



# State Representative

# Adam Ravenstahl

## 20th Legislative District



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## I support the Pennsylvania Education Reinvestment Act

I am supporting Gov. Tom Wolf's proposal to enact a severance tax on natural gas extraction to help properly fund public education in Pennsylvania.

It's a necessary step to help schools recover from the \$1 billion in funding cuts made by former Gov. Tom Corbett and Republican leadership in the state House and Senate. Those cuts forced schools to increase class sizes, lay off teachers and other staff, and make program cuts.

The Pennsylvania Education Reinvestment Act would enact a reasonable 5-percent severance tax plus 4.7 cents per thousand feet of volume on extraction, which is expected to generate hundreds of millions of dollars every year. It is modeled after West Virginia's severance tax.

Pennsylvania sits on one of the largest deposits of natural gas in the world, and it is only right that companies profiting from our natural resources contribute toward the future of the commonwealth.

The governor's proposal would continue payments made to impacted communities. It would also contain provisions to protect property owners who lease land for natural gas exploration.



I enjoyed reading to the third-grade students at Avalon Elementary.

## I oppose legislation that could cause higher property taxes, less services

Last year, county and local governments and school districts in Allegheny County had to forgo nearly \$620 million in property taxes to big hospitals and other organizations deemed purely public charities.

Now there's a move afoot that could further reduce the amount of tax money to fund schools and essential public services, such as police and firefighters.

Senate Bill 4 would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution and make the legislature the judge and jury in determining which charities deserve tax exemptions.

Currently, our constitution permits the legislature to exempt "institutions of purely public charity" from tax. However, the constitution left it to the courts to define a public charity.

It's a balance of power that, while not perfect, has served Pennsylvania well.

I'm concerned that giving the legislature sole authority to decide which charities are tax-exempt would increase the influence of special interest money from mega-nonprofits.

In turn, that would lead to more of them being tax-exempt.

That would reduce the tax base, particularly in urban areas, and result in higher overall property taxes, reduced services, or both. After all, every time an organization is declared tax exempt, someone else has to pay more or cuts have to be made.

Because S.B. 4 would amend the constitution, it has to pass the Senate and House in two consecutive legislative sessions before going to the voters in a referendum.

The Senate already voted in favor of the bill twice – last year and again on Feb. 18 – with little public input. The House approved the bill last year. If and when it comes before the House again, I will vote no.

After all, there are so-called charities that pay some of their employees more than \$1 million per year. Certainly, they can help contribute financially to the communities in which they operate.



## House passes legislation to criminalize possession of animal-fighting equipment

I joined my colleagues in the state House to unanimously pass legislation that would make it a crime to possess equipment used in animal fighting.

Pennsylvania prohibits animal fighting, so it makes sense to extend our laws to ban equipment used in this barbaric activity.

The legislation would help hold offenders accountable in

cases where law enforcement is not able to arrive while an animal fight is occurring, but later find equipment used in such matches.

Under H.B. 164, possessing animal-fighting paraphernalia would be a third-degree misdemeanor, carrying a maximum penalty of a year in prison and a fine of \$2,500.

The bill is now before the state Senate.



I met with John Thornton of Astrobotic at the company's facility in the Strip District.

## Supporting the 'Work Experience for High School Students with Disabilities Act'

I am proud to support H.B. 400, the "Work Experience for High School Students with Disabilities Act." The bill would help kids with disabilities get the support they need to land jobs after graduation.

These students can successfully enter the job market, but they must receive job readiness skill training and supported work experience while in school.

H.B. 400 would designate the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in the Department of Labor and Industry as the lead agency responsible for developing connections between local education agencies and employers to promote the successful transition from school to gainful employment.

I voted for the bill when it was voted out of the House Labor and Industry Committee in late February. The bill is now in a position to be considered by the full House of Representatives.

## Tough action needed to fight cyberbullies

Bullies have always been around, using words, threats and occasional violence to harass others.

Now that almost everyone has a portable electronic device, such as a smart phone or a notebook computer, bullies have another avenue for harassment. They can use social media platforms to harass young people 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

I believe the law has to change with the times. That's why I recently voted for H.B. 229, which passed the House and would create the crime of cyber harassment of a child.

