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2016 Spring Senior Fair returns to Westgate Mall

I will be hosting my annual Spring Senior Fair again this year at Westgate Mall in Bethlehem. This year's event is scheduled for Friday, April 29 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Last year's event was our best to date with 85 vendors and over 600 seniors in attendance. This year's event will again be co-hosted with state Sen. Lisa Boscola. There will be free screenings including blood pressure, stroke, vision and many others; free upper body massages and other free services; as well as important and valuable information for seniors.

Again this year we will have a multitude of door prizes and offer free refreshments, so get there early before the coffee and doughnuts are gone! For those who came last year, the Westgate Mall, located at 2285 Schoenersville Road, has undergone extensive renovations. The new location worked great last year with more room, plenty of free parking, easy accessibility from Route 22 and accessibility via the LANTA bus 105 route.



Reintroducing my proposal to suspend legislative pay during a budget impasse

During the first week of January, after more than six months without a budget and watching Republican House leadership abruptly leave the Capitol for Christmas break refusing to vote on one, I felt I had to take action. I reintroduced my bill that would suspend pay for members of the General Assembly and administration officials if a budget is not passed by the budget deadline. The state's fiscal year ends on June 30 and passing the state budget is necessary to extend state spending into the new fiscal year that starts July 1.

As elected officials, responsible negotiation and passing a budget is something Pennsylvanians count on us to accomplish. By law, legislators and members of the executive branch have a basic fiduciary duty and a core function of state government to carry out this obligation. In order to move the budget process forward to timely completion, my bill would incentivize all involved by removing any pay or per diem after the deadline until a budget is passed.

I first introduced this bill on June 17, 2015, but was only able to get the support of two representatives as co-sponsors, so I pulled the bill since I knew it would never get the votes

to pass the House. As the budget impasse dragged on, it forced school districts and human service agencies to borrow money just to stay open, and forced the closure of many pre-K programs, causing parents to scramble to find alternative and often expensive care for their children. I am hopeful that this time around, more members will be willing to sign on to the bill to prevent a similar impasse in the future. So far, only eight representatives have signed on as co-sponsors.

The pay suspension would impact senators and representatives, the governor, lieutenant governor and the governor's cabinet officers, but would not affect staff. The pay and per-diems would be reimbursed upon passage of a budget.

Games and posturing force Pennsylvanians to view government as ineffective and as not taking our responsibilities seriously. We should start the process early in the year, engaging in actual negotiations and compromise to get the budget done on time. My hope is that this legislation will encourage my fellow legislators in Harrisburg to do so.

