



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**Daniel McNeill**

133RD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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## NATURAL GAS TAX WILL BENEFIT STATE'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Pennsylvania sits on top of one of the largest natural gas pockets in the country, called the Marcellus Shale Fairway, and the commonwealth's abundance of natural gas has made Pennsylvania a leader in natural gas production, responsible for 10 percent of the nation's output.

The gas is extracted by a drilling method called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which uses a large amount of water blasted into the rock formation to extract the gas. Natural gas extraction has brought hundreds of jobs to Pennsylvania, and companies drilling for gas pay a small "impact fee" on every well drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale formation.

However, Pennsylvania is the only major gas-producing state that does not impose a severance tax. Most states have a severance tax between 4 and 7 percent, with our neighbor to the south, West Virginia, incorporating a 5 percent severance tax. This severance tax can put money back into our public education system, which has seen devastating cuts statewide over the last several years. Money captured from the severance tax will not solve all the problems with funding our schools, but will go a long way to making up the difference.

Gov. Tom Wolf wants to enact a severance tax modeled on West Virginia's, with a tax on both volume and sales. Gas companies would pay a 5 percent tax on the value

of the gas, plus 4.7 cents for every thousand cubic feet. The governor says it could generate a billion dollars in its first year, which he'd use to boost the funding for public education.

A reasonable tax, like the one proposed by the governor, provides a significant source of new revenues for education while giving every Pennsylvania resident a stake in the health and success of this important industry.

A severance tax to help fund schools would finally take some of the pressure off Pennsylvania homeowners, who have seen their property taxes rise significantly in recent years because of state-level school funding cuts.

A quality education system is important to the natural gas industry, just as it's important for all Pennsylvanians. Making the industry a partner in funding our schools ensures they will have the highly educated and well-trained workers they need in Pennsylvania.

We can grow jobs and preserve the benefits the natural gas industry is already providing to many counties and municipalities across Pennsylvania, while also boosting revenue for our schools and other needs. The governor's reasonable and responsible severance tax proposal is a great first step in the effort to do that, and one I fully support.

## Spring 2015 SENIOR FAIR TO BE BIGGER AND BETTER

I will be hosting my annual Senior Fair at Westgate Mall, 2285 Schoenersville Road, Bethlehem on Friday, April 17, from 9 a.m. to noon. This year's event will be co-hosted with state Sen. Lisa Boscola, and it will be bigger and better than ever. The Westgate Mall offers more room, plenty of free parking and easy accessibility from Route 22. The mall is also accessible via the LANTA bus 105 route.

There are over 80 vendors scheduled to participate with free screenings (blood pressure, stroke, vision, etc.). In addition, we will have free refreshments and door prizes. Last year's event drew over 500 seniors, so get there early before the coffee and doughnuts are gone!

*Annual*  
*Spring*  
**Senior Fair**  
Co-sponsored by



State Rep.  
**Daniel McNeill**  
133rd Legislative District



State Sen.  
**Lisa Boscola**  
18th Senate District

*Friday, April 17, 2015*  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Westgate Mall  
2285 Schoenersville Road  
Bethlehem, PA 18017

# MEDICAID EXPANSION GOOD FOR PENNSYLVANIA

As you may know, Gov. Tom Wolf announced his intention to expand Medicaid under the federal Affordable Care Act. This move represents a commitment to the health and well-being of hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, who will now be able to acquire health care coverage.

The full expansion is a win-win for Pennsylvanians. Expansion will create between 35,000 and 40,000 jobs, cover hundreds of thousands of uninsured Pennsylvanians and open the flow of federal money into our state. This infusion will greatly benefit the current budget shortfall we're experiencing due to a lack of vision from the previous administration. Most importantly, this will lead to a more vibrant Pennsylvania with healthier citizens, and I commend the governor for doing the right thing.

At the time of his announcement, Wolf provided a few frequently asked questions about the Medicaid expansion changeover, which I have included below. As always, contact my office if you have questions about this or any state-related program.

## **Who qualifies for coverage under Medicaid expansion?**

In addition to individuals who qualified previously, Pennsylvanians 19 to 64 with incomes up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) may be eligible for coverage under Medicaid expansion.

## **How does Medicaid expansion differ from Healthy PA?**

Medicaid expansion will allow for eligible adults to be placed into one streamlined adult package. This will increase continuity of care and reduce unnecessary processes to make individuals eligible for uncomplicated health care coverage faster.

## **What does this mean for individuals who are in the Private Coverage Option?**

The department is currently working on a plan to transition individuals into one streamlined adult package without interrupting their coverage and services.

## **What will happen to the Healthy and Healthy Plus benefit packages?**

The department is currently working with the federal government to develop one benefit package for adults. Once



that has been finalized, adults in Healthy and Healthy Plus will be transitioned to the new adult package.

## **What kind of coverage will be provided?**

Medicaid coverage meets national standards for coverage. This includes primary care doctors, preventative care, prescriptions and behavioral health parity.

## **Who will pay for the expansion?**

Federal funds will cover 100 percent of the cost of Medicaid expansion from 2014 to 2016, 95 percent in 2017, 94 percent in 2018, 93 percent in 2019 and 90 percent in 2020 and subsequent years.