Repeatedly commenting on a child's sexual orientation, sexual activity, mental health or physical

characteristics would also be treated as a crime if it was intended to cause "substantial emotional distress ... and produces some physical manifestation of the distress."

The crime would be graded as a third-degree misdemeanor for adults, carrying a maximum penalty of a year in prison. Children charged under this legislation would be referred to juvenile court.

We need to have a deterrent in place and the means to punish offenders, because cyberbullying can have terrible consequences.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, kids who are bullied are more likely to experience depression and anxiety;

loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy; health complaints; and, most importantly, decreased academic achievement and school participation.

In addition, a small number of bullied children might retaliate through extremely violent measures. In 12 of 15 school shooting cases in the 1990s, the shooters had a history of being bullied.





## Good news on Medicaid expansion

I congratulate Gov. Tom Wolf for changing course from the prior administration and implementing traditional Medicaid expansion.

Expanding Medicaid will help roughly 500,000 of our fellow Pennsylvanians obtain health care – including 23,000 veterans and 10,000 of their family members – while creating an estimated 40,000 jobs in our state.

Plus, the federal government is providing 100 percent of the funding for the first three years, and 90 percent of the funding after that.

By scrapping the confusing HealthyPA plan and opting for Medicaid expansion, Gov. Wolf is putting Pennsylvanians first and saying yes to \$40 billion that will come into the state over the next 10 years under the federal Affordable Care Act.

That money will create a lot of jobs, generate a lot of tax income and help a lot of people get or stay healthy.

## Raising awareness about poisonings



I presented Dr. Michael Lynch, medical director of the Pittsburgh Poison Center, with my Poison Prevention Week proclamation.

Did you know that more than 2 million poisonings are reported each year to the 55 poison control centers across the country, including one in Pittsburgh?

Each year, the Pittsburgh Poison Control Center responds to more than 150,000 requests for poison information from the general public and medical professionals, and regularly conducts community education and outreach programs in western Pennsylvania.

To raise awareness about poisonings and the Pittsburgh Poison Control Center's life-saving work, the House adopted my resolution that designated March 15-21 as "Poison Prevention Week."

"Poison Prevention Week" helps inform the public on steps they can take to prevent accidental poisonings and what to do if a poisoning occurs. More than 90 percent of these poisonings occur in the home. The majority of non-fatal poisonings occur in children younger than 6, while poisonings remain one of the leading causes of death among adults.

Some steps you can take to avoid accidental poisoning include safely storing poisonous substances, using poisonous substances as directed, ensuring that children are taught to ask before using a poisonous substance and keeping the poison control center toll-free telephone number of 1-800-222-1222 in an easily accessible location.



I visited with the Most Holy Name Athletic Association on hockey opening night.



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## Inside:

- Drilling tax can help our schools
- Standing up to cyberbullies
- Medicaid expansion will help Pa.

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### My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints



**I joined Ross Township Commissioner David Mikec at the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners Legislative Reception in Harrisburg.**

## My committee assignments for the 2015-16 legislative session

At the beginning of each session, legislators apply for appointments to standing committees. These committees are important to the legislative process. The committee system allows legislators to assess and amend legislation, and evaluate important issues, before sending bills to the full House for a vote.

This session, I am honored to have been appointed to the following standing committees: Aging and Older Adult Services, Children and Youth, Labor and Industry, Liquor Control, and Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness.

## All Pa. schools should have CO detectors

Earlier this year, hundreds of students and faculty were inside a Colorado school when carbon monoxide – an odorless and deadly gas – seeped into the building because of a malfunctioning furnace.

Fortunately, everyone inside the school safely escaped.

I do not want to see an incident like this claim a life at a Pennsylvania school. That's why I have introduced legislation that would require all Pennsylvania schools that have heating systems or appliances powered by fossil fuels to install carbon monoxide detectors.

Incidents such as the one in Colorado are preventable with a CO detector. However, only a handful of states, such as Connecticut and Maryland, require CO detectors in their schools. I believe it's time for Pennsylvania to enact legislation to require these detectors in all schools – public and private.

I am hopeful my colleagues will agree.