

Rep. Chris

# Sainato

Winter 2016



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## Background checks, clearances required for volunteers, more employees

A new state law requires all employees, adoptive/foster parents and adult volunteers who have direct and routine contact with children to obtain a state police criminal background check and a state Department of Human Services child abuse history clearance.

Previously, only school and child care employees and social workers had to obtain the checks and clearances. In addition, the law requires volunteers who have direct and routine contact with children and have lived in Pennsylvania for less than 10 continuous years to obtain a federal criminal background check that requires fingerprinting.

All new volunteers must submit their checks and clearances before beginning their service. Current volunteers have until July 1 to obtain their clearances. Volunteers who need the clearances include sports coaches and scout leaders. New employees must obtain their clearances before starting employment. In addition to those listed above, some examples of employees who need these clearances are doctors, nurses, dentists and lifeguards.

State police background checks and child abuse

history clearances are free for volunteers and are \$8 each for employees and other requestors. Volunteer clearances cannot be used for employment.

FBI checks cost \$25.75 through the Department of Human Services and \$27 through the Department of Education.

Background check clearances must be recertified every five years.

Child abuse history clearances are available online at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). State police criminal background checks are available online at <https://epatch.state.pa.us>.

This law and 22 others were enacted in 2014 in response to the Jerry Sandusky child abuse scandal at Penn State University. The legislature modified and clarified this law in late June.

Detailed information about the laws, including a detailed explanation of who needs clearances, is available at <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov>.



*I visited with members of the Union Township Fire Department during their annual Balloonquest.*



*I was proud to join those in our community who participated in the annual Shenango Community Education Foundation 5k Walk/Run.*

## PA budget impasse is unacceptable

As of this writing, Pennsylvania remains without a balanced and fiscally responsible state budget. In December, Gov. Tom Wolf approved a partial budget that the legislature sent to him. It allowed funding for social services, schools and counties. I supported the release of these funds so our senior citizen centers can remain open, nonprofit organizations can receive reimbursements for the services provided to vulnerable citizens, and schools stay open without borrowing additional funds.

However, the governor vetoed a portion of the spending bill because it was not a truly balanced budget. Without one, Pennsylvania could potentially face a \$2 billion gap by the next budget year. Wolf demanded the budget framework that legislative leaders from both parties had previously agreed upon, as it would put Pennsylvania back on track toward a stable and financially responsible foundation, while restoring some of the education and human services funding cuts made by the previous administration.

I did not support the spending bill that the legislature sent to Wolf because it was fiscally irresponsible. We must truly balance the budget and not create a looming fiscal crisis

in the billions of dollars. Also, we must not simply shift the burden to local governments by continuing large cuts. In too many cases, these cuts force schools and counties to raise property taxes, which are already causing hardship for many families. We must invest in early childhood education to help children achieve their full potential.

A bill to help Pennsylvania attain these goals received two preliminary positive votes in the House, but the speaker abruptly adjourned session before the final vote to send it to the governor. This is irresponsible. Since then, I have stood with my colleagues in calling for a final vote, and for the speaker to keep the House in session every day, weekends and holidays included, until a final budget was passed. Unfortunately, that did not happen. As lawmakers, it is our duty to stay in Harrisburg and work until we reach a responsible budget.

Moving forward, it is my hope that a final compromise budget will be reached soon. As your state legislator, I will continue to be your voice and call on the legislature to finish its job, and I will continue to ask that my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, make the necessary compromises to pass a balanced budget.

## Persian Gulf Bonus Program championed by Rep. Sainato is extended

Did you or do you know someone who served in the first Gulf War? Those who served then may qualify for a bonus from the state.

The deadline to apply was set to expire Aug. 31, 2015. Fortunately, H.B. 175, which I co-sponsored and Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law to become Act 50, extends the program through 2018.

The program pays \$75 per month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty, an additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for an additional \$5,000.

I co-sponsored and voted for this law back in 2006 because I believed it was important to recognize those military men and women who sacrificed for us. I want to make sure everyone who qualifies knows about this program and applies.

### TO QUALIFY, THE SERVICE MEMBER MUST HAVE:

- Served with the U.S. Armed Forces, a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Pennsylvania National Guard.
- Served on active duty in the Persian Gulf Theater of Operations between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991, and received the Southwest Asia Service Medal.
- Been a legal resident of Pennsylvania at the time of active-duty service.
- Been discharged from active duty under honorable conditions, if not currently on active duty.

For detailed instructions on how to apply, please visit [www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov](http://www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov).

Pennsylvania's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs also is asking veterans who might have previously been denied the bonus to reapply. New applications are required to reopen a claim.



