

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 202166

HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2166

lpo.kaf.1216

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

DECEMBER 2016

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE:

1001 East Darby Road
Havertown, PA 19083
(610) 789-3900
Fax: (215) 560-4197

EMAIL: greg@gregvitali.com

CAPITOL OFFICE:

38B East Wing
P.O. Box 202166
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2166
(717) 787-7647
Fax: (717) 705-2089

WEBSITE: www.gregvitali.com



State's Tax Amnesty Program starts April 21

Details were recently released for Pennsylvania's Tax Amnesty Program.

The program will allow repayment of all taxes owed to the Commonwealth and administered by the Department of Revenue, including personal income tax, sales, and gross receipts taxes, without penalties and prosecution.

To participate in this program, eligible taxpayers must:

- File an amnesty tax return with the state Department of Revenue between April 21, 2017 and June 19, 2017;
- Pay all taxes and one-half of the interest due to the Commonwealth; and
- File complete tax returns for all tax periods that have been unreported/underreported, even if those tax periods are not eligible for the Amnesty Program.

For more information, visit the Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov and click on Tax Amnesty Program under Popular Services.

PA driver's licenses soon will be inadequate for federal identification purposes

As of Jan. 30, 2017, Pennsylvanians will not be able to use their state-issued driver's licenses to enter federal facilities, military bases or nuclear power plants due to our state's noncompliance with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005, a law passed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in an effort to improve security. Currently, Pennsylvania driver's licenses do not possess the advanced anti-counterfeiting security features required by the REAL ID law. They also are unable to present data in a common, machine-readable format (bar codes, smart card technology).

In addition, after Jan. 22, 2018, Pennsylvanians no

longer will be able to use state IDs to board domestic commercial flights. Instead, Pennsylvanians will need federally-acceptable forms of identification, like a passport, for domestic air travel, access to federal buildings, and admission to military bases.

In 2012, the General Assembly prohibited PennDOT from participating in REAL ID. Critics said the federal program was an unfunded mandate and would harm privacy rights.

Hopefully the state Legislature will rectify this situation soon.

New law addresses ride-sharing services in PA

Ride-sharing services such as Lyft and Uber, which have been operating across the state, are now legal in Philadelphia under a new state law.

The law establishes an assessment of 1.4 percent of the gross receipts from all fares originating in Philadelphia. Two-thirds of that revenue will help Philadelphia schools and one-third goes to the

Philadelphia Parking Authority, which regulates the companies in the city.

The law also establishes a number of statewide driver and consumer protections for ride-sharing services, including ensuring insurance coverage and criminal background checks for drivers.

Increased penalties for texting and driving

In Pennsylvania, a new law enhances the penalties for an accident caused by texting while driving resulting in serious bodily injury or death.

The new law imposes a sentence of up to five years in jail for an accident involving texting while driving that results in a death, or up to two years in jail if there is serious injury. This will bring texting and

driving offenses on par with aggravated, reckless driving accidents that cause death or serious bodily injury.

In Pennsylvania, more than 14,800 crashes in 2015 were caused by distracted driving, resulting in 66 deaths.

More payment options available on the PA Turnpike

The Pennsylvania Turnpike is now accepting payment by credit and debit cards at its toll booths that accept cash.

While cash and E-ZPass are the preferred means of payment, the turnpike's toll collectors began receiving card readers in October.

Typically a driver who doesn't have enough cash to cover the costs of the toll has to fill out a certificate of passage, which is essentially an IOU to the turnpike. It's time-consuming and offers no guarantee the toll will ever be paid.

You can find out more about E-ZPass by going to www.paturndpike.com.

New website provides information on tours of State Capitol

A new website, www.pacapitol.com, provides all of the information you need to plan a visit to Pennsylvania's State Capitol in Harrisburg, including maps, events, parking and more.

It also includes interactive, educational tools for

anyone looking for more information on the Capitol. In the future, the website will allow guests to book tours of the Capitol online.

My office can also assist you in planning a visit to the Capitol, including booking tours.

Replacement of College Avenue bridge will impact traffic

PennDOT will replace the structurally deficient College Avenue bridge over the SEPTA railroad tracks at Haverford Road in Haverford Township. The project is scheduled to be completed in November 2017.

The bridge, built in 1931, is closed to traffic. All local roads and residences will be accessible on College Avenue from the Darby Road side. Traffic will not be able to access College Avenue from the Haverford Road side but will be detoured around using Ardmore Avenue.

