



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Scott Conklin

SUMMER 2024
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77TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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There's a special joy that comes from helping folks solve problems, access services, or tap into programs that make their lives easier.

I knew that was my calling from the first day I set foot in Rep. Scott Conklin's district office in 2007. Since that time, and with assistance from our talented and devoted staffers, we have helped thousands of district residents connect with resources, find answers to questions, and resolve state-related issues.

But our work is far from finished, and we're excited about the opportunity to continue serving you in the year ahead. Whether you need help with an unemployment compensation problem

or PennDOT matter, a copy of a birth certificate or handicap placard, or assistance filing for a Property Tax/Rent Rebate, we are here for you.

We have two offices: our State College Service Center is located at 301 S. Allen St. Suite 102 and can be reached at (814) 238-5477. Our Philipsburg office is located at 213 N. Front St. in Philipsburg and can be reached at (814) 342-4872. Both offices are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Please stop in or call us to find out all the ways we can help!

In friendship,

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A Budget To Boost Our Most Important Resource

This summer, I cast a "yes" vote for the 2024-25 state budget. Although the new plan isn't perfect – no budget ever is – it has the right priorities when it comes to our most important resource: our kids.

So much depends on the quality of our public schools, from the strength of our workforce and the health of our economy to how well we prepare the next generation to succeed. With a historic \$1.3 billion investment in our K-12 schools and an additional half a billion in funding for chronically underfunded schools, including some in our own district, the new budget will help us create a more level playing field while easing the property tax burden on residents.

The budget also addresses the impact of cyber charter schools by reimbursing our brick-and-mortar public schools for cyber charter tuition.

Here at home, the new budget increases funding to our school districts by \$3.75 million and will bring across-the-board increases to all our schools.

Beyond education, the new budget promises to stimulate job growth and the economy by investing in key industries like agriculture and in programs that will expand "shovel-ready" building sites to attract new businesses.

The new budget also increases investments in programs to expand affordable housing and quality child care, and it also makes a stronger commitment to ensuring Pennsylvanians with disabilities and people facing mental health challenges have the resources they need.

To be sure, any budget involves some degree of compromise. But I supported the new plan because I believe it invests sensibly in ways that will strengthen our public schools, boost jobs, improve quality of life in our communities, and better support our most vulnerable residents – all without raising taxes. In my book, those are solid promises for the future.



2024-2025 EDUCATION FUNDING

MORE MONEY FOR SCHOOLS



\$1.8 Million

State College Area School District
\$959,745

Philipsburg-Osceola Area School District
\$523,072

Bald Eagle Area School District
\$471,607

Tyrone Area School District



Leveling The Playing Field For Our Student Athletes

In late April, I held a news conference at the state Capitol to shed light on an unfair practice that is depriving our public school student athletes of important opportunities.

In Pennsylvania, private schools may recruit student athletes from anywhere in the state, while public schools may only recruit from within the school district's geographic boundaries.

It's a system that allows private schools to create all-star teams with major playoff advantages over our public schools. And the problem isn't just impacting our public schools' ability to win championships – it's depriving student athletes at these schools of major opportunities, including scholarships and recruitment for college and professional sports.

To address the problem, I have introduced H.B. 1983, which would allow the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association to establish separate playoff systems and championships for public and private schools.

The change would not reduce opportunities for private school students. It would simply introduce greater fairness into our school competitions and ensure that our talented public school athletes have the opportunities they deserve for a brighter future in sports beyond high school.



Bringing Your Tax Dollars Home

I'm excited to report that since the start of this year, we have helped secure more than \$25 million to boost resources and programs in our district and region.

Highlights include –

- **More than \$17 million** to strengthen broadband throughout the county.
- **More than \$3.3 million** to Penn State for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.
- **More than \$1.7 million** for agriculture and environmental protection, including more than \$1 million to Penn State for programs that strengthen the agricultural industry, remediate environmental dangers, and preserve biodiversity and nearly \$740,000 to preserve farms in our district.
- **Nearly \$620,000** for water and stormwater improvements, including nearly \$620,000 to fund various watershed preservation projects.
- **Nearly \$830,000** to expand affordable housing.
- **More than \$600,000** for road improvement projects.
- **More than \$530,000** for school safety and mental health resources.
- **\$325,000** for workforce development.
- **\$133,100** to Penn State to expand adult literacy programs.
- **Nearly \$120,000** to expand resources for fire companies and EMS providers.
- **\$120,000** to Penn State to expand student resources, including \$60,000 to fight food insecurity and \$60,000 to strengthen programs to prevent sexual assault, harassment, and violence.

Infrastructure Work Continues On Calder Way

As I write this, work continues on Phase 1 of the Calder Way Project, with crews installing a sanitary sewer system on Calder Way from Pugh Street to Allen Street.

