

New school funding formula was long overdue

In June, Gov. Tom Wolf signed the School Fair Funding Formula bill into law.

This is a crucial step to helping our public schools perform better, by using geographic, economic and other demographic information to ensure the schools that need the most money to properly educate our children receive the most. The new plan will use a three-year average of student enrollment and will also specifically include district poverty levels, students that have English as their second language, and also the percentage of students enrolled in charter schools.

Additionally, the new funding plan will base special education funding on actual need. Previously, special education funds were figured out on the statewide average, about 16 percent of all students. However, districts vary in their special education student enrollment, from 8 percent to more than 25 percent. As it costs more to properly educate a special needs student, this can be a critical issue for some districts.

I know many people think we are just throwing money at our public schools, but in reality, Pennsylvania ranks 46th out of the 50 states in public school funding – and before this new formula was enacted, the state ranked dead last in funding equality.

This is a good first step to making sure our students get the education they deserve.

Millennials moving to Pittsburgh!

A recent Pew Charitable Trusts review of U.S. Census data from 2010 to 2014 has determined that Pittsburgh ranks third nationwide in cities experiencing a millennial boom.

While the population of Pittