

June 2014

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## Lawrence Downs Casino and Racing Resort update

I recently joined local elected officials, business and labor leaders along with several community organizations and residents to ask the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board to award the state's final casino license to the proposed Lawrence Downs Casino and Racing Resort.

At the May 8 hearing, which was held at the Mahoning Township Community Center, I urged the board to award the final Category I license to Endecka Entertainment, giving Lawrence County the opportunity to create jobs and bring economic development that has been missing since the steel industry collapsed 30 years ago. The casino will also benefit local schools, including Butler County Community College at Lawrence Crossing and New Castle School of Trades, which can be used to train potential employees.

Endecka plans to invest \$210 million to construct a 110,000-square-foot facility with 1,000 slot machines, 36 table games, dining and entertainment and a one-mile harness racing track. This project will create 1,000 construction jobs as the facility is built over the course of 15 to 18 months and includes the widening of Route 422. Once complete, the casino will bring 600 permanent jobs to Lawrence County.

Opponents of Lawrence Downs, including The Meadows,

Rivers Casino in Pittsburgh and Presque Isle Downs in Erie County, were present at the hearing, claiming that the region has been oversaturated with gaming facilities and are afraid that competition will reduce other casino revenue.

I strongly disagree with opponents' claims and noted during my testimony that competition is good for consumers and plans to build a casino in Lawrence County have existed for nearly 10 years. In addition, Lawrence Downs will most likely attract fans from as far as the Midwest, due to the creation of the one-mile harness racing track. The track will be the only one of its kind in Pennsylvania, making Lawrence Downs one of the country's top harness-racing facilities as soon as it opens. The complex will also complement Grove City's Prime Outlets, which draws people from as far away as Canada.

The next step will be for the gaming board to hold a "suitability" hearing in Harrisburg to discuss financing, ownership, projected audience and other viability issues. As plans move forward, I will continue to be a strong advocate for Lawrence Downs and the many economic benefits it will bring to Lawrence County and all of Pennsylvania.



*The Salvation Army helps to feed, comfort and care for those in need in our community. It was my pleasure to attend the Salvation Army's Back to School Bash.*

# PA Army National Guard receives new Bradleys

I had the distinct honor to join the Pennsylvania National Guard as it received 120 new Bradley Fighting Vehicles. This event kicked off the next stage in the modernization of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

These vehicles will greatly increase the combat abilities and readiness of Pennsylvania's 28th Infantry Division. Additionally, the 55th Armored Brigade Combat Team is beginning Armor Unit Set Fielding (AUSF), during which they'll receive more modern combat vehicles. The outcome of the AUSF will be a leap ahead in the capabilities of the 55th Brigade. Further, the 120 new Bradley Fighting Vehicles (M2A2 ODS-SA) will be used by the brigade to train with and utilize in fulfilling its mission.

The fielding of these vehicles to Pennsylvania soldiers impacts the commonwealth economically as well. The Bradley Fighting Vehicle is manufactured by BAE Systems at a facility in York. These are weapons systems, manufactured by skilled Pennsylvania workers, being delivered to Pennsylvania Guard members.



*I, along with Lt. Gov. James Cawley and Pennsylvania National Guard Adj. Gen. Wesley E. Craig, attend the Pennsylvania National Guard's dedication of new Bradley Fighting Vehicles.*

## New law increases Volunteer Loan and Assistance Program amounts

Thanks to Act 129 of 2013, which I supported, loan limits under the Volunteer Loan and Assistance Program (VLAP) doubled as of March 1. VLAP provides low-interest loans to volunteer fire companies, ambulance services and rescue squads for the purpose of purchasing and modernizing apparatus, facilities and equipment.

In order to help preserve funding for the program, the act requires a showing of need for any apparatus that is an additional piece and not replacing an existing apparatus, thus incentivizing local governments and fire companies

to strongly consider the absolute need for maintaining fire protection services in our communities.

The law also gives the Office of the State Fire Commissioner the discretionary authority to require other types of collateral for securing a loan so as to not jeopardize a fire company's ability to receive and use federal grant money to assist in the purchase of apparatus. Volunteer fire/EMS departments, who have merged into one entity, are limited to 10 loans at one time for a period of 10 years from their merger date.



*I met with volunteers from the Mahoning Township Fire Company during the Crisis Shelter's Walk Against Violence.*



*I was honored to be on the reviewing stand during the New Castle Veterans Day Parade.*

