



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

D-Bucks

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Friends:

The year 2015 was frustrating in Harrisburg. As this newsletter was being prepared in early February, Pennsylvania was still without a complete budget package.

This is an embarrassing situation, as it is the legislature's most important job and one we know is essential.

This budget fiasco has been very frustrating because it seemed like elected officials in Harrisburg had reached an agreement that would have reduced our deficit while also restoring critical funding to our struggling school districts, thus taking a big step toward eliminating the unfair burden of using property taxes to pay for our public school systems.

Instead, a number of House Republicans withdrew their support for any compromise at all and left the budget unfinished.

I have been fighting to eliminate property taxes for years and that agreement, reached just before Thanksgiving, would have reduced property taxes and moved us toward their elimination.

We must eliminate property taxes. Any system that pays for public schools at the risk of a senior citizen – or any resident – losing their home because they can't pay must be replaced.

While the 2015-16 budget has not yet been finalized, we are now in a unique position of trying to finish last year's budget while the budget for the upcoming fiscal year has already been proposed by Gov. Tom Wolf. Unfortunately, I don't think the upcoming budget will be any easier than the one we are still working on.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

I currently have four bills which may come before the House later this year:

E-verify – I am currently working with state Rep. Marc Gergely from Western Pennsylvania to recruit other legislators as co-sponsors, as I will be reintroducing my previous bill that would require all construction workers in Pennsylvania to pass an E-Verify and Social Security number verification check before being hired. This would expand my previous E-Verify proposal that became law in 2012. It requires all contractors hired on any public project subject to prevailing wage laws to use the federal government's E-Verify checks for all employees.

Certified Recovery Residence Act – I am currently working with neighboring state Rep. Tina Davis to introduce legislation to create the State Board of Recovery Residences. This board would develop a voluntary certification program for residences housing addicts on the path to recovery. The residences would be peer-supported and alcohol- and drug-free.

If this program is established, licensed medical personnel would not be permitted to refer patients to non-certified residences.

This bill would ensure quality care for the residents, as well as proof that the residence is maintaining a standard of safety for the community.

H.B. 1074 (Monica's Bill) – would allow a state Personal Income Tax deduction for uncovered expenses incurred by a living organ donor during the organ donor process. At least 10 other states have laws that provide some tax incentive for living donors.

The bill was inspired by a family medical emergency that highlighted the need for the tax deduction. An organ donation recipient's insurance will pay the costs of the medical procedures required for the donor, but the other expenses are the responsibility of the donor.

I am calling this bill Monica's Bill, in honor of my cousin, who donated a kidney to my 3-year-old nephew. Monica was considered a good match for donating and she was happy to undergo the procedure. Her part in the donating process required two trips to California with hotel and other living expenses before and after the procedure, and one month of lost pay at her job. Her company may qualify for a tax deduction for allowing her the time off, but she receives no financial support for the prohibitive expenses she incurred. It is a major imbalance that a business can earn tax deductions for allowing an employee the time to make the donation, but the person who donates their organ gets no opportunity to recoup his or her expenses. Fixing this oversight may well encourage more living donations.

The bill would cap the deduction at \$10,000 per donation.

The bill has been sent to the House Finance Committee for further consideration.

H.B. 1076 – would stiffen drunk driving crimes for some accidents causing serious injury or death. Currently, there is a loophole that allows reduced charges if it cannot be proven that driving under the influence was the cause of an accident that kills or seriously injures someone, even if the driver was found to be intoxicated.

This is a huge loophole in our DUI rules. A local teenager, Zachary Gonzalez, was killed by an intoxicated driver while riding his bike in January 2014, but since the police could not prove the driver's intoxicated state caused the crash, he could not be charged with a homicide; only driving under the influence. This bill would close that loophole.

The bill has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee for further consideration.

Route 13 travel corridor construction is underway

Long-term solutions to the traffic problems on Route 13 and the needed upgrades to the Levittown SEPTA train station are both well underway. The short-term inconveniences will lead to safer roads and a more accessible train station. I wanted to let you know where these projects stand as of February 2016:

Route 13:

All major road work on the northern section of the highway, from Green Lane to Levittown Parkway, has been completed. Traffic is open in two lanes in both directions.

The middle section, from Green Lane to Bath Road, is currently under traffic restrictions, limiting drivers to the left lane only in each direction. Contractors are updating drainage systems, and the right lane and shoulder are being rebuilt. New curbs and sidewalks are also being installed where required. Once the righthand lanes, shoulders and sidewalks are completed, traffic will be moved to those lanes so the left lanes can be rebuilt.

The southern end of the project, from Bath Road to Route 413, has had new traffic patterns in place since late November. The contractors are installing a new drainage system in the median while rebuilding the left lane heading northbound and the right lane for those traveling southbound.

The project is still expected to be completed later this year. When it is finished, there will be two lanes of travel north and south with a wider median, as well as a pedestrian tunnel for safety and left-turn lanes to maintain traffic flow.

Levittown train station

The overhaul of the Levittown train station, which I pushed for years, is progressing at a steady pace. The upgrades are long overdue for this station, which was built in 1953 and allowed to deteriorate for years.

Among the planned improvements are: more parking, elevators, a pedestrian overpass and accessibility enhancements.

The station serves more than 1,250 riders a day, many of them commuting for work.

Phase 1 is currently underway and involves the intersection of Route 13 and Fallsington Avenue. The intersection is being reconfigured and storm pipes and manholes are being installed. Utility poles and overhead wires are also being relocated as part of this construction phase.

Phase 2 is also underway now. This part of the project is focusing on the inbound parking lot on the south side of the station. Utilities are being relocated and storm pipes and manholes are being installed in what will be the new parking lot. Pipes for the future rain gardens are also being installed during this phase.

