



State Representative
Adam Ravenstahl
 20th Legislative District



Capitol Office: 322 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202020 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020 • (717) 787-5470

Constituent Service Office: 3689 California Ave. • Pittsburgh, PA 15212 • (412) 321-5523

Email: RepRavenstahl@pahouse.net • Website: www.pahouse.com/Ravenstahl

Fall 2011

2011-12 budget bad for working families, students

I voted no on the 2011-12 state budget because it was unnecessarily harsh, even in these tough economic times.

Negotiated without any Democrats at the table and passed without one House Democratic vote, the budget puts too big of a burden on working families while protecting the profits of gas companies drilling in Pennsylvania.

It slashed nearly \$1 billion in funding for public schools, the largest cut in Pennsylvania's history. The three districts in the 20th Legislative District will receive about \$28 million less than they did in the previous year.

As a result, Pittsburgh Public Schools have cut 276 jobs and reduced early childhood education programs. The North Hills School District raised taxes by a mill and eliminated 25 teaching positions. The Shaler Area School District eliminated 26 teaching positions through attrition.

The budget also cut state aid to Pennsylvania's state-owned and state-related universities by \$200 million. That forced the University of Pittsburgh to raise tuition by 8.5 percent, Penn State to increase tuition at its main campus by nearly 5 percent and state-owned universities such as Slippery Rock and Clarion to hike tuition by 7.5 percent.

The worst part of this budget is that \$560 million in additional revenue was left on the table. It could have been used to mitigate the painful cuts to education and human services. In addition, the governor and Republican leaders rejected proposals for a modest tax on natural gas drilling that could have further eased the cuts.

I have received hundreds of emails, letters and calls, asking me to support a reasonable budget deal. This budget was far from reasonable, and that's why I voted no.



My bill would grant military spouses educational leave

I have introduced a bill that would allow spouses of members of the Pennsylvania National Guard and other military reservists to maintain their academic credits, scholarships and tuition if their husband or wife is called to active duty.

Current law only provides members of the Pennsylvania National Guard or military reserves an educational leave of absence. It does not address their spouses, even though their life is uprooted as well.

Under H.B. 1134, if a Guard member or reservist is called to active duty, other than active duty for training, educational institutions would be required to grant the member or his or her spouse a military leave of absence from their education without the loss of earned academic credits or forfeiture of scholarships or grants they received before the call to active duty.

Educational institutions also would be required to refund tuition or fees paid, or credit the tuition and fees to the next semester or term when the member returns.

The bill, which has bipartisan support, is currently before the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Education cuts in the 20th Legislative District

School District	Dollar Difference from 2010-11	Percent Difference from 2010-11
Pittsburgh	-\$26,373,896	-14.6%
North Hills	-\$577,962	-9.3%
Shaler Area	-\$1,162,672	-9.8%

Honoring our nurses



I was pleased that the House adopted my resolution that designated May 6-12 as Nurses Week in Pennsylvania.

It's an incredibly demanding profession, and nurses are on the front lines of our health care system. Their hard work and patient care is essential to the health of Pennsylvania residents.

Nurses Week in Pennsylvania was held in conjunction with Florence Nightingale's birthday.

Nightingale is considered the founder of the modern nursing profession.

I was honored to speak to nurses from across the state when they gathered at the Capitol May 10 for the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association's Legislative Day.

I spoke at a Capitol news conference and presented my resolution that designated May 6-12 as Nurses Week in Pennsylvania.



New Pennsylvania laws

Here's some significant legislation that was signed into law earlier this year.

BANNING SYNTHETIC DRUGS

A new law adds concentrated "bath salts;" synthetic marijuana; salvia divinorum, which is a hallucinogenic herb mixture; and 2C-E, which is similar to LSD or Ecstasy; to the state list of controlled substances, along with the compounds used to make them. Concentrated "bath salts," which have nothing to do with baths or spas, contain a chemical known as MDPV, which can mimic the effects of cocaine and methamphetamine.

Common bath salts sold in retail stores do not contain MDPV, and are not affected by the law.

CASTLE DOCTRINE

Legislation I supported expands legal protections to those who must use deadly force to defend themselves and their families. The law removes a person's duty, when outside of the home or workplace, to retreat or find a safe place from danger before resorting to protective or deadly force. The law allows a person the right to stand his ground when being threatened, provided he did not provoke the perpetrator.

The law also grants immunity in civil cases in which a person can justify the need to protect himself against a perpetrator threatening him with death, serious bodily injury, kidnapping or rape.

This law simply reaffirms Pennsylvanians have the constitutional right to bear arms in defense of themselves.

Law-abiding citizens should not have to run from violent crime.

CANCER IN FIREFIGHTERS

Firefighters can receive workers' compensation if they develop cancer and can establish direct exposure to certain carcinogens while responding to an incident. Firefighters also must successfully pass a physical exam showing no evidence of cancer before beginning work as a firefighter.

BIRTH CERTIFICATES FOR STILLBIRTHS

A new law provides parents with a "Certificate of Birth Resulting in Stillbirth" when a child is stillborn, helping families through the grieving and healing process. At the option of the parent, the name of the child, names of the parents and birth place can be included on the certificate. This was not previously available in Pennsylvania.

