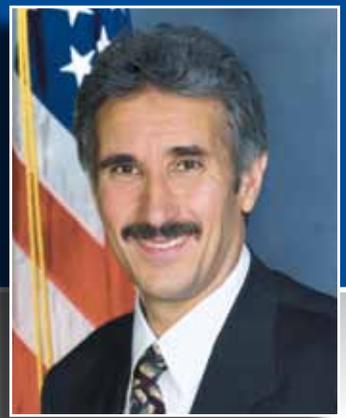


Rep. Chris

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Fall 2014

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UPMC/Highmark transition agreement helps, but more could be done

By now, you probably have heard that an agreement brokered by the state details where many western Pennsylvanians can receive health care after the contract between UPMC and Highmark expires in 2015.

While it was a welcome development, I had hoped for more.

I, and many of my colleagues, wanted UPMC and Highmark to reach a permanent solution that benefits residents of western Pennsylvania.

Short of that, the agreement, brokered by the Office of Attorney General and Governor's Office, ends uncertainty and helps the transition.

Most importantly, our most vulnerable patients are

protected.

Patients going through medical treatment, patients living with cancer or cancer survivors, adults in the Medicaid program, children, and seniors will have access to the full range of providers in our region. Patients with chronic conditions will have time to find another provider, or use UPMC doctors if no others are available. Anyone suffering a heart attack or other health care emergency won't have to ask their ambulance driver to bypass a UPMC hospital to get to one that is willing to accept their insurance.



I attend the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life every year. I visited with the Coachman Club team and saw another great performance by the New Castle Playhouse Mini Stars.



Important information about the Nov. 4 election

The general election is scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 4. Voters will cast ballots for the office of governor, congressman, state senator and state representative.

Unless you are a first-time voter, you do not have to show ID to cast a ballot. Commonwealth Court has struck down the state's voter identification law.

You may vote by absentee ballot if you are unable to make it to the polls due to illness, disability, or

you will be out of your municipality for the entire day.

Ballots can be obtained at the Lawrence County Election Bureau, Lawrence County Government Center, 430 Court St., New Castle. Applications also are available online at www.co.lawrence.pa.us/Voters/AbsenteeVoting.html.

To determine if you are registered to vote and the location where you vote visit www.votespa.com.

IMPORTANT 2014 GENERAL ELECTION DATES

OCT. 6 – Last day to register to vote.

OCT. 28 – Last day to apply for an absentee ballot.

OCT. 31 – Last day for county election offices to receive absentee ballots.

NOV. 4 – Election Day: Polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Home heating assistance starts in November

Keeping your home properly heated is essential. But many families, particularly senior citizens on fixed incomes, will struggle to pay the cost of heating their homes over the next several months.



If you need help paying your home heating bills this winter, assistance is available through the federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. LIHEAP offers cash grants to help purchase home heating fuel and crisis grants for unexpected fuel shortages and necessary furnace purchases or repairs.

Grants are based on family size, income, type of heating fuel and heating regions.

The income limits are:

Household Size	Proposed 2015 Income Limits
1	\$17,505
2	\$23,595
3	\$29,685
4	\$35,775
5	\$41,865
6	\$47,955
7	\$54,045
8	\$60,135
9	\$66,225

Each Additional Person ADD \$6,090

If you received LIHEAP assistance last year, you should have received a renewal application. If not, you may want to check into the program. This program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare through the local public welfare office.



I stopped by the American Cancer Society's Duck Derby booth at the New Castle Fireworks Festival.



The Mohawk Pack 720 Cub Scouts visited my office in New Castle.

Pulse Oximetry Screening

A new law, which I supported, requires birthing facilities to offer pulse oximetry screenings. Pulse oximetry is a blood oxygen test that can detect congenital heart defects. Recent studies have shown that this testing, with wide use, could detect 90 percent of congenital heart defects. Many birthing facilities already offer the testing; however, it is now mandatory under the new law.



It was an enjoyable day at the New Castle Moose Lodge picnic.



