



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**Daniel McNeill**  
133RD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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## Bill would suspend legislator pay until state budget is passed

In an effort to avoid prolonged budget impasses in the future, I wanted to introduce a bill in June that would suspend pay and per diems for members of the General Assembly and administration officials if a state budget is not passed on a timely basis.

The state's fiscal year ends June 30 and passing the state budget is necessary to extend state spending authority into the new fiscal year that starts July 1.

Responsible negotiation and the passing of a budget is something citizens of the commonwealth count on us for. As legislators and members of the executive branch, it is our 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.

The pay suspension would impact state senators and representatives, the governor, lieutenant governor and the governor's cabinet officers, but would not include staff. In addition, once the budget is passed, retroactive reimbursement for pay or per diems would be prohibited. ***After receiving only TWO co-sponsors, I had to shelve my proposed bill due to lack of support.***

Games and posturing force the citizens of Pennsylvania to view us as ineffective and as not taking our responsibilities seriously. We should start the process early in the year, and engage in actual negotiations and compromise to get the budget done on time.

Once we have passed a responsible budget, I will be re-introducing this bill and hope to receive more bipartisan support in order to see it signed into law.

## My rally gives citizens a voice in the state budget debate

In April, I led officials from across the Lehigh Valley in calling for a responsible state budget during a rally at Westgate Mall in Bethlehem.

Lehigh County Executive Tom Muller, Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski, and Northampton County Councilman Scott Parsons joined me, along with teachers, labor members and leaders, and seniors who are concerned about the lack of progress in passing a responsible budget.

People across the state are being crushed by high property taxes and our children have been hurt by cuts in education funding. The rally showed that people support the governor's vision for our state, and we will fight for them. I personally organized this rally, because I am really angry that our residents are suffering and we can't accomplish what we are elected to do, which is pass a budget that helps all Pennsylvanians.

My Democratic legislative colleagues and I are committed to passing a 2015-16 state budget that addresses the core issues

facing Pennsylvania: fixing a structural budget deficit and a drastically underfunded school system, adopting a severance tax on natural gas drilling, and alleviating rising property taxes for seniors and middle-class families.

After four years of budgets that shortchanged schools, increased property taxes and relied on gimmicks and one-time revenue sources, we need a budget that reverses that damage. My colleagues and I refuse to vote for a budget that includes more of the same bad budgeting. We stand with Gov. Tom Wolf and his plan to turn Pennsylvania around.

School supplies were collected at the rally, which were distributed to students in need throughout the 133rd Legislative District.



***We had a great turnout of concerned citizens at my budget rally in September.***



*In May, I had the honor of introducing the next great Penn State football player to the House, Whitehall High School's Saquon Barkley. He was the best football player in the state, winning the 2014 Mr. Pennsylvania Football award. He has already been named Big Ten Co-Freshman of the Week twice this season.*

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program deadline extended

The deadline to apply to the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2014 has been extended from June 30 until Dec. 31, 2015.

The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income and all COLAs are excluded, and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because they are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid each year. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2014 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

Some companies are running ads offering to do the paperwork for this state program and charge a fee, but you do **not** have to pay for this help.

Please contact my district office staff with questions or for free assistance completing the form. My staff can let you know what paperwork you need to bring.

## SENIOR FAIR WAS BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER

In April, I hosted my annual senior fair with state Sen. Lisa Boscola at the Westgate Mall. This year's fair was bigger and better than ever, with over 80 vendors offering free health screenings (blood pressure, stroke, vision, and many others) and valuable information. We gave away a number of door prizes and provided free refreshments to the hundreds of seniors attending.

This year's senior fair will be tough to top but we will try to do that next year. I will keep you updated as plans progress and we determine a date for the event.

I look forward to seeing you next Spring!



## Online voter registration now available in Pennsylvania

Recently, Gov. Tom Wolf launched a website to make it easier for you to register to vote and participate in elections. You can access it by visiting: <http://bit.ly/1NCHCYp>.