*I stood with local veterans as we took part in Edison Manor's Salute to Service ceremony.*

## Local veterans assistance at my office

I have arranged to have a representative from the American Legion make regular visits to my local office at 20 S. Mercer St., Z-Penn Building, New Castle, to help veterans with their concerns and issues.

The service is available on a first-come basis from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the last Thursday of every month. Veterans

should bring their DD214 or other proof of service with them.

Information available as part of this service includes veteran housing benefits, financial assistance, employment benefits, veteran and dependent education benefits, and other state-sponsored veteran programs.



*It was an honor to participate in the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day March and Ceremony.*

## Children's Health Insurance Program extended

I voted in support of extending the state's health insurance program for children, CHIP, through the end of 2017. Gov. Tom Wolf signed the bill into law in December.

CHIP covers immunizations, wellness checkups, prescriptions, dental, vision and hearing services, diagnostic testing, emergency care, mental health benefits and hospitalization, as well as substance abuse rehabilitation and other services.

CHIP coverage is available to any child in Pennsylvania whose family earns too much to qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford to purchase private insurance or isn't covered by an employer.

For an average four-person family, CHIP is free if household income is between \$32,253 and \$50,440, low cost if household income is between \$50,440 and \$76,145, or full cost if the household income exceeds \$76,145. Premiums vary, depending on the carrier.

If your child doesn't have health insurance, or if you know of a child who isn't covered, you can find out more about CHIP, including providers in your area, and how to enroll at [www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com) or by contacting my office.



## Keep Your Family Warm this Winter

Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program is accepting applications for the winter heating season, which runs until April 1.

LIHEAP provides heating funds based on income and family size, as well as emergency grants for those in immediate danger of losing their heat.

### INCOME ELIGIBILITY IS AS FOLLOWS:

Household Size	Income Limit
1	\$17,655
2	\$23,895
3	\$30,135
4	\$36,375
<b>Each Additional Person Add</b>	<b>\$6,240</b>

Application information is available at <http://bit.ly/23Jb3hP>.

The commonwealth also offers a weatherization program for low-income households to reduce actual heating bills. Families that make less than 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline are eligible for this program. Check out the website at <http://bit.ly/MXUufz>.

## Sainato's 21-year record of perfect attendance continues

It's quite an honor to serve a region that has always recognized the importance of a day's work. With that comes a responsibility to represent the area in a manner that reflects our strong work ethic.

I hope my record of perfect attendance when the House is in session since I first took office in 1995 does that. I have always taken the responsibility of being an elected voice of the people of the 9th Legislative District seriously.

During my time in office, I have voted on tens of thousands of pieces of legislation on the issues that affect every person in Pennsylvania, ranging from state budgets to education programs to senior citizens' programs. During

the first 13 months of the 2015-16 legislative session, I have cast more than 925 votes.

I have also introduced many bills to help the people of Lawrence County.

I hope my accomplishments in Harrisburg — rising through the ranks to become Democratic chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee — shows that hard work results in success.

The job keeps me away from home for hundreds of days every year, but when I was sworn in, I took an oath of office and vowed to serve the people of my district with honor and respect.



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## Inside:

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## Online voter registration available in Pa.



Gov. Tom Wolf and Secretary of State Pedro Cortes launched a website in March to make it easier for you to register to vote.

By visiting [www.register.votespa.com](http://www.register.votespa.com), you also can

make updates to your voter record, such as change of name and address, and request assistance at a polling place.

This online system is more secure because the form goes directly to the proper Lawrence County voter registration office for processing, instead of your paperwork transferring through several hands before getting to the right person.



*Fun was had by all at the St. Vitus School Carnival.*

## Sign up for email updates

I want to alert you of House rules that prohibit when I can contact you leading up to an election. Unless you specifically opt in to continue receiving my emails, I'm prohibited from sending you legislative email updates for 60 days before the 2016 primary and general elections.

Opting in will allow you to continue to receive notices about important issues that matter to you, including:

- Updates on legislation
- News and events in the district
- Other relevant government-related information

You can sign up to receive my email alerts – and opt in to continue to receive them before elections – by visiting my website at [www.pahouse.com/Sainato](http://www.pahouse.com/Sainato), clicking “Contact” at the top of the main page, then “Sign Up for Emails” before filling out the form and leaving the box checked.

## My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Attorney General consumer complaint forms
- Concerns about state road conditions
- Matters concerning PennDOT
- Birth certificates or death records
- Disability plates and placards
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Complaints about insurance companies
- Help in finding unclaimed property through Department of Treasury
- Assistance in completing the Property Tax/Rent Rebate application

***Any problem with state government!***