SUNDAY MOTORCYCLE SALES

Many Pennsylvania motorcycle dealerships were already open on Sundays to only sell merchandise or parts. Now they can sell a motorcycle.

GOOD SAMARITAN

Underage drinkers who call 911 because someone else needs medical attention can now receive immunity from prosecution. The caller must provide his or her name to the 911 operator and must remain with the person until paramedics arrive.

AROUND THE DISTRICT AND HARRISBURG



Thanks to the organizers and participants of the Fearless 5K. It's a great tribute to one of our heroes, Marine Sgt. Joseph Caskey, who was killed in action during convoy operations in Afghanistan by an improvised explosive device on June 26, 2010, and raises money to benefit the injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.



I co-sponsored West View's Safety Fair, which featured bicycle inspections, fingerprinting, safety programs and activities for children.

I hosted participants in the Girl Gov program, which provides an opportunity for high school girls to shadow legislators for the day.



Congratulations to Bailey Narr of Lawrenceville, who triumphed in the girls' division of the National Marbles Championship held in Wildwood, N.J. Bailey was at the Lawrenceville July 4th celebration.



Lottery check-up

Study needed to ensure it can keep supporting senior programs

I supported a resolution the House unanimously adopted in June that calls for a financial check-up of the Pennsylvania Lottery system to make sure it can continue providing important services and programs to senior citizens.

Since the first game went on sale in 1972, the Pennsylvania Lottery has contributed more than \$20.6 billion to a wide variety of programs. **But the last time we examined its financial solvency was in 1994.**

Things have changed since then. The Pennsylvania Lottery now has competition from state gaming facilities and out-of-state lotteries while demand for services and programs is increasing.

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee will prepare a report that will include a sales forecast with long- and short-term projections of net-collections and an analysis of projected future program demand. The information will enable us to ensure state Lottery Fund revenues are sufficient to sustain lottery-funded programs and services.

Protecting seniors' access to PACE and PACENET

The House and Senate unanimously approved a bill that would allow PACE and PACENET enrollees to continue to maintain their income eligibility despite any Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. The bill, now Act 21 of 2011, was signed into law by the governor in June.

A previous law maintaining seniors' eligibility for the PACE and PACENET prescription-drug assistance programs, even if a Social Security cost-of-living adjustment put them over the income limit, expired on Dec. 31. This law extends the Social Security COLA exemption until Dec. 31, 2013.



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The survey says!

I recently conducted an online survey, and, as of this writing, an overwhelming majority of my constituents favor taxing Marcellus Shale natural gas drillers.

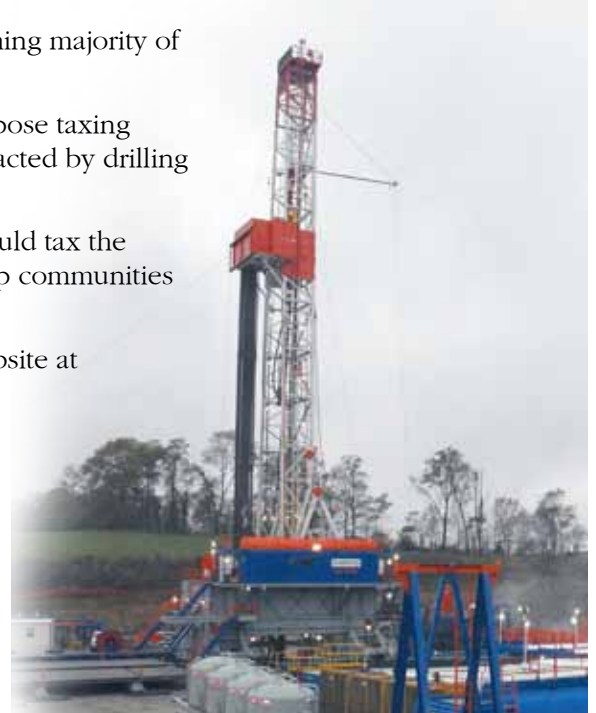
As you may know, Gov. Tom Corbett and many Republicans steadfastly oppose taxing drillers. I support a tax that will help the state budget, aid communities impacted by drilling and help fund environmental programs.

As of early August, 213 people who responded to my poll said the state should tax the drillers. Another 26 people favored an impact fee that would be used to help communities where drilling takes place. Another 10 people oppose a tax or fee.

If you want to weigh in on this issue, or any other issue, please visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Ravenstahl.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

To stay updated on my work in Harrisburg and the 20th Legislative District, please visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Ravenstahl.



SPORTSMEN'S CORNER



Bill would end hunting license display requirement

The state House of Representatives recently passed legislation I supported that would eliminate the requirement in Pennsylvania for hunters to display their hunting license on their back while hunting.

Pennsylvania is one of only two states that still require hunters to display their license. I believe it makes more sense to simply require hunters to have their license with them when they are hunting.

The legislation ([H.B. 735](#)) is being considered by the state Senate and is supported by the state Game Commission. Please visit my website, www.pahouse.com/Ravenstahl, to sign up for hunting and fishing updates.