The new website is available in English or Spanish and it also allows you to make updates to your voter record, such as change of name, address or party affiliation. You can also request assistance at a polling place.

This online system is more secure because the form will be transmitted directly to the proper county voter registration office for processing, compared to the traditional paper application containing personal information that might pass through several hands before you are officially registered.

The site is directly linked to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, so if you have a driver's license or PennDOT ID card, your signature on file can immediately be linked to your voter record.

If you do not have a driver's license or ID card, you can print, sign and mail the completed online application to your county voter registration office. If you are unable to print the application, you may request the Department of State mail you a signature card to complete and send back.

Although the deadline has passed to register for this year's general election, I encourage you to register to vote today, if you have not already done so.

After years of dealing with Republican schemes to suppress voter registration and turnout, we now have a governor committed to making it easier for citizens to have their voices heard in elections, not harder. I commend Gov. Wolf for his efforts and hope his action will lead to more people participating in elections and exercising their constitutional rights.

# FEE FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS WAIVED FOR VOLUNTEERS

As many of you know, legislation was enacted in 2014 to reform the way Pennsylvania responds to child abuse. Under these new reforms, volunteers who work with or come in routine contact with children are now required to complete criminal history checks and child abuse clearances.



Requiring clearances for those who work with our children is a necessary reform to ensure the safety of our kids. We have always required these checks from school employees, day-care workers and those working with our kids in a professional capacity. We should require the same from those volunteering.

However, many constituents contacted my office regarding the financial burden caused by having to obtain these checks. In June, the legislature was able to make several revisions to this law and worked with Gov. Tom Wolf to waive any costs associated with the child abuse and criminal background checks for Pennsylvania volunteers. This announcement allows us to protect our kids without imposing an unnecessary financial burden on those wishing to volunteer or work with them.



*In September I had the privilege of participating in the Eagle Scout ceremony for Whitehall High School graduate Samuel Harwi. Samuel was a member of the National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society and Science National Honor Society. He also received recognition for seven years of perfect attendance. He has been in scouts for 11 years and he earned 29 merit badges. For his Eagle Project, he refurbished all the hand railings surrounding St. John's Church in Whitehall. Congratulations, Samuel, on your great achievement!*



## LIHEAP program opens Nov. 2

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families pay their heating bills. LIHEAP offers assistance in the form of a cash grant, sent directly to the utility company, or a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat. The application period for 2015-16 runs Nov. 2 through April 1. Please contact my office if you have any questions or want free help applying for this program.

## Bills for veterans signed into law this summer

In late June, three bills drafted to benefit veterans were signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf. Those bills include:

**Act 32 (S.B. 42)** makes it a misdemeanor crime to falsely claim to be a veteran when requesting a veteran's driver's license or ID card.

This has become an issue since Act 176 of 2012 permitted the inclusion of a veteran's designation on state driver's licenses and photo IDs. The purpose of that law was to make it easier for veterans to prove their status without having to carry valuable papers with them at all times.

People convicted of making a false veteran's representation under this new law can face a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to one year in prison.

**Act 17 (S.B. 284)** creates an "Honoring Our Veterans" license plate for motorcycles. Non-veterans will be able to order these plates for their cycles. Currently, a plate is available for automobiles, but not for motorcycles. The license plates will be available for \$35. Veterans will be able to purchase the plate for \$20.

**Act 18 (S.B. 285)** works alongside Act 17 to earmark \$15 from the non-veteran's price of the motorcycle license plate to the Veterans Trust Fund. Money in the trust fund is available to help needy veterans with the purchase of food, rent, mortgage, utilities, health care and other needs.

These three new laws demonstrate Pennsylvania's commitment to veterans.





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- **State budget rally gives citizens a voice**
- **Online voter registration comes to PA**
- **Background check fees waived for volunteers**

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## 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
- 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
- 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