation of video detection, radar dilemma zone detection, ADA-compliant push buttons and battery back-up.

The Department of Transportation program is designed to improve safety and mobility by reducing congestion and improving efficiency on key state highways.

Both grants are examples of ways state and local government agencies can work together to better our communities.

I am working with our local municipalities, schools and nonprofit organizations to identify and secure grant funding on numerous initiatives, including programs to address the opioid epidemic, improvements for local emergency services providers, and health programs. I hope to have good news to share on these efforts in the future.

Stay connected

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www.pahouse.com/Tai

Keep up to date with news from Harrisburg and the 178th Legislative District by following me on social media. You can also sign up for my email updates at www.pahouse.com/Tai/EmailSignup.

Upcoming events in the 178th

I hope to see you as I attend events throughout the community this fall!

Telephone Town Hall
Thursday, Sept. 6

Just answer your phone that evening to join the discussion!

Visit www.pahouse.com/Tai for more details or to register to ensure you get the call.

**Policy Committee
Hearing on Gun Safety**
Monday, Oct. 22

Watch for more details at www.pahouse.com/Tai.