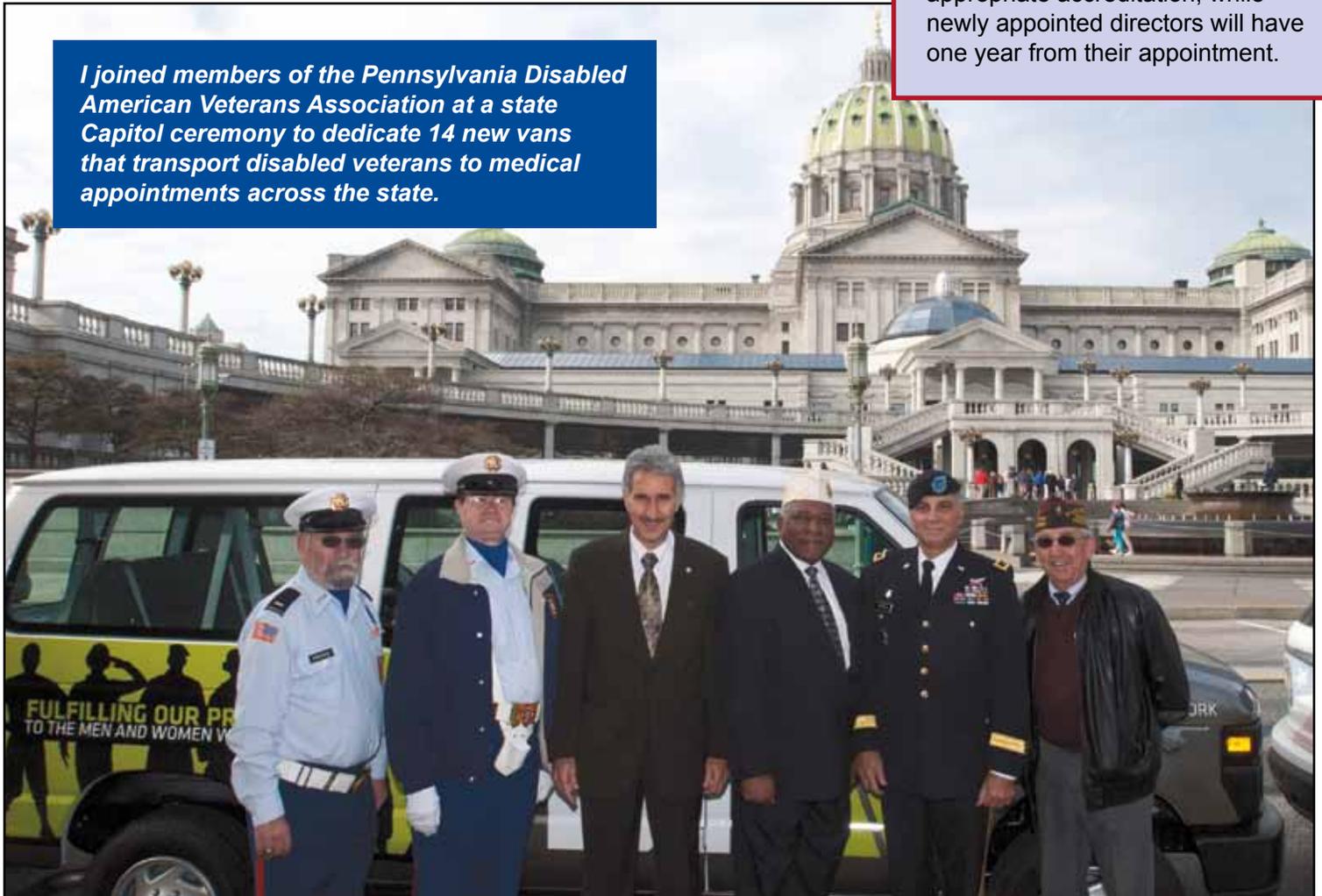
## House committee dedicates new vans for disabled American veterans

As Democratic chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I helped dedicate 14 new vans to be used by the Pennsylvania Disabled American Veterans (DAV) for its Transportation Network Program. Thanks to the DAV Transportation Network, thousands of veterans across the commonwealth receive the transportation services needed to access medical care across Pennsylvania.

The DAV volunteer group works to transport disabled veterans to and from VA medical facilities for treatment. There are chapters throughout the commonwealth, with volunteers who log thousands of miles, providing rides for veterans who cannot otherwise receive treatment for service-connected disabilities.

DAV volunteer drivers provided more than 73,000 rides for veterans during 2013.

*I joined members of the Pennsylvania Disabled American Veterans Association at a state Capitol ceremony to dedicate 14 new vans that transport disabled veterans to medical appointments across the state.*



## Strengthening county veterans' affairs offices

The director of veterans' affairs in each county is typically the first point of contact for current members of the military and veterans. However, the training and resources given to county veterans' affairs directors vary significantly from county to county.

A new law I supported brings a degree of standardization and uniformity to this important position by requiring county veterans' affairs directors to receive accreditation as a veteran service officer by a national or state accrediting body.

The act requires county veterans' affairs directors to obtain U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs accreditation from either the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs or one of several veterans' organizations who are members of the State Veterans' Commission under Title 51. This includes the VFW, AMVETS and the Military Order of the Purple Heart, to name a few.

Under this act, current county veterans' affairs directors will have one year from the date of the bill's enactment to receive the appropriate accreditation, while newly appointed directors will have one year from their appointment.



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## Veterans designation on licenses now available

Pennsylvania military veterans can now have their service noted on state driver's licenses, offering them a way to demonstrate their status if they don't have military ID handy.

Act 176 was passed in October 2012, enabling Pennsylvania's service men and women to have their veteran status included on their state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards. The designation on licenses and IDs became available in March.

Qualified applicants for a veterans designation include those who have received a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty for service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Eligible veterans include reservists and members of the National Guard, who were discharged or released from such service under conditions other

than dishonorable.

The veterans designation does not entitle a veteran to any special consideration or discount but identifies them as a veteran who honorably served their nation and the commonwealth. Any recognition such as a discount, free meal or other token of appreciation is solely determined by the organization, business or entity providing a service.

The veterans designation is available to eligible veterans at the next date of renewal of their license or ID card. If veterans

want the designation prior to their next renewal, they must pay the fee for a duplicate license.

Once the veterans designation has been added, it will automatically appear each time your license or ID is renewed.



*I helped celebrate Healthy Kids Day at the YMCA in New Castle. Healthy Kids Day is a national incentive to improve the health and well-being of children.*

*I visited with members of the Pulaski Township Fire Department during the annual pumper pull competition.*