

Fall 2013

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## Redistricting reshapes 9th District

Earlier this year, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court upheld a redistricting plan that redraws the boundaries of all 203 state House and all 50 state Senate districts. The plan, which will be used for the 2014 elections and thereafter, makes some changes to the 9th Legislative District, which I currently represent.

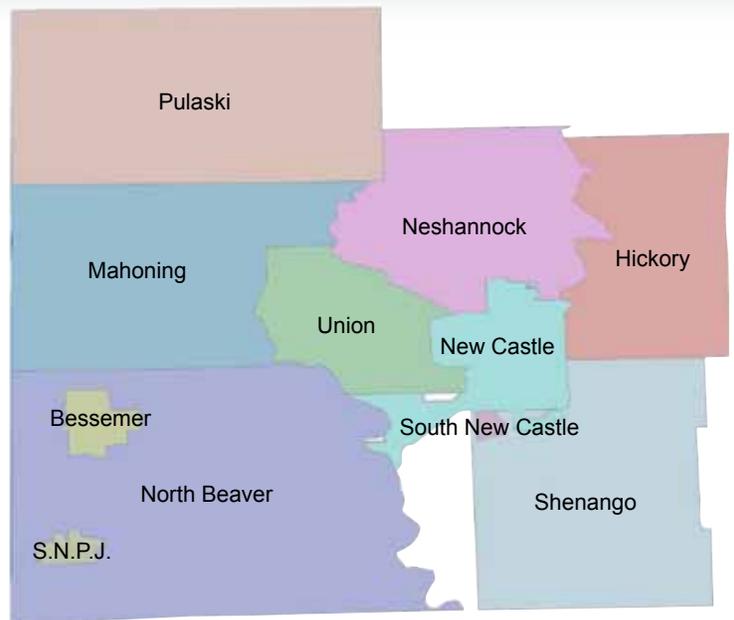
The 9th Legislative District will be located in Lawrence County and will consist of the city of New Castle, the townships of Hickory, Mahoning, Neshannock, North Beaver, Pulaski, Shenango and Union and the boroughs of Bessemer, S.N.P.J. and South New Castle.

Darlington Township and Borough in Beaver County, and Enon Valley Boro and Little Beaver Township in Lawrence County will no longer be part of the 9th District.

The changes are the result of a requirement in the Pennsylvania Constitution that requires legislative districts be redrawn every 10 years to reflect population shifts and to ensure accurate distribution of state and federal money.

As a state representative, my primary focus is to advocate for the best interests of the 9th District while serving in Harrisburg. I also take pride in providing top-notch constituent service on state-related programs and issues.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office at Z-Penn Building, 20 South Mercer St., New Castle if I or my staff may be of assistance with any state-related issue. Our phone number is 724-656-1112.



*Mohawk VFW Post 267 had a booth at Bessemer Community Day.*



*I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Cooper's 9th grade government classes at Shenango High School.*

# Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee holds hearing on needed updates to Pennsylvania's 911 Emergency Telephone Act

The Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee held several public hearings on a plan to overhaul Pennsylvania's 911 Emergency Telephone Act to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology and the costs of maintaining the emergency system.

As Democratic chairman of the committee, I feel it is essential to fully explore needed updates to the law with regard to 911 surcharge fees, the funding disbursement formula, and next generation 911 technologies.

During the hearing, the committee heard from state, county and municipal government officials, emergency dispatchers who use the system, members of the communications industry and other stakeholders. Any and all feedback will be essential in drafting meaningful and effective legislation to update the act, hopefully, this fall. Updates will reflect advances in available 911 technologies and provide a reliable funding source for emergency services.



*Inside a Stryker Personnel Vehicle, I chatted with an officer of the 56th Stryker Brigade.*

Following the hearing, the committee had the opportunity to tour the Pennsylvania Veterans Museum in Media. We then concluded our visit to Delaware County with an informational briefing and tour at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station, home of the Pennsylvania National Guard 56th Stryker Brigade.

## Pro-military employment legislation signed into law

I am pleased that legislation I helped shepherd through the state House of Representatives aimed at assisting military personnel in maintaining their civilian jobs is now law.

Act 80, formerly House Bill 88, requires the 15-day leave of absence for active duty military reserve personnel to be applied to 15 individual 24-hour days. This legislation will impact those public employees working on a 24-hour schedule who can currently be docked for three days of work absence for one 24-hour day of military service. State law formerly required public employers to allow for 15 days of military service leave outside of sick and vacation benefits.