## **What do I need to do if I am already covered under Healthy PA?**

If you are already covered, your coverage is unaffected and you do not have to do anything at this time. As Pennsylvania transitions to the new comprehensive adult package, the Department of Human Services will notify you of any changes before the changes take effect.

## **What do I do if I want to apply for health insurance?**

If you do not have health care coverage, you can apply online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).



*In March, I was happy to welcome a new small business to our area by participating in the ribbon cutting for Frites Fries, which opened in Lehigh Valley Mall.*





*I was glad to meet Miss Pennsylvania Sable Butler, a Catasauqua resident, when she stopped by my office in February.*

## LIQUOR-PRIVATIZATION BILL WOULD LEAD TO JOB LOSSES, MORE UNDERAGE DRINKING

I voted against a liquor-privatization bill in March because it would result in the loss of thousands of family-sustaining jobs for Pennsylvania workers.

The proposal favors the interests of giant retailers and corporate interests over those of small businesses and tax-paying citizens and will result in the loss of 4,000 jobs at state wine and spirits shops while putting small, family-owned beer distributors out of business.

The bill would triple the number of wine and spirits stores, and more than quadruple the number of wine retailers, which would result in more children having increased access to alcohol. We cannot create a new system that makes it easier for children to obtain alcohol.

The estimated revenue from selling the state's 619 liquor stores could be as low as \$425 million.

This bill is a disservice to Pennsylvania. We'll have serious consequences if we expand access to alcohol, which has led Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the state DUI Association, fraternal and veterans' organizations, and others to oppose this plan.

## RAISING THE WAGE HELPS LIFT PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY

Throughout my term in the House, I have been standing up for workers across the state by calling for an immediate raise to the state minimum wage. I intend to continue that effort in this new legislative session until every worker in Pennsylvania can count on a livable, family-sustaining wage in exchange for a fair day's work.

Democratic state Representative Patty Kim has reintroduced her legislation to increase the state's minimum wage, which would help struggling families pay their bills and reduce their reliance on government assistance programs. H.B. 250 would increase the minimum wage from the current \$7.25 per hour to \$9 per hour and then to \$10.10 per hour a year later.

H.B. 250 also includes an annual cost-of-living adjustment that is the same rate that all state lawmakers receive annually, so the minimum wage will increase to keep up with inflation.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 14 percent of Pennsylvanians are living in poverty. Increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour would boost the earnings of a full-time worker by more than \$5,900 to \$21,008. For a single mother with two children who works 40 hours per week, this would get her family above the poverty line, which is \$19,790 for a household of three.

This isn't an issue about a willingness to work; this is about fair compensation and a chance at a better life. Trying to survive on the current minimum wage is nearly impossible for many in the Lehigh Valley and across the state. When their income can barely cover the bills, one cannot afford a car payment, home ownership, or the cost of higher education for their children.

If the minimum wage had simply kept up with the pace of inflation since the 1960s, it would be well over \$10 per hour today. Instead, every year an increase is delayed, it is essentially a pay cut for the minimum wage worker. For instance, in 1963 an hour of work at the minimum wage bought more than seven loaves of bread. Today it buys less than half of that amount.

Many argue that raising the minimum wage would harm our small businesses, but that simply is not true. Employees who get paid more are bound to spend more, which in turn helps to expand local economies and grow our communities.

Raising the minimum wage also has broad support throughout the commonwealth and across the country. Studies have shown that more than three out of four Americans support a raise in the minimum wage. In addition, 29 states plus Washington, D.C., have adopted a minimum wage increase. Pennsylvania is now in the minority of states that have yet to do so.

I am a proud co-sponsor of Rep. Kim's H.B. 250, and Gov. Tom Wolf has already expressed his support for this bill, including a minimum wage increase in his budget address. This must become law this current session, and the Democratic Caucus has made raising the minimum wage a top priority.



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## INSIDE:

- Senior Fair April 17
- Medicaid expansion coming
- Natural gas tax can fund education

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## MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Issues with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Issues with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies

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## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Lehigh County Government Center.....	610-782-3000	Community Hope (help for homeless veterans).....	1-855-483-8466
Northampton County Government Center.....	610-559-3000	Northampton County Department of Veterans Affairs.....	610-559-3199
PA Department of Revenue (Bethlehem Office).....	610-861-2000	CareerLink.....	610-437-5627
Internal Revenue Service (Bethlehem Office) ..	610-865-8208	American Red Cross .....	610-865-4400
AARP – Allentown .....	610-434-2701	Social Security office (Allentown).....	1-877-405-6746
Crime Victims Council of Lehigh Valley .....	610-437-6611	Social Security office (Bethlehem).....	1-866-783-7458
Turning Point Lehigh Valley Helpline.....	610-437-3369	LIHEAP (Lehigh County) .....	610-821-6509
CACLV – Community Action Committee Lehigh Valley.....	610-691-5620	LIHEAP (Northampton County) .....	610-250-1700
Lehigh County Department of Aging.....	610-782-3034	U.S. Rep. Charles Dent.....	610-770-3490
Northampton County Department of Aging.....	610-559-3245	State Sen. Lisa Boscola .....	610-868-8667
Lehigh County Veterans Affairs Office.....	610-782-3295	State Sen. Patrick Browne .....	610-821-8468