St. Elias' Old Fashioned Syrian Picnic always provides good company and good food.

Youth Suicide Prevention

Suicide is the third-leading cause of death for people age 15 to 24. A new law that I supported requires teachers who work with students in grades six through 12 to complete four hours of youth suicide awareness training every five years as part of their continuing educational development program.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for developing a suicide prevention awareness program that can be used by both public and private schools. Each school must create a youth suicide awareness program to be taught in the schools. The new law requires the Department of Education and school districts to have suicide training and educational information in place for the 2015-16 school year.

Yellow Dot Program provides life-saving information to first responders

Pennsylvania's Yellow Dot Program was created to assist citizens in the first hour of emergency care following a traffic accident when they may not be able to communicate their needs. Placing a yellow dot in your vehicle's rear window alerts first responders to check your glove compartment for vital information to ensure you receive the medical attention you need.

To participate, you must complete a personal information form which includes your name, contact information, emergency contact information, medical history and medications, allergies and your doctors' names.

Forms are available by visiting www.yellowdot.pa.gov.

Protect yourself from identity thieves

Western Pennsylvania has had its share of scams this summer.

From phony emails telling people that they've been summoned for federal jury duty in Pittsburgh to scam artists posing as job recruiters, identity thieves are always coming up with new ways to try to pry personal information from you.

ID theft can happen to anyone. People in their 20s have the highest rate of identity theft in Pennsylvania. Once an identity thief has personal information, they can use it in a myriad of ways, such as using the victim's credit or debit card account, obtaining a loan in the victim's name or transferring money from a bank or brokerage account.

Here are some simple steps from the Pennsylvania Treasurer's Office to keep your personal identification information secure:

- Shred documents that contain personal identifiers before disposing them in the garbage. Identity thieves have been known to sift through trash containers to look for discarded bills, statements, or documents containing identifying data.
- Secure your "snail mail" to prevent theft of bills and letters with account identifiers on them. People living in multi-unit buildings should make sure their mailbox is locked to prevent unauthorized access to their mail. Do not let mail pile up in your mailbox. Make arrangements to stop mail delivery or have mail collected by a trusted party if you are going to be away from home for an extended period of time.
- Secure your computers by keeping software, including anti-virus and spyware software, up-to-date.
- When interacting online with merchants and utility, financial service, and insurance companies, make sure their websites are using encryption before sending any personal identifiers. There are two simple ways to tell whether the website you are interacting with is using encryption to secure the data being transmitted between your computer and the web server hosting the site. Look for the "HTTPS" (Hypertext Transport Protocol Secure) prefix at the beginning of the web address instead of the more common "HTTP" (Hypertext Transport Protocol) prefix. Additionally, the presence of a "lock" in the margin of your web browser indicates that information entered on the website is encrypted during transmission.
- Check your credit report annually to look for any suspicious accounts. You are entitled to a free credit report every 12 months. Learn more by going to annualcreditreport.com.



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A reminder about Pa.'s school bus stopping law

Another summer has flown by and children are back in school. With that in mind, be sure that you're careful while driving in school zones and to remember Pennsylvania's school bus law.

The law requires motorists to:

- Stop at least 10 feet away from school buses that have their red lights flashing and stop arm extended;
- Stop when behind a bus, meeting the bus or approaching an intersection where a bus is stopped;
- Stop until the red lights have stopped flashing and the stop arm is withdrawn;
- Not proceed until all children have reached a place of safety.

If physical barriers such as grassy medians, guide rails or concrete median barriers separate oncoming traffic from the bus, motorists in the opposing lanes may proceed without stopping.

There are serious consequences for violating this law, including a \$250 fine, five points on a driving record and a 60-day license suspension.



I joined members of St. Luke's AME Church for the Stop the Violence rally.



I attended the Union Township Lions Club breakfast.



Local AFSCME members rolled many strikes and spares to help raise money during Big Brothers/Big Sisters Bowl for Kids' Sake fundraiser.