Military personnel provide an indispensable service to our nation and often make tremendous sacrifices. We must do everything possible to make it easier for these brave men and women to live and work outside of their military service. This law will help active duty military personnel to maintain their public-sector civilian positions. I was pleased to vote for this legislation when it was before the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and again before the full House of Representatives.

Act 80 was signed into law on Nov. 1.

## 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 concerns about a variety of issues.

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

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.



*I joined the New Castle Area Honor Guard at Parkside Cemetery and Mausoleum for a Memorial Day weekend ceremony.*

# Be prepared for winter

*Old Man Winter is just around the corner and so are snow and ice storms.*

The National Weather Service refers to winter storms as “Deceptive Killers” because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. People are injured or killed in traffic accidents, or suffer from hypothermia due to prolonged exposure to the cold. Another major danger is a winter storm’s ability to knock out heat, power and communications, sometimes for days at a time.

Here’s some advice from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency about how to prepare for winter storms.

## At home

- Get an emergency supply kit that includes enough provisions for you and your family to live on for a minimum of three days.
- Make sure your home is well insulated and that you have weather stripping around your doors and window sills to keep the warm air inside.
- If you lose heat, close off unneeded rooms, stuff towels or rags in the cracks under doors and cover windows at night.
- Cover pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic. Allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Learn how to turn off water valves in case a pipe bursts. If the pipes freeze, remove any insulation or layers of newspapers and wrap pipes in rags. Completely open all faucets and pour hot water over the pipes, starting where they were most exposed to the cold, or where the cold was most likely to penetrate.
- Use extreme caution when using alternative heating sources. Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet from flammable objects. Also, when using kerosene heaters be sure to maintain ventilation to avoid build-up of toxic fumes.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight, warm clothing. Several layers of lightweight clothing will keep you warmer than a single heavy coat. Wear gloves (or mittens) and a hat to help prevent loss of body heat.

## On the road

- Avoid driving during winter storms. If you must drive, stay on main roads, avoiding back road shortcuts.
- Prepare your vehicle for winter by checking, or having a mechanic check, antifreeze levels, battery and ignition system, brakes, exhaust system, fuel and air filters, heater and defroster, lights and flashing hazard lights, oil, thermostat, tires, windshield wipers and wiper fluid.
- If you get trapped in your car, pull off the highway, turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not set out on foot during a blizzard unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter. If you do leave the vehicle, use extra caution because distances are distorted by blowing snow.
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe to guard against possible carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Outdoors

- Use caution not to overexert yourself when shoveling snow. Heart attacks caused by overexertion are a major cause of death in the winter.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs from extremely cold air.
- Keep dry. If possible, change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat.
- Watch for signs of frostbite. These include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, and the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia. These include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness, and apparent exhaustion.

*I participated in this year’s John Thompson Memorial 5K Run/Walk in Neshannock Township.*





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*It was my honor to participate in the Mahoningtown Memorial Day ceremony.*



*I visited members of the North Beaver Township Fire Department.*

## Local fire companies receive state grants

Many local fire companies have benefited from the Fire Company Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

Act 78 of 2012, which I supported, increased the program's annual funding from \$25 million to \$30 million. The average grant to fire departments was increased from \$9,500 to \$12,000, with a maximum \$15,000 grant, and the average grant to ambulance companies increased from \$4,500 to \$5,600, with a maximum \$10,000 grant.

The law also extends eligibility for the grant program to 35 paid fire companies across the state, including the New Castle Fire Department.

The grant program is funded by gaming revenue. Tax revenue produced from the play of slot machines during the 2012-13 fiscal year, which ended June 30, totaled \$1.3 billion.

### Here's how much local fire companies received to help them continue their important work:

Hickory Township Volunteer Fire Company	\$11,661.42
Mahoning Township Volunteer Fire Department	\$11,984.95
Neshannock Township Volunteer Fire Company	\$12,954.87
New Castle Fire Department	\$12,590.46
North Beaver Township Volunteer Fire Department	\$12,146.38
Pulaski Township Volunteer Fire Company	\$12,146.38
Shenango Township Volunteer Fire Department	\$11,984.95
South New Castle Boro Volunteer Fire Department	\$11,661.42
Union Township Volunteer Fire Company	\$11,822.84