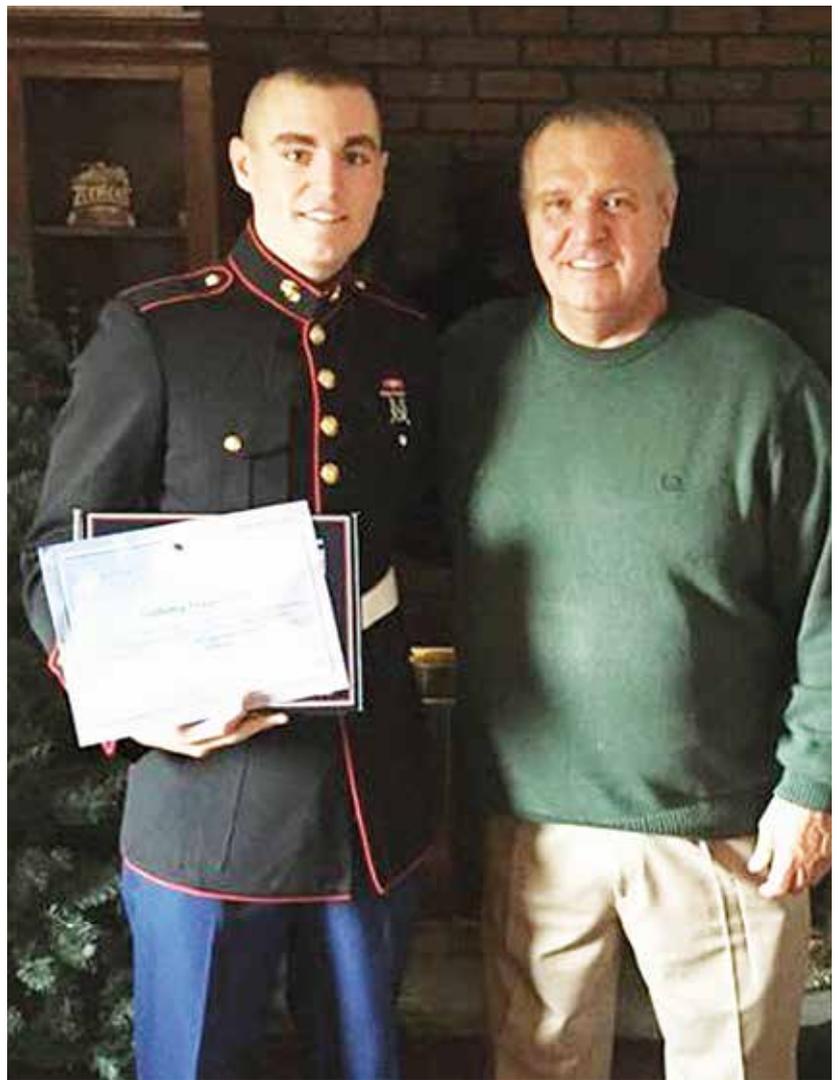
Naloxone standing order to combat heroin epidemic

Unfortunately, Pennsylvania is facing a devastating heroin epidemic. People across the state are dying of drug overdoses way too often. But there is some good news in the fight to save lives.

Naloxone, a drug that can reverse an overdose caused by an opioid drug like heroin, is now available to all Pennsylvanians through a standing order issued by the Pennsylvania Physician General. Family members and friends can access this medication by obtaining a prescription from their family doctor or by using the standing order. The standing order is kept on file at many pharmacies, or may be downloaded at the Pennsylvania Department of Health's website at www.health.pa.gov.

Two of the most common ways naloxone is administered are intranasal (nasal spray) and the auto-injector. Not all pharmacies stock both forms, and insurance coverage may vary, depending on the type of medication being purchased and each individual insurance plan. Check your insurance prescription formulary or call your benefits manager to determine if the medication is covered by your particular plan or if your purchase of the medication will be an out-of-pocket cost.

For more information about naloxone and how to administer it, please visit the Department of Drug and Alcohol Program's webpage at www.ddap.pa.gov and click on the link for the Naloxone & Reverse Overdose Toolkit.



In December, my friend Anthony Fragnito left Whitehall to join his unit as a U.S. Marine. As happy and proud as his family and I are, it is sad to see him go. I have known him since he was a little boy, and I have watched him grow into a man who is now willing to put his life on the line to defend our country and the freedoms we all enjoy. I stopped by the Fragnito house to say goodbye and presented him with a U.S. flag that flew over the Capitol in Harrisburg.

Heating assistance program accepting applications



Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is open for applications, and expected to close April 1. LIHEAP helps low-income families pay their heating bills.

LIHEAP provides two types of grants – a cash grant sent directly to utility companies to pay a portion of the resident's fuel bill, and a crisis

grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat due to a furnace failure or an unexpected fuel shortage.

LIHEAP cash grants based on household income, family size, type of heating fuel and region – will range from \$100 to

\$1,000 in 2015-16. LIHEAP crisis grants will range from \$25 to \$500.

To qualify for either a cash grant or a crisis grant, the income limit for a one-person household is \$17,655. This income limit increases by \$6,240 for each additional person in the household.

