



State Representative Dan Miller

Serving the 42nd District

Summer/Fall 2015

Here To Serve You

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Committee Assignments:

- Judiciary, *Secretary*
- Education, *Co-Chair*,
Subcommittee on Special Education
- Children & Youth
- Human Services
- Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness

Caucus Memberships:

- At Risk Children & Families
- Disability Caucus, *Co-Chair*
- Early Childhood Education
- Firefighters & Emergency Services
- Government Reform
- LGBT Equality
- Steel



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LOOK INSIDE FOR: Government Reform Update ● Prioritizing Disability and Mental Health Issues ● Working for our Community ● Committee Updates ● Constituent Service 101 ● Upcoming Events

Prioritizing Disability and Mental Health Issues

Co-chairing the Disability Caucus

The new bipartisan Disability Caucus is up and running! As Co-chair of this initiative with Rep. Tom Murt (R-Montgomery), we have successfully merged two smaller caucuses into a reinvigorated force that brings legislators from both parties together in order to advance disability issues and budget priorities.

Currently the Disability Caucus is working on legislation that would allow for an autism designation on a driver's license and a bill to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities in relation to organ donation. We are also teaming up with related nonprofits in June for a disability rally in the Capitol. It is our hope that by working together we will increase independence and opportunity for all.



Our 2nd annual Children and Youth Disability and Mental Health Summit expanded to two days with more people, resources, and workshops than last year! Our 3rd Summit will be this coming March.

ABLE Act Update

Last session, I introduced HR 697 that urged Congress to pass Sen. Casey's ABLE Act bill – which allows for tax-free savings accounts to handle a variety of life needs for individuals with disabilities. Thankfully this bipartisan bill was signed by the president last year, and now each state must pass their own bill to authorize such accounts. In conjunction with several partners, I wrote and introduced HB 583 that would create these game-changing options for people.

Shortly thereafter I met with Speaker Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) and we are now working on a new draft with the Treasury Department and the House Finance Committee. I am optimistic we will soon have a new bill that will accomplish the ABLE Act goals and can go to the Governor's desk.

Pushing for a state plan for adults with autism

The number of adults with autism in Pennsylvania will more than triple by 2020 and time is running out to develop a real plan on how to prepare our state and county human services. This session I introduced HR 183 which would direct the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee to recommend a plan to address our upcoming home and community-based needs. This resolution was recently brought before the Human Services Committee where I am hopeful for its unanimous adoption.



Joining Autism Speaks to talk about support needs.

Fighting Mental Health & Addiction Stigma

This spring, I launched a series of informal roundtable discussions across our district called "Conversations that Matter." Each discussion focuses on one important topic with a panel of related experts and community members who analyze the problem and debate possible solutions. The inspiration for this series came from my current committee assignments in the House, and the many conversations I've had with constituents on these very difficult and complex topics. While some of these issues are admittedly broad in scope, I feel that they cannot be ignored given their impact on our community and state. I hope you'll join us for our fall series, which includes discussions on food regulations, women in the workplace, and childhood trauma.

Our addiction panel included Mt. Lebanon residents Police Chief Aaron Lauth and advocate Charlotte Stephenson.



Working for our Community

Mt. Lebanon

The poor condition of Castle Shannon Boulevard has been a long-standing problem and a growing concern for Mt. Lebanon's leadership and commuters from all over the area. The brick road, while offering charm and its own advantages, has fallen into major disrepair due to numerous storm water problems. Working with Sen. Smith, I was glad to assist in coordinating information and bringing PennDOT to the table. This led to a state commitment of approximately \$1.5 million to repave and repair drainage from Washington to Scott Road. While construction will create temporary inconveniences, I am very thankful that with the assistance of Sen. Smith, the state has reached an agreement with Mt. Lebanon to prioritize this project over the remainder of the year.

Baldwin Township

We have had several discussions with Baldwin's leadership regarding proposed improvements to Armstrong Park. We were also pleased to coordinate a meeting between Baldwin and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to discuss possible state grants to further their local goals. I have enjoyed keeping up to date with their goals through my many conversations with County Councilman Palmiere.

Brookline

I was very glad to participate – along with fellow Reps. Deasy and Readshaw – in an open house on the Boulevard hosted by Sen. Fontana. I have also met on several occasions with Mayor Peduto and his team, as well as with Councilwoman Rudiak, to better understand their goals and direction for the Brookline neighborhood and city as a whole. My office continues to receive updates from the SPDC and EDS regarding the many exciting projects in the business district and the watershed, and we look forward to continuing to support such efforts.