The \$5.2 million state-funded project also includes improvements to the traffic signals at the intersection of College Avenue and Haverford Road, and the addition of left turn lanes on College Avenue at this intersection.

As construction progresses, you can get more information about traffic in the area at PennDOT's traffic website, www.pa511.com.

New laws to address heroin and opioid crisis

Pennsylvania recently enacted a package of bills aimed at attacking the state's heroin and opioid crisis.

Now, prescribers can only provide minors a seven-day supply of opioids. Additionally, prescribers will be required to check a computer database every time they provide an opioid, to ensure that a patient is not getting multiple opioid or benzodiazepine prescriptions from different doctors. Opioids include drugs such as Percocet, Vicodin and oxycodone, and benzodiazepines include Valium and Xanax.

Also under the new law, hospital emergency departments and urgent care centers may not prescribe more than a seven-day supply of opioids and they may not write refills for opioid prescriptions.

Lastly, the new law helps people properly dispose of unused or unwanted opioids, by expanding the number of places that can serve as drop-off locations for any extra, unwanted, or expired prescription drugs or over-the-counter pharmaceutical products. The new sites include law enforcement entities, hospitals, and pharmacies.

Beer and wine sales now more convenient

A recently enacted law is designed to make beer sales more convenient for customers. This is achieved by implementing the following changes:

- Allowing beer distributors to sell beer in any amount to a customer. This includes six-packs, single bottles and refillable growlers.
- Allowing restaurants, hotels, airports and other retail locations to start selling on Sundays at 9 a.m. instead of 11 a.m.
- Allowing Pennsylvania residents to receive direct shipments of beer from a Beer-of-the-Month-Club.

These changes are in addition to a state law that was enacted this summer to improve customer convenience when purchasing wine and spirits in Pennsylvania. Those changes allow:

- Customers to purchase up to four bottles of wine at restaurants, grocery stores and hotels that have obtained a wine to go permit.
- Customers to buy wine from a licensed wine producer, such as a winery, over the internet and have it shipped directly to their home.

- More Wine and Spirit Stores to be open Sundays and holidays, and to have longer hours.
- Wineries, distilleries and breweries to sell their products at farmer's markets.
- Beer, wine and liquor to be sold at casinos 24 hours a day.
- Some gas stations with restaurant licenses to sell beer to go.

2017 House of Representatives calendar available

You can download the 2017 House of Representatives calendar on my legislative website, www.gregvitali.com. It contains 12 seasonal color photos of the state Capitol Building. Just scroll down the right-hand side of the page to "Download your 2017 Capitol Scenes calendar here."

Heating assistance program accepting applications

Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is open for applications, and expected to close March 31. 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 \$200 to \$1,000 in 2016-17. LIHEAP crisis

grants will range from \$25 to \$500.

This season's income guidelines for LIHEAP cash and crisis grants are \$17,820 for an individual and increase by at least \$6,210 for each additional person in the household.

Residents who received a LIHEAP grant last season already should have received a postcard or a 2016-17 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.

Voters approve increased retirement age of 75 for judges

On Nov. 8, voters narrowly approved a ballot question to increase the retirement age of judges from 70 to 75.

This change applies to all judges in the state, including Supreme Court Justices, Superior Court Justices, Commonwealth Court Justices, Court of

Common Pleas Judges and local District Justices.

The vote will impact 192 judges from now through 2021. This includes 19 judges who turned or will turn 70 this year, among them the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, who can serve on the bench another five years.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate deadline approaches

The application deadline for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program is Dec. 31. The Property Tax/Rent Rebate 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 of your Social Security or federal railroad retirement Tier I benefits toward your total income.

You can obtain an application in my office or download the form online by going to www.revenue.state.pa.us, clicking on "Individuals" on the left side of the page, and then clicking on "Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program."

My office can help you apply.

Free notary service at district office

You can have most official documents notarized for free in my district office. Please call ahead to make sure the notary is in the office and can accommodate your type of document. Notary work is done most weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The person whose signature is to be notarized must sign the document in person, in the presence of the notary, and provide proof of identity such as a valid driver's license, photo ID card, or passport. Please let my staff know if witnesses are needed, in addition to the notary, for your documents. My office has a limit of five notarizations per person.

My office is on the second floor. If you are unable to climb stairs, please let us know when you call, and we can arrange to have the notary meet you on the ground floor.