



State Representative
TED HARHAI
Democratic Chairman

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Urban Affairs Committee

FALL 2013

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Chairman's message

As the newly appointed Democratic chairman of the House Urban Affairs Committee this session, I am pleased to issue this initial update on the important issues and matters relating to the work of the Urban Affairs Committee.

The committee oversees legislation that pertains to the general governance of Pennsylvania's cities and most-populated counties -- and to the operations of housing and redevelopment agencies, and municipal authorities. We also handle legislation related to manufactured housing and economic and community development.

You may recognize some of our work through the legislation that's passed through our committee over the years and has since been enacted into state law: The Keystone Opportunity Zone Act, the Neighborhood Improvement District Act, the Downtown Location Law, the Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act, and the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act.

Most recently, we oversaw enactment of legislation creating so-called "land banks" for the conversion of vacant or tax-delinquent properties into productive use, which became Act 153 of 2012.

Over the past 40 years, the focal point for manufacturing, commercial and retail activities has shifted substantially from our cities and towns to more suburban areas. As a result, older communities, such as the cities of Jeannette and Monessen have faced the increasingly difficult task of trying to provide municipal services while maintaining existing infrastructure with a significantly diminished tax base.

As Democratic chairman of the House Urban Affairs Committee, and a former mayor and councilman of the city of Monessen, I am firmly committed to facilitating policies and laws to promote equitable, livable and sustainable neighborhoods and communities in all municipalities throughout the Commonwealth.


 Ted Harhai

HOUSE URBAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The committee oversees legislation relating to:

- Cities and the most populous counties
- Housing and redevelopment agencies
- Parking and convention center authorities
- Economic development
- Community development
- Affordable housing
- Manufactured housing

The committee has the following subcommittees:

- Subcommittee on Cities, Counties of the First Class (Philadelphia)
- Subcommittee on Cities, Counties of the Second Class (Pittsburgh, Scranton, and the counties of Allegheny, Bucks, Delaware, Lancaster and Montgomery)
- Subcommittee on Cities of the Third Class (Monessen and all the other cities not listed above)

The committee generally handles bills amending these statutes:

- Housing Authorities Law
- Urban Redevelopment Law
- Housing Finance Agency Law
- Neighborhood Assistance Act
- Landlord and Tenant Act
- Manufactured Home Community Rights Act
- Real Estate Cooperative Act
- Uniform Condominium Act
- Uniformed Planned Community Act

The committee has been designated by the Speaker of the House as the standing committee for regulatory review of the Philadelphia Parking Authority for the 2013-14 legislative session.



Bills allowing Scranton employees to purchase military time toward retirement reported out of Urban Affairs Committee, passed by House of Representatives

In June, the House unanimously passed two bills – H.B.s 128 and 131 – that would allow firefighters, police officers and non-uniformed employees of the city of Scranton to immediately purchase military time toward retirement.

The bills would remove the existing three-year time limit after discharge to buy back their military service time for retirement purposes. They also would put Scranton employees on the same footing as employees in other municipalities when it comes to purchasing service time, as no other state or municipal pension law requires such time limits.

These bills – sponsored by state Rep. Kevin Haggerty, D-Lackawanna – moved through the Urban Affairs Committee on their way to passage by the full House and are now awaiting consideration by the Senate Finance Committee.

Delinquent property tax bill advances

A measure that would boost efforts to collect delinquent property taxes was approved by the House Urban Affairs Committee this spring.

As the Democratic Chairman of the Urban Affairs Committee, I feel strongly that the bill will provide a much-needed mechanism for counties, municipalities and school districts to go after property tax scofflaws. It would permit them to transfer real estate tax liability to properties owned by the same person in other taxing jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth, without having to take the additional step of seeking a civil action in court.

Under the legislation, for example, someone who has a delinquent tax bill on a property owned in Monessen could see that liability transferred via a lien to property he or she owns elsewhere in Pennsylvania.

As a former local government official, I saw far too many cases where property owners have a cavalier attitude toward paying real estate taxes, particularly if they are out-of-town owners and the property is not their primary residence. This bill would provide a powerful incentive for property owners to pay all their taxes on time, and for them to get caught up if they are in arrears.

Furthermore, since the vast majority of property owners pay their taxes in timely fashion, it makes sense to give taxing bodies help in the quest to compel payment of delinquent taxes from those who willfully flaunt their taxing obligations.

H.B. 388 would provide a tool, by letting them place a lien in the amount due on a tax-delinquent property onto another property – or onto all other properties – owned by that person by which the taxing body could compel payment of tax obligations. I am hopeful that the full House will be able to vote on this sensible and fair-minded legislation, which would be applicable in all taxing jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth, during the fall legislative session.

H.B. 388 would provide a simple and inexpensive way for taxing bodies to seek what they are owed, without having to undertake the expense of a lawsuit that, depending on the dollar amount of delinquent taxes, could be cost-prohibitive.