Castle Shannon

There is no doubt that Castle Shannon's leadership continues to think big regarding future development in town, and my office has been very glad to support their efforts. We have worked to ensure continued accessibility of funds for the Shannon Transit Village, and to gain DEP approval for the sewage infrastructure expansion necessary to advance that project. Additionally we have advocated for additional funds from the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for a Main Street Program study and a walking trail between the business district and Lebanon Shops.

Scott Township

While our share of Scott has greatly decreased due to redistricting, we continue to keep in contact with the elected leaders, administration, and public safety officials regarding Scott's goals. Scott recently received the Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence, which is quite an accomplishment, and I am very appreciative of Scott's continued support of our signature Disability and Mental Health event that occurs each March at Beth El Congregation.

Dormont

Recently we worked to bring together Dormont's leadership and PennDOT to review problems arising from the 2011-12 signalization project on West Liberty. This project, which had an admirable goal, resulted in a series of malfunctions and safety concerns that risked vehicles and pedestrians alike. Thankfully, a preliminary agreement has been reached and these issues should be largely rectified in coming months.

Meeting with Dormont residents at their street fair.



Celebrating Veterans Day with the Keystone Young Marines in Castle Shannon.



Kicking off the Brookline Little League season with Sen. Fontana and Councilwoman Rudiak.



Catching up with County Councilman Palmiere from Baldwin Twp.



Talking city issues with Lois and Nathan at our Brookline Open House.

Government Reform Caucus

In this new session I have continued my membership in the bipartisan Government Reform Caucus. This group meets regularly to consider ways to modernize and improve how our state government works. Currently the caucus has been working on initiatives that would follow Governor Wolf's lead and eliminate legislative gifts, as well as implement real redistricting reform. However, I also wanted to update you on some other reform-related bills.

Increasing Local Government Transparency

First let me say that all too often Harrisburg passes "good government" bills that do not apply to them. I have made that point several times in relation to passing on requirements to local governments. That being said, there has been a debate in the State Government Committee regarding agenda requirements in local government meetings.

Currently there is no legal requirement that a local government publish a regular meeting agenda and only fleeting references to the topics of executive session meetings. One bill offered by a colleague would go beyond agenda requirements and mandate the audio recording of all executive session meetings – regardless of whether or not they would otherwise be protected under an attorney-client privilege. Since only limited topics are allowed for non-public executive session meetings, I do appreciate the author's intent to ensure that nothing inappropriate is discussed out of the public arena. However, I believe that attorney-client privilege is a bedrock of constitutional privilege, and in my opinion it must be maintained.

That being the case, I have authored HB 1080 that I believe increases transparency and accountability but does not violate any constitutional right. This bill requires:

- A printed agenda made available to the public prior to an open meeting;
- Minutes of the previous open meeting be available upon their approval no later than the next open meeting;
- An executive session general topic agenda be posted and made available prior to the executive session that lists the specific reason provided in law that permits each item to be discussed in executive session;
- Any new executive session topic added after the creation of the general topic agenda must be publicly listed along with its specific reason and included in the open meeting minutes.

I believe that my proposal increases transparency while protecting the attorney-client privilege. Keep in mind that there is no law that mandates a local government ever go into executive session. The decision to do so remains entirely at their discretion.

Reducing the Size of the Legislature

This session, just like last session, I have supported efforts to reduce the size of both the House and the Senate. I voted for HB 384, which would reduce the Senate from 50 to 37 members, and HB 153, which would reduce the House from 203 to 151 members. While I continue to support these bills, I also admit that I am not sure what the ideal number for either body actually is. However, given the lack of confidence felt by many toward Harrisburg, I believe that we need to fundamentally change the current system. It is my hope that these bills would be the first of many to redefine the legislature in a bipartisan manner.

BUDGET

Update

I am writing this newsletter in early June – which means our budget negotiations have barely started. As I am sure you know, Governor Wolf was elected largely on a position of increasing education funding. However, due to an over-reliance on one-time revenue sources, he has inherited a structural deficit of between \$1.5 and \$2.3 billion. In order to fulfill his promises and deal with the deficit, Governor Wolf has proposed a series of tax increases as well as a major tax shift. According to his projections, this shift would eliminate property taxes for many seniors and drastically reduce them for most families. His budget also cuts the corporate tax in half, eliminates the stock and franchise tax, and institutes a severance tax on natural gas. None of these is a small issue. In order to accomplish any of his goals, Governor Wolf obviously needs legislative support, and the Republicans control both the House and Senate by large numbers. Thus, he cannot pass a budget without their support and they cannot override his veto. This has set the stage for what could be a grand compromise, where property tax relief, a severance tax, and other tax increases, along with more money for schools, would be balanced out with some type of pension reform and liquor modernization, as well as large cuts in corporate and business taxes. Obviously I cannot forecast the outcome, and I expect both sides will do their fair share of political jockeying before a deal is reached. But with divided government in Harrisburg I believe that the majority of people expect compromise in order to advance our state. It is entirely possible that we will achieve more compromises in the next few months than in the past several years.