Residents who received a LIHEAP grant last season should have received a postcard or a 2015-16 LIHEAP application with a registration number.

Those who did not receive LIHEAP last season may obtain an application by contacting my office, calling LIHEAP directly at 1-866-857-7095, or applying online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

New law extends kids' health insurance program

A new act recently passed into law extends the state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through the end of 2017. The program had been set to expire at the end of 2015.

The program ensures that all children who qualify can get quality, affordable health insurance.

In addition to extending the program, the new law also moves the program under the direction of the state Department of Human Services. Moving the program out of the state's Insurance Department will ensure the program is run more

efficiently, as many children see their insurance change between CHIP and medical assistance, depending on family finances. Since both programs will now be under one computer system, making changes will be much more efficient.

For those who use CHIP, please note that the program itself is not changing, only its location in state government.

For more information about CHIP you can visit www.chipcoverspakids.com/ or contact my office.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program accepting applications

The state started taking applications for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program in February.

The program provides a state rebate on 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 your Social Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier I benefits toward your total income.

You can obtain information about the program, an application and help applying through my local office or on the state Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov. There is no charge to apply for this program. If you receive an offer requiring a fee to apply, please disregard it.

The state will begin mailing rebate checks on July 1.



Thank you to everyone who donated a toy for our Toys for Tots collection. The response was overwhelming. Together we put smiles on the faces of many children this past holiday season!

Town hall meeting on heroin epidemic

To say that opioid and heroin addiction is a major problem in our area is an understatement. In the past year in Lehigh County, there have been 215 heroin overdoses. It is simply devastating our community. Because of this epidemic, I will be hosting a town hall meeting at **6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 24 at Whitehall High School, 3800 Mechanicsville Road, Whitehall in the Large Group Instruction Room.**

Scheduled to participate in the discussion are Lehigh County District Attorney Jim Martin, Sheriff Joe Hannah, parents of children who have been addicted to these drugs, and medical professionals.

We will discuss how and why our children get involved with drug use, how to identify children who are abusing these drugs, and what we as a community can do to fight back and prevent the use and abuse of such addictive narcotics. Please join us and educate yourself on this growing epidemic with often fatal consequences to avoid a tragedy in your family.





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INSIDE:

- **CHIP extended**
- **Preventing heroin overdoses**
- **Senior Fair coming in April**

lpo.kaf.0216

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
 - Information on financial assistance for higher education
 - Obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
 - Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
 - Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
 - Birth and death certificates
 - Issues with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
 - Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
 - Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
 - Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
 - Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
 - Issues with insurance companies
 - Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
 - Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
 - PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
 - Consumer complaints
 - Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
 - Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
 - Information about federal, state and local government agencies
- Any state government-related matter!**

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IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Lehigh County Government Center.....	610-782-3000	Lehigh County Veterans Affairs Office.....	610-782-3295
Northampton County Government Center.....	610-559-3000	Northampton County Department of Veterans Affairs.....	610-559-3199
PA Department of Revenue (Bethlehem Office).....	610-861-2000	CareerLink.....	610-437-5627
Internal Revenue Service (Bethlehem Office).....	610-865-8208	American Red Cross.....	610-865-4400
AARP – Allentown.....	610-434-2701	Social Security office (Allentown).....	1-877-405-6746
Crime Victims Council of Lehigh Valley.....	610-437-6611	Social Security office (Bethlehem).....	1-866-783-7458
Turning Point Lehigh Valley Helpline.....	610-437-3369	LIHEAP (Lehigh County).....	610-821-6509
CACLV – Community Action Committee Lehigh Valley.....	610-691-5620	LIHEAP (Northampton County).....	610-250-1700
Lehigh County Department of Aging.....	610-782-3034	U.S. Rep. Charles Dent.....	610-770-3490
Northampton County Department of Aging.....	610-559-3245	State Sen. Lisa Boscola.....	610-868-8667
		State Sen. Patrick Browne.....	610-821-8468