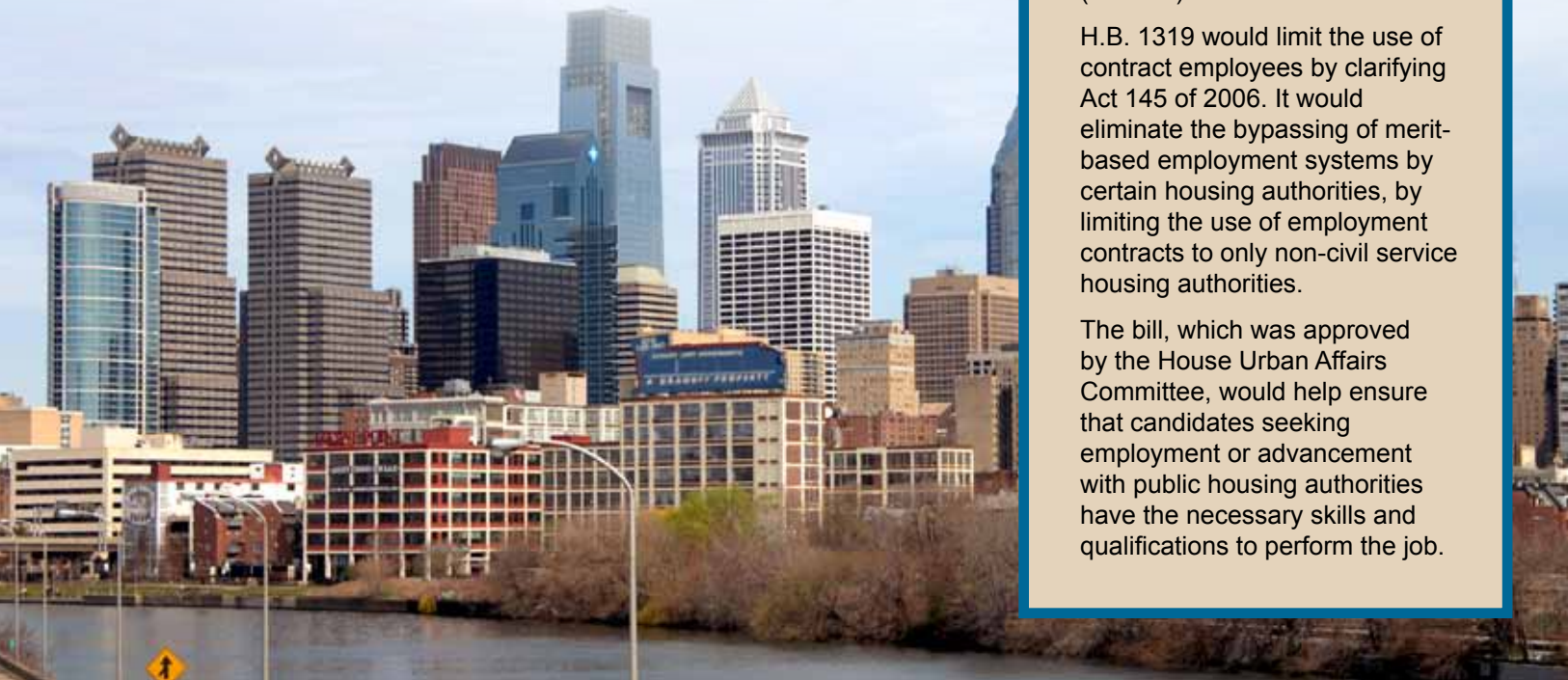


Bill to limit housing authorities' use of employment contracts unanimously passes House

In June, the House amended existing law to limit the ability of housing authorities to skirt the civil service system when hiring new employees, a move supported by the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities (PAHRA).

H.B. 1319 would limit the use of contract employees by clarifying Act 145 of 2006. It would eliminate the bypassing of merit-based employment systems by certain housing authorities, by limiting the use of employment contracts to only non-civil service housing authorities.

The bill, which was approved by the House Urban Affairs Committee, would help ensure that candidates seeking employment or advancement with public housing authorities have the necessary skills and qualifications to perform the job.



Urban Affairs Committee

Democratic Members 2013-2014



Ted Harhai
Democratic Chairman

Harhai (D-Fayette and Westmoreland) graduated from Monessen High School in 1973 and earned a degree from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1977.

By profession, Harhai is an investment banker and previously worked in New York City (Wall Street) and Chicago. Prior to becoming state representative, he held

public offices in the city of Monessen as councilman in 1996 and 1997 and as mayor from 1998 until 2002.



James Clay, Jr.
Democratic Secretary

Clay (D-Philadelphia) was born and raised in the 179th Legislative District's Frankford neighborhood where he still lives. He was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on Nov. 6, 2012.

Clay is a former employee of the Philadelphia Parking Authority and the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. He served

his neighborhood politically as an auxiliary committeeperson in the 23rd Democratic Executive Committee from 1998 to 2008.



Michelle Brownlee
Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Cities, Counties – First Class

Brownlee (D-Philadelphia) represents the 195th Legislative District and has extensive legislative experience, having worked in the constituent service office of former state Rep. Frank Oliver for 35 years.

Brownlee is a past member of the board of directors of the historic Berean Institute,

and she is also a graduate of the Berean Institute paralegal program. She is also past president of the Philadelphia School District Head Start Policy Council, is a member of the Celestial Work Ministries and serves as a licensed missionary.