Last December, I helped secure \$2.75 million for projects to replace the Calder Way water, stormwater, and sanitary sewer systems. It's great to see work proceeding on these important projects to prevent flooding, improve access to drinking water, and improve waste disposal. To learn more about the work and find the latest updates, please visit <https://bit.ly/CalderWay>.

Strengthening Minority-Owned Businesses



Minority-owned businesses have an important role to play in our commonwealth, but for too long, many have faced barriers when it comes to accessing the resources needed to thrive and grow. To get more funding flowing to these businesses, I introduced H.B. 2202, which would establish the Minority Business Development Program.

By providing low-interest loans and equity financing to ethnic-owned businesses, the program would help level the playing field for these traditionally underserved businesses and help them thrive. The result – new jobs, greater economic growth, healthy competition, and more business owners empowered to give back to their communities – benefits all of us.

The House passed the bill in May, and it is now awaiting consideration in the state Senate.

Building Greater Trust In Our Elections

When Pennsylvania expanded the use of mail and absentee ballots five years ago, we saw a dramatic increase in these ballots. It was a great move that increased voter participation, but it also created some unwanted administrative issues.

As mail ballots have increased, county election board workers from all over the state have been telling us that the current system is unworkable because they simply don't have enough time to process these ballots.

Current state law does not permit election workers to begin pre-canvassing – defined as inspecting and opening envelopes containing ballots; removing them from the envelopes; and counting, computing and tallying the votes (but not reporting or publishing those votes) – until 7 a.m. on Election Day.

The resulting delays in tabulating returns can prevent a timely and efficient vote count and, even worse, foment voter mistrust and unfounded conspiracies.

To fix the issue, I introduced H.B. 847, which would allow election workers to begin the pre-canvassing of mail and absentee ballots up to seven days before an election. Providing that extra time will address delays and frustration arising under the current law and ensure continued trust in our electoral process.

The bill passed the House in May and is currently awaiting consideration in the state Senate.

My bills to help consumers, boost business

Below is a look at some other bills I have introduced this year.

- H.B. 2196 would ensure that consumers are notified up front that the contract they are about to sign includes an automatic renewal clause. The bill, which would also require that consumers be notified if their contract is sold to a different company, is currently being considered by the House.
- H.B. 2164 would allow PA wineries to offer small games of chance, just as breweries are permitted to do. The bill, which would allow wineries to attract more customers and increase revenue, is currently in the House Gaming Oversight Committee.
- H.B. 2410 would provide needed upgrades and stronger consumer protections for PA's law governing recreational vehicles. The law, which would help ensure reliable, efficient and cost-effective warranty service for consumers, is currently in the House Professional Licensure Committee.



I was touched when Patton Township officials presented me with a proclamation recognizing my efforts to secure \$180,000 to help cover costs created by the Christmas 2022 sinkhole. House State Government Committee Director Nicholas Himebaugh, who worked with me on the project, was also recognized.



Humbled To Be Recognized By Heroes

I was deeply humbled that Port Matilda EMS dedicated a new ambulance in my name, but these frontline medical heroes and their colleagues throughout Pennsylvania are the ones who deserve our recognition.



In June, I welcomed some of our Teamsters to the state Capitol. It's always wonderful to hear from these amazing labor advocates!



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House Commerce Committee Keeps PA 'Open For Business'

Earlier this year, I was appointed chairman of the House Commerce Committee, which works to ensure that our state laws keep pace with the needs and issues facing PA businesses while also protecting consumers. The committee has had a busy year, and I'm proud of our bipartisan work to advance important bills.

In recent months, the committee has advanced bills – now signed into law by the governor – that will clarify shareholder rights; help preserve storage space rental income for storage facility owners; and streamline the state's annual business-reporting law to bring consistency for in-state and out-of-state businesses, reduce confusion, and ensure PA maintains a business-friendly climate.

I'm looking forward to tackling new bills on our agenda when the House returns to session this fall!



I was proud to help recognize the accomplishments of Saige Solier Whitney, the son of my former staffer Valerie Whitney. Saige is the first Black male student to make Orchestra Regionals and Districts at Susquehanna Township, premier bassist for Harrisburg Youth Symphony, and a member of the York Youth Symphony Orchestra and Lebanon Valley College Honors Orchestra.



I was deeply honored to receive a 2024 PA State Grange Champion plaque from State Grange Master Matt Espenshade. It's hard to overstate all this amazing fraternal organization does to foster community service, education, and fellowship.



My Coffee and Conversation event in July at The Naked Egg Cafe in Ferguson Township spurred some great dialogue, as I joined residents and Assistant Township Manager Jaymes Progar to discuss township priorities, progress and other issues of community interest.



I had a blast at this year's 2024 State College Pride Parade! I always support our LGBTQ+ community.



I was proud to stand with members of CeaseFirePA and other advocates who rallied at the PA Capitol this spring for sensible gun safety laws.