If you have not been to the station recently, construction that affects the parking lots has been addressed with the addition of 80 parking spaces available at St. Michael the Archangel School.

SEPTA is still waiting for required building permits before construction on the building can begin.

When the \$35 million project is completed in 2018, there will be more than 100 additional parking spaces.

Annual Toys for the Y collection provides Christmas help to many

I was happy to use my office again in 2015 as a drop-off location for Toys for the Y, the annual Christmas toy drive for the Lower Bucks family YMCA, which collects toys, cash and gift cards to help local families have a joyful holiday season.

Your support was once again inspiring, as my office was filled with toys.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the friends and family of U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Robert Deis who have been big supporters in the past and this year. Deis is the son of Robert and Shellie Deis of Morrisville.

Even though he is stationed in California, many toys were donated in his honor.

A special thank you must also go out to the teams of Little League District 21. Their own drive added a huge number of gifts to the Toys for the Y collection drive.

All of the gifts dropped off at my office were given in the area to brighten the holidays for local children.

Each family helped by the YMCA also received gift cards enabling them to purchase a holiday dinner.



Persian Gulf Bonus Program extended through Aug. 31, 2018

I wanted to let you know legislation signed into law late last year has extended the application period for the Persian Gulf Veterans Benefit Program through Aug. 31, 2018.

Pennsylvania veterans who served in the Persian Gulf Conflict are eligible to receive a one-time bonus of \$75 per month of qualifying active service up to a maximum of \$525.

Surviving families of military personnel who died due to injury or illness obtained while serving in the operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm are also eligible to receive an additional \$5,000.

Service members who were declared POWs during those conflicts are also eligible for a \$5,000 award.

The bonuses are available to those who served in any branch of the Armed Forces, a licensed reserve group or the Pennsylvania National Guard and served in the Persian Gulf between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991. Applicants must have been legal Pennsylvania residents at the time of their service.

More information and instruction on how to apply can be found at www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov.

Do you qualify for Property Tax or Rent Rebate?

Each year, the state authorizes rebates for a percentage of property taxes or rent paid by qualified seniors and others.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is funded through Pennsylvania Lottery profits, and is meant to help reimburse low- and fixed-income homeowners for property taxes they paid in the previous year.

Also, some seniors may qualify for rent rebates.

Seniors 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older and permanently disabled adults may be eligible for the refunds, depending on their income level.

Homeowners may earn up to \$35,000 and renters may earn up to \$15,000 in the 2015 calendar year, and only half of the applicant's Social Security, Supplemental Security and federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 earnings will count toward the limit.

The maximum rebate is \$650, depending on the person's income and other qualifications.

I will host two forums in the upcoming months where you can work with my staff to complete the application. Check the back page for dates and times.

My staff is trained to help determine if you qualify, and to complete the forms if you are eligible.

You will need to bring your 2015 income statements and 2015 paid property tax receipts when you attend the forums.

If you want to complete the application on your own, the forms are available for download at www.revenue.pa.gov.



October Senior Expo served hundreds

On Oct. 15, I held my 9th Annual Senior Expo at Westaby Hall in Fairless Hills.

A number of free health and wellness opportunities were offered, including blood pressure and hearing screenings.

Representatives from a number of government and nonprofit agencies and local businesses attended.

Veterans were invited to apply for ID discount cards.

Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to sign up for their free SEPTA senior pass.

Door prizes, giveaways and light refreshments were available during the event.



Rep. Galloway presents a certificate of appreciation to students from the group M.O.S.T. (More Opportunities for Student Training) who assisted at his Senior Expo. Their helpful attitudes and bright smiles made the whole event more enjoyable for everyone!



Stay in the know

I want to alert you about Pennsylvania House rules that prohibit when I can contact you leading up to a state House election. Though you might already be receiving my email alerts, there will be a 60-day period preceding the upcoming April 2016 primary election when I will be prohibited from sending legislative emails to you unless you have "opted in" to continue receiving them.

Please visit my website, www.pahouse.com/Galloway, to sign up for email alerts on important information, including legislation being considered in Harrisburg. On my website, click on the "Contacts" tab at the top, then select "Sign Up For Emails" and fill in your information.

You can also keep up to date with me through my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RepGalloway and follow me on Twitter at @RepJohnGalloway.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming senior events:

My annual Property Tax/Rent Rebate forums will be held:

Friday, March 11

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Bristol Borough Area Active Adult
Center
301 Wood St.
Bristol

Friday, April 1

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Falls Township Senior Center
Trenton & Oxford Valley roads
Fairless Hills

Please bring your 2015 income statements and receipts for property taxes or rent paid in 2015.

SEPTA senior pass event

Tuesday, March 15

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Falls Township Senior Center
Trenton & Oxford Valley roads
Fairless Hills

Seniors aged 65 are entitled to ride SEPTA bus, trolley and subway service free of charge and may ride regional rail service for \$1 per trip with proof of age. The easiest way is to carry a SEPTA senior ID card that you may obtain free of charge at this event. You must bring proof of age and ID, such as a driver's license, birth certificate, passport or PACE card. You can learn more at www.septa.org.

Veterans Appreciation Dinner was a huge success

Thank you to all who attended my second Veteran's Appreciation Dinner Aug. 13 at Westaby Hall. My staff and I were proud to be able to salute 300 local veterans, from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and all others who bravely fought to protect our freedoms.

Special thanks to the Delaware Valley Vietnam Veterans for leading the opening procession and the Hotsy Totsy Girls for their musical entertainment.

The willingness of our veterans to put their lives at risk for all Americans has given us freedom, security and the greatest nation on Earth!

The date for my 2016 dinner will be announced this summer.



At the dinner, an empty, candle-lit table is reserved as a remembrance for those still listed as MIA or POW.