Daniel J. Deasy
Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Cities, Counties – Second Class

Deasy (D-Allegheny) was first elected to the state House of Representatives in 2008. He attended Canevin Catholic High School and the University of Pittsburgh, worked as a supervisor at Pittsburgh's Public Works Department, and served for four years as a Pittsburgh city councilman. He currently

serves as chairman of the board of the Pittsburgh Water & Sewage Authority.

Deasy has a long history of community service, working to address housing concerns; securing funding for playgrounds and other community resources; and obtaining grant money for neighborhood revitalization.



Patty Kim
Subcommittee Democratic Chair on Cities – Third Class

Kim (D-Dauphin), a former news anchor and reporter and Harrisburg city councilwoman, was elected to her first term in the state House of Representatives in November 2012. Believing government should be transparent, responsive and frugal, Kim earned wide support to secure

the seat serving the residents of the city of Harrisburg, Steelton, Highspire and part of Swatara Township.

Prior to her work in the legislature, Kim was elected to Harrisburg's City Council where she served two terms. Throughout her terms she served as the chairwoman of Public Safety, Public Works and the Community and Economic Development committees. Kim also was elected as council vice president by her colleagues during her second term.



Kevin J. Boyle

Boyle (D-Philadelphia) has been a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives since 2010. He graduated from Cardinal Dougherty High School in 1998 and from LaSalle University in 2002.

While at Harvard University where he earned his master's degree in education policy, Boyle researched urban education issues, school funding streams and

strategies to expand access to higher education. Boyle worked as an advocate for the Alliance for Children and Families, the nation's second-largest association for family service organizations in Washington, D.C. He also served as Philadelphia Councilman Bill Greenlee's legislative director for three years and helped write some of the city's most impactful new laws.



Maria P. Donatucci

Donatucci (D-Philadelphia) graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls. She earned credits at various institutions of higher learning, including the Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia Community College, Pierce Junior College and Temple University. She succeeded her late husband by securing the legislative seat for the 185th Legislative District with the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in a special election held in 2011.

Donatucci has strong experience within government, having worked for various departments of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as an adjudicator and supervisor with the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication.



Ed Gainey

Gainey (D-Allegheny) received a bachelor's degree in business management from Morgan State University in 1994. He played varsity basketball and graduated from Peabody High School in 1988.

Gainey most recently worked as the community development specialist for the city of Pittsburgh, where he implemented several initiatives. He is a board member for Divine Intervention Ministries and PROMISE organizations.



Ed Neilson

Neilson (D-Philadelphia) was elected state representative for the 169th Legislative District in a special election in 2012. A graduate of Abraham Lincoln High School, he is a well-known civic leader in his native Northeast Philadelphia.

Neilson is a lifelong member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 98 and formerly served as deputy secretary of labor under the Rendell administration, where he managed a staff of 6,000 employees. Most recently, he served as director of Government Affairs and Business Development for Chartwell Law Offices in Philadelphia.



Kevin J. Schreiber

Schreiber (D-York) was elected to state representative for the 95th Legislative District in a May 2013 special election. He earned his bachelor's degree in public relations from York College and his master's degree in public administration from Penn State University.

Schreiber worked for the city of York for seven years before being elected state representative. He served as Community and Economic Development director, overseeing an annual budget of over \$6 million and managing more than 30 employees. He assisted in more than \$150 million in economic and community development advances.



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Urban Affairs Committee to take up Deasy bill on cultural development districts

This fall, a bill to create a state Cultural Development District Program as a means of creating jobs, reducing blights and revitalizing distressed communities is expected to be taken up by the House Urban Affairs Committee.



H.B. 1497 – introduced by state Rep. Daniel J. Deasy, D-Allegheny, a member of the committee – would enable municipalities to establish “cultural development districts” around such anchors as major art institutions, community arts centers, entertainment businesses, museums, markets, theaters and similar entities.

Businesses and residents within such districts would be exempt from state taxes for five years; they then would pay a portion of taxes for the next four years until they are fully reinstated.

The tax credit provided by this bill would be a catalyst for new businesses and housing, resulting in increased occupancy, commerce and jobs. It would also create a stronger sense of community identity.



State Rep. Ted Harhai, Democratic chairman of the House Urban Affairs Committee, asks a question during committee's deliberations on H.B. 1363.

Abandoned and blighted properties addressed by House bill

In June, the House approved H.B. 1363, an amendment of the Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act that seeks to make it easier and faster for private investors and nonprofit corporations to remediate blight in their communities.

H.B. 1363 would decrease the time for court action on a petition from within 120 days of receipt to 60 days, and also would require an owner to post a bond for the estimated repair costs to prevent stalling.

The bill would require an owner to confirm that the property has been actively marketed, to confirm any sale price reductions, and to provide an affidavit of the people to which the property was shown.

It also would change the definition of “party in interest” (one who can file for conservatorship) from a resident or business within 500 feet of the blighted building to 2,000 feet. In addition, it would increase from 1 mile

to 5 miles the radius in which the proposed conservator must have done work from the subject property.

