

State Representative Harry A. **READSHAW** 36TH DISTRICT **report**



Summer 2016

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Special session planned on opioid epidemic

I was pleased to speak as the governor accepted recommendations from the Task Force and Advisory Committee on Opioid Prescription Drug Proliferation and declared that a Special Session on the opioid epidemic, which is a public health crisis, will be held.

House Democratic and Republican lawmakers, along with Gov. Tom Wolf, stood together in solidarity on June 22 to detail legislative progress made to date, outline more recommendations made by the special task force, and discuss plans for a special session this fall to focus lawmakers' attention on combatting the opioid addiction crisis.



READSHAW LEGISLATION

H.B. 1692 – The House Human Services Committee held a public hearing on my bill, which would allow for the involuntary commitment of those suffering from drug or alcohol addiction for treatment. When I spoke on the bill, I cited similar laws in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Florida, and underscored the scope of the opioid epidemic by saying that as many as 200 Americans die by overdose on a given day.

Other speakers were: Dennis Troy, Brentwood Borough mayor; Dr. Rachel Levine, physician general, Pennsylvania Department of Health; Deb Beck, president, Drug and Alcohol Service Providers Organization of Pennsylvania; and David Freed, communications chairman, Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association.

I am hopeful the committee will report out the bill soon.

Carrick wrestlers win WPIAL championship

On May 10, I was honored to present a House of Representatives citation to the Carrick High School wrestling team, the 2016 Pittsburgh Public School City League Class AAA wrestling champions. The team won the title by a large margin at the competition in February.

Nine Carrick wrestlers won their individual weight divisions, receiving from three to six points per match, depending on the final outcome.

Carrick wrestlers combined for a team total of 227 points, nearly 100 points ahead of the runner-up, Perry, with 132 points.

Wrestlers earn from three to six points per match for the team.

I am proud to salute these outstanding wrestlers. Wrestling is both an individual and a team sport, where individual wrestlers square off in their matches and the results add to the team's tally. The citation recognizes the wrestlers, the team managers and also Head Coach Lenny Orbovich and Assistant Coach Scott Donald. They represented the school with leadership, athleticism

and sportsmanship.

The Carrick wrestling team was undefeated in the city league, with a 7-0 record, and they compiled a 16-7 overall record during the season.



Pittsburgh's changing population

I recently received some information about Pittsburgh's population changes over the past two decades that I found very interesting and wanted to share with you.

The Allegheny Institute of Public Policy reports that Pittsburgh's population has fallen by nearly 10 percent since 2000, from 334,563 in 2000 to 304,390 in 2015, a loss of more than 30,000 residents.

The most important aspect of the population loss is that the major loss occurred between 2000 and 2010, when the population fell by more than 28,000 people.

It is stunning to realize that in the 1950s, the city's population was 677,000. The Steel City has fallen from the ninth most-populous city to 59th.

Pittsburgh is dramatically slowing the population loss, and three age groups have shown growth since 2000.

Between 2000 and 2014, the population of those between 55 and 64 grew by more than 9,000, and the senior population 85 or older grew by more than 1,000.

Most importantly for the future, since 2010, the population of those between 20 and 34 grew by more than 10,000 residents.

The most alarming trend for the future, however, is a dramatic loss of those 19 and younger – our school-age population, which saw a loss of more than 15,500, with the biggest losses between 5 and 14.

The loss of school-age children can probably be attributed to a number of things, but I believe it also points to the need to strengthen our city schools to give families a better educational option in the city when they are looking to move within or relocate to the region.

If you find these numbers interesting, you can read more on the website www.alleghenyinstitute.org.

Dormont VFW has taken ownership of the Brookline howitzer cannon

Almost everyone in the area is familiar with the howitzer cannon on display in Brookline's Cannon Memorial Park. Thanks to Dormont VFW Post 695, it will remain in the park for a long time.

The cannon's future was in jeopardy when the Brookline American Legion was decommissioned. A new agency with a "veteran clause" was needed to take over ownership, and the Dormont VFW stepped forward.

New concrete around the cannon and preservation work are being planned in the community.

I was happy to be involved in the ownership transfer process.



VETERANS UPDATE

Persian Gulf bonus deadline extended through August 2018

I'd like to remind you that the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has extended the state's Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans' Bonus Program through Aug. 31, 2018.

Under the program, eligible veterans of the first Persian Gulf Conflict in 1990-91 can receive \$75 for each month of service in the Persian Gulf Theater of Operations. Prisoners of war and the families of troops who died as a result of the war can receive \$5,000.

Anyone who served in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserve component or the Pennsylvania National Guard in the Persian Gulf Conflict between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991 may be eligible.

The deadline to apply for this benefit is now Aug. 31, 2018. More details about the program are available at www.dmva.pa.gov or by calling the program's toll-free number 1-866-458-9182.

July 27, 1953 Korean War Armistice

July 27 will mark the 63rd anniversary of the Korean War Armistice.

The agreement to end hostilities was signed at 10 a.m. in Panmunjon by U.S. Army Lt. Gen. William K. Harrison Jr. on behalf of the United Nations Delegation, and by North Korean Gen. Nam Il on behalf of the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers.