Committee Updates

A new legislative session means some new committee assignments in the Capitol. Aside from remaining on the House Children and Youth Committee, all my other assignments are new.

Already this year we have worked on several important issues, such as:

Education: Truancy, bullying, revisions to school planning and construction, teacher certification

Children & Youth: Adoptee birth certificates, background clearances

Human Services: Disability Bill of Rights, transition services, children of incarcerated parents

Judiciary: Merit selection for appellate judges, predator sentencing and victim rights, medical cannabis

Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness: 911 call center funding formula, National Guard and veterans death benefits, reimbursement for ambulance companies

911 Call Center Funding Legislation

The wireless revolution has led to a drastic decrease in the number of landlines across our state. This has had the unintended consequence of negatively impacting how our 911 call centers are financially supported. The current plan was put in place in 1990, putting approximately a \$1 fee on phone lines. That \$1 would equate to a \$1.72 fee today. The shortage has caused counties across the state to cover the difference. For example, Allegheny County had to pay \$7.7 million to fund their center last year.

After much deliberation in the Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee, and working with industry representatives and the County Commissioners Association, HB 911 recently passed the House on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote. If this bill becomes law it will increase the line fee to \$1.65 – which is still below the inflationary index. It is essential that we have a modern 911 system and well-trained staff to make sure that first responders have the necessary information to save lives and property.

Senior Bus Trips



Constituent Service 101

Have you ever thought ...

... My utility bill looks wrong:

Tired of waiting on hold for a customer service representative or supervisor? Let us know about errors on utility bills or questions about utility company work and we can often look into them on your behalf. Please note that some companies do require you to sign a privacy waiver in order to discuss billing issues with us.

... I am sure I don't have any unclaimed property:

The Pennsylvania Treasury currently holds over \$2 billion in unclaimed property. Some of our constituents have discovered dividend checks that never got forwarded to a new address; final paychecks from a college job; an unknown bank account for a deceased spouse, parent, or grandparent; and even an uncashed manufacturer's rebate check. Visit www.patreasury.gov or stop in our office and we can check for you. We can also process the forms and notarize them for free!

... Where is my PA state tax refund or rent/property tax rebate?

Frustrated trying to call 800#'s and being on hold? Call us and we can track the progress of your state refund or rebate for you.

... I don't want to go downtown for a senior bus pass

We process requests in our office! All individuals 65 or older can get a pass for FREE bus and trolley rides! Just bring your state photo ID to our office and fill out a form that takes two minutes to complete – you will get a pass in the mail about 10 days later.

... Help! I need a:

Handicap placard – we can notarize the form (for free) and expedite the processing.

Replacement registration card, sticker, or title – we can provide and process the necessary forms.

Birth certificate – if you mail the form yourself, current processing time is 25 to 45 business days. If we process the form for you, the turn-around time is approximately two weeks!

Title transfer – no need to go to a messenger service, as our office has a licensed PennDOT card agent who can process this.

This spring, state Sen. Matt Smith and I held our second bus tour for constituents to visit us in Harrisburg and tour our magnificent Capitol. The next bus tour will be Monday, September 21st. Call the Mt. Lebanon Recreation Department at 412-343-3409 for more information!

Rep. Miller's Upcoming Events

Given the budget uncertainty and the lack of a fall session calendar, all information is tentative. Please check our Facebook page at RepDanMiller/events to keep up to date or call 412-343-3870!

August



Public Meeting with SHACOG Fire Chiefs

**Aug. 20
7 p.m.**

Castle Shannon Fire Hall

Castle Shannon Townhall

Aug. 26 • 7 p.m.

Castle Shannon Library



**Save the
dates!**

September

Dormont Townhall

**Sept. 8
8 p.m.**

Dormont Municipal Building

Brookline Townhall

TBD



Senior Bus Trip Sept. 21

Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center

Conversations That Matter:

Food Regulations

Sept. 17

Mt. Lebanon
Municipal Building

November



Conversations That Matter:

Childhood Trauma

TBD

Dormont

October

Conversations That Matter:

Women in the Workplace

TBD

Brookline

Parent Education

With the Mt. Lebanon PTA

Oct. 22



Senior Fair

TBD

Veterans Service Van

Nov. 11

10:30 a.m.

Castle Shannon
Vets Memorial



Also coming in March: our 3rd Annual Disability and Mental Health Summit