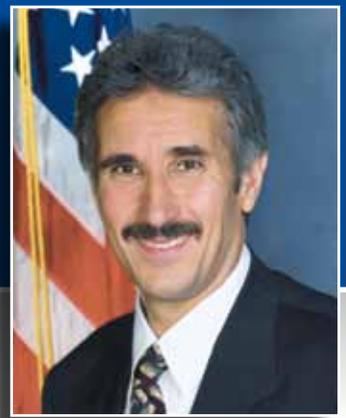


Rep. Chris

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Summer 2014



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New Castle could benefit from expanded revitalization program

I am co-sponsoring legislation (H.B. 2123) that would make New Castle eligible for the City Revitalization Improvement Zones (CRIZ) program, which helps communities develop vacant, blighted and abandoned properties for commercial use.

The CRIZ program allows eligible cities to create an authority to issue bonds for a redevelopment project. The bonds are then repaid through state and local taxes generated within the CRIZ area during and after construction of the project. Developers are required to supply at least 20 percent of the development cost for the project through private dollars.

A law enacted last year limited the program to just eight cities: Altoona, Bethlehem, Erie, Lancaster, Reading, Wilkes-Barre, York and Chester. It also permitted one borough or township with at least 7,000 people to participate in a pilot program for smaller municipalities.

Under H.B. 2123, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development would award

City Revitalization and Improvement Zones in 15 third-class and second-class A cities between now and 2016. The additional designations would be divided among the following categories: four in cities with a population of 60,000 or more; four in cities with a population of between 20,000 and 60,000; four in cities with a population of up to 20,000; and three additional cities regardless of population.

Communities deemed financially distressed under Act 47 would receive priority status if they applied for CRIZ participation. New Castle is deemed financially distressed under Act 47.

In addition, the bill would create five pilot programs for boroughs and townships of at least 2,000 people.

After 2016, the state would add two cities every year to CRIZ, regardless of population. This is the current requirement under state law.

The bill was referred to the House Urban Affairs Committee where it awaits consideration.



I met with Hickory Township community leaders at C.J. Long Park.



I visited officers of Duca Degli Abruzzi during the club's picnic.

How to avoid electricity bill spikes

This winter, thousands of Pennsylvanians were shocked when their electric bills doubled or tripled in one month. Those customers who had a variable-rate contract with an electric supplier or who had a fixed-rate contract that expired, were subject to the price spikes.

To avoid this problem, be sure to check the terms and conditions of your contract with your electric supplier.

You can obtain information regarding the current status of your contract, including whether your rate is fixed or variable, and any cancellation fees, by calling the supplier. The name and phone number of your supplier, along with the current rate you are paying can be found on your monthly bill.

As a result of the price spikes, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has approved new rules to help consumers.

One rule, which took effect in June, requires competitive energy suppliers to clearly disclose the details of their offers, especially the risks of variable-rate offers. In regard to fixed-term contracts, suppliers must notify customers by mail if their contracts are expiring or if there are changes to terms of service.

Another rule will shorten the time to switch suppliers. Currently, it takes up to 40 days; however, the new rule, which is expected to take effect by the end of the year, will require the change to occur within three days of the request.

You can learn more about shopping for electricity suppliers, or choose another supplier by visiting www.papowerswitch.com, a website maintained by the PUC.



The Neshannock High School National Honor Society volunteered during the Monster Stomp 5K walk/run, which raises money to fight Multiple Sclerosis.



Congratulations to the New Castle Christian Academy Archery Team for winning the state championship. The team also had a strong showing at the National Archery in the Schools Program Tournament in Louisville, Ky., in May 2014.

Find out whether that amusement park ride is safe

Did you know Pennsylvania has more than 9,000 amusement rides? That's more than in any other state!

If you are heading to a fair, carnival, amusement park or water park with the family this summer, you can find out whether the rides have recently been inspected.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, which is tasked with inspecting the rides, launched a website, www.ridesafe.pa.gov. The website shows the most recent inspection report for each ride a park operates, the date of

inspection, ride name and ride and owner ID numbers.

The Department of Agriculture plans to improve the site as it receives feedback from those who use it and from ride operators.

State law requires that rides be inspected every 30 days by state-certified inspectors at amusement and water parks, as well as each time the rides are set up at carnivals and fairs.

Inspection reports are required to be sent to the department by mail, fax, email or online within 48 hours.



Bill would help promote Pa.-produced products, boost the economy

If Pennsylvanians know that a product on the shelf was produced in our commonwealth, I'm sure they would be more likely to buy it.

That's why I am co-sponsoring legislation that would establish a "Made in PA" program to encourage Pennsylvanians to buy products made in the commonwealth.

H.B. 1800 would build on the successful PA Preferred program that the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture started in 2004 to promote food and agricultural products grown, produced or processed in the state.

The legislation would establish a new "Made in PA" logo to include a broader

range of products made in Pennsylvania that are not currently covered by the blue and gold PA Preferred label.

The program would be administered by the state Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). It would permit the use of a "Made in PA" trademark on products manufactured or produced in Pennsylvania.

The bill also would establish a database on the DCED website to help buyers identify products, locations and sources of Made in Pennsylvania products.

I am hopeful that lawmakers, along with labor and business organizations, can work together to get this bill signed into law and help Pennsylvania's economy.

Here are a few examples of items that are made in Pennsylvania:

- Mrs. T's Pierogies, Shenandoah, Schuylkill County
- Zippo Lighters, Bradford, McKean County
- Crayola crayons and markers, Easton, Northampton County
- Harley Davidson motorcycles, York, York County
- Sylvania light bulbs, St. Marys, Elk County
- Mallo Cups, Altoona, Blair County

Is the state holding your unclaimed property?

The state Treasurer's Office is holding \$1.9 billion in unclaimed property, and it is estimated that about one of 10 Pennsylvanians has unclaimed property.

Unclaimed property may include:

- Closed bank accounts;
- Uncashed checks, including paychecks;

- Lost stocks and bonds;
- Contents of safe deposit boxes;
- Proceeds from the demutualization of insurance companies;
- Expired gift cards/gift certificates.

To find out whether you have unclaimed property, you can search your name, as well as your friends and family in the Unclaimed Property

database at www.patreasury.gov/Unclaimed/Search.html or call 1-800-222-2046. There is NO CHARGE to claim your unclaimed property.

You can also contact or stop by my office. My staff will be happy to help you search the Pennsylvania Treasurer's Office website for unclaimed property.



I honored members of the SkillsUSA program Opening and Closing team at the Lawrence County Career and Vocational Technical Center for winning the silver medal during the state competition that was held in Hershey.



I took out my trumpet to join the Union High School Marching Band during alumni night.

Precautions to take when hiring a home improvement contractor

Pennsylvania's Home Improvement Consumer Protection Act requires all home improvement contractors, with limited exceptions, to register with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office and to

display their registration number on all advertising and contracts.

To determine if a contractor is registered, you can call the Home Improvement Consumer Information

Toll-Free Helpline at 1-888-520-6680 or visit www.attorneygeneral.gov.

The Pennsylvania Attorney General offers the following advice to those considering hiring a contractor:

- Thoroughly check your contractor's references.
- Obtain more than one bid for the job.
- Check for complaints filed with the Better Business Bureau.



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Mosquito season in full swing; here's how to fight back

Summer is here!

For many, the long, warm days are a welcomed relief after a difficult winter. Unfortunately, the warm weather also brings the return of unwanted pests, including blood-sucking, virus-carrying mosquitoes.

In addition to being a nuisance, certain mosquito species carry the West Nile virus. In humans, the West Nile virus can cause fever, headaches and swollen glands. In rare cases, encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain that can include tremors, coma and paralysis, can occur.

The West Nile virus has already been detected this season in three Pennsylvania counties, including Beaver County.

Measures to help eliminate mosquito-breeding areas include:

- Properly dispose of containers and tires that hold water;
- Empty unused wading pools and don't let water stagnate in birdbaths or wheelbarrows;
- Clean clogged roof gutters;
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, and aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish.



I visited members of the Rapid Tappets Car Club at the Memories Car Cruise in New Castle.



I recently honored the PIAA Class AAAA state championship New Castle boys basketball team at the state Capitol.

My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, disability 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
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drugs cards for senior citizens