The truce created the Demilitarized Zone, a 2.5-mile-wide space that separates North and South Korea. The DMZ remains one of the most heavily defended borders in the world.

Although the armistice was signed, no formal peace treaty was ever signed, so the war has never officially ended.

Since the end of the war, South Korea has become a democracy and an economic world leader, while North Korea is essentially a dictatorship with one of the most closed economies in the world.

Thank you to all who served in Korea and at any other time or location!

Working Together in Harrisburg



Pennsylvania Fire Commissioner Tim Solobay, Rep. Harry Readshaw, Darrin Kelly, and Pennsylvania Professional Firefighters Association President Art Martynuska.

Do you want to start a Block Watch program in your community?

SaferTogether Pittsburgh is a program run through the city's Department of Public Safety.

Among the goals of SaferTogether is the establishment of community Block Watch programs.

Block Watches are community-driven attempts to make our streets safer by encouraging neighbors to get to know each other better, to watch out for each other and to be aware of anything unusual in the neighborhood.

Block Watch members can work with local police to reduce crime.

If you would like to start a Block Watch in your community, contact the Department of Public Safety at (412) 255-2131 or email Elizabeth.Style@pittsburghpa.gov.

Cyberbullying law

Last year, Gov. Wolf signed Act 26 into law, which made cyberbullying a crime.

Bullies have been around forever, but newer technologies have made bullying even more dangerous. Social media posts can reach thousands of people within minutes. Embarrassing photos can be impossible to erase from the internet and cellphone technology can mean a bully can always contact and harass his or her victim. Numerous victims have turned to suicide to escape their tormentors.

That's why I voted for the law last year.

Adults who are convicted of cyberbullying can face prison time and fines. Juveniles charged with cyber harassment may be given the opportunity to participate in a diversionary program in an effort to keep their lives on track as well as end the bullying.

I also encourage all parents and guardians to know what your children are doing online.

Property taxes – state rankings

Every year during budget season, we hear about how Pennsylvania's property taxes are used to fund schools and local governments. But where does Pennsylvania stand against the rest of the country?

In March, WalletHub studied the property taxes in each state and Pennsylvania was just out of this year's top 10.

The average Pennsylvania homeowner spends approximately \$2,650 per year on property taxes for a median-priced home.

New Jersey had the highest tax rate – the median-priced home would cost a New Jersey homeowner more than \$4,000 per year in property taxes.

The national average spent on property taxes for that same median-priced home is about \$2,100, so Pennsylvanians pay about 20 percent more than the median homeowner in the country.

Did you know?

Legislation was enacted in 2014 that requires volunteers who work with or come into routine contact with children to complete criminal history checks and child abuse clearances. This was important to ensure the safety of our children.

However, the legislature recently made several revisions to the law waiving the costs associated with obtaining these clearances for volunteers. This now includes volunteers with Emergency Medical Services organizations.

All EMS providers are required to report cases of suspected child abuse, but generally speaking, they do not need clearances. EMS personnel ARE required to obtain the clearances if they are involved in a junior EMS program or other type of program, activity or service involving children. If you have questions about the criminal history checks and child abuse clearances, talk to your local EMS agency and/or its attorney.

Support Scouting



Rep. Readshaw with Logan, Bryan and Logan.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program accepting applications through Dec. 31

The deadline to apply for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended to Dec. 31.

This program provides a state rebate on paid 2015 property taxes or rent to income-eligible residents who are 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older.

To be eligible, your household income must be \$35,000 or less if you are a homeowner, or \$15,000 or less if you are a renter.

When applying, you only have to count half of your Social Security or federal railroad retirement Tier I benefits toward your total income.

You can obtain information about the program, an application and free help applying through my district office or on the state Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov.

There is no charge to apply. If you receive an offer to apply for a fee, please disregard it.

General Election is November 8

Tuesday, Nov. 8 is our national presidential election. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

The last day to register to vote in the general election is Oct. 11, and you can do that online at www.register.votespa.com.

Voters will cast ballots for U.S. president, U.S. senator, U.S. representative, state attorney general, state auditor general, state treasurer, state senator and state representative.

Your polling place may have changed since the last election. Voters can verify their polling location at www.votespa.com.

Unless you are a first-time voter or voting at a new precinct, photo ID is not required.

All voters will be asked to consider one ballot question: whether to increase the mandatory age, from 70 to 75, at which judges must retire.





For more information and a complete list of candidates, visit the Allegheny County Election Division website at www.county.allegheny.pa.us/elections/index.aspx or call 412-350-4500.



Brentwood ballfields renaming

On May 7, I was proud to participate in the rededication and renaming of the baseball fields at Brentwood Park.

The fields are now named:

-  Herb E. Troy Stadium Field;
-  Jim Attanucci Field, in honor of "Mr. A.," president of the Brentwood Athletic Association;
-  Tepsic Field, in memory of former Brentwood Mayor William "Bow Tie Bill" Tepsic; and
-  Kaiser Field, in honor of the Honorable Ralph Kaiser.

IMPORTANT 2016 ELECTION DATES

Oct. 11 – Last day to register to vote.

Nov. 1 – Last day to apply for an absentee ballot.

Nov. 4 – Last day for county election offices to receive absentee ballots.

Nov. 8 – Election Day Polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.



YOUR HEALTH

Brashear, Carrick safe sports awards

In April, The House unanimously adopted my resolution that recognized Brashear and Carrick High Schools as Safe Sports Schools. (See photo on back page.)

My resolution acknowledged that Brashear and Carrick were recognized by the National Athletic Trainers' Association as winners of their Safe Sports School awards.

To receive the award, a school must fulfill 10 specific requirements, which are designed to protect the student-athletes and offer appropriate training to school athletic trainers.

Among the requirements are: to provide or coordinate pre-participation physicals, plan for election, fit function and proper maintenance of athletic equipment, and provide or facilitate injury prevention.

Suicide prevention

More than 1,800 Pennsylvanians die by suicide each year. That is one every five hours, or almost five every day. Suicide kills twice as many Pennsylvanians as all homicides every year. We need to reduce the numbers.

It is hoped that the cyberbullying law I described earlier in this newsletter will reduce school-age suicides, but I also wanted to let you know there are resources available to help prevent suicide.

The Pennsylvania Youth Suicide Prevention Initiative (PAYSPI) is a collaboration between the state Department of Health and many county, local and private organizations. Visit the website <http://payspi.org> for more information.

Learn about preventing senior suicides from the Pennsylvania Adult/Older Adult Suicide Prevention Coalition at www.preventsuicidepa.org.

The national suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Jury duty exemption available for seniors and breastfeeding mothers

A new state law offers jury duty exemptions to seniors 75 or older, as well as breastfeeding mothers. Those who qualify for either exemption may elect to automatically be dismissed from their duty by marking the appropriate box on the jury duty questionnaire.

However, this is a personal choice. Neither breastfeeding nor age will automatically disqualify you if you wish to serve.

Rape kit law

Last July, the governor signed a law that is critical for the health of women.

Act 27 of 2015 updated Pennsylvania's "rape kit" law which established specific rules and regulations regarding the processing of rape kits.

Among the key points of this law are:

- The state is required to designate laboratories that are certified to process rape kits;
- Local authorities are required to submit those kits to an approved laboratory for testing within 125 days of collection;
- Requires testing on the submitted kits to be completed within six months;
- Mandates reports on testing backlogs;
- Permits authorities to upload the results to crime databases to help solve related cases; and
- Requires notification to the victim or their family when testing is completed.

This new law should expedite the processing of rape kits and may help law enforcement solve more sexual assault cases, as well as find related cases caused by the same attacker.

Medical marijuana update

Pennsylvania has passed a law that allows for the medically appropriate use of marijuana. This new law is long overdue and I hope it will help many seriously ill children and adults.

Many of the new law's components will take effect over the next year and a half, but one important note is that as of May 16, a parent of a child who suffers from one of the qualifying illnesses will be immune from prosecution for possessing medical marijuana legally purchased in another state. Caregivers must apply for a Safe Harbor letter and carry it with them whenever medical marijuana is being transported outside the home.

All patients will be required to receive a Department of Health Medical Marijuana ID card.

Among the 17 approved medical conditions are:

- HIV/AIDS
- ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)
- Cancer
- Epilepsy or intractable seizures
- Parkinson's disease



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Beware of Lyme disease

According to the Centers for Disease



Control, Pennsylvania has more cases of Lyme disease than any other state. In 2014, there were 7,400 confirmed cases in the commonwealth. Lyme disease was reported in all 67 counties that year. Beware of ticks when you are outside. Cover exposed skin whenever possible, use insect repellents and be sure to check for ticks on both you and your outdoor pets regularly.

Well, I'm here to tell you that Harry has "a thing" about checking dogs for ticks. After he checked me out, he investigated the situation with my cousin, STARRIE. Looks to me like they are about ready to fall asleep. I think he just uses this "tick check" so we pay attention to him! He always provides a treat afterward, so it makes cooperating worthwhile. Because it is something that humans often overlook, PLEASE check your pets continually, as ticks cause Lyme disease.



The Pittsburgh Public Schools, PIAA District 8, are now considered to be among the leaders with the highest safety standards. From left, Licensed Athletic Trainers Brandon Mazza, Allderdice; Mike Koyack, Perry; Guy Sanchioli, Carrick; Nick Henry, Westinghouse; Tonya McKenzie, Obama; and Jessica Falvo, Brashear, received NATA Safe Sports School awards.



Stay in the know

I want to alert you about Pennsylvania House rules that prohibit when I can contact you leading up to a state House election.

Though you might already be receiving my email alerts, there will be a 60-day period preceding the upcoming November 8, 2016 election when I will be prohibited from sending legislative emails to you unless you have opted in to continue receiving them.

Please visit my website, www.pahouse.com/Readshaw, to sign up for email alerts on important information, including legislation being considered in Harrisburg. On my website, click on the email icon on the top bar and then click on the "Sign up for emails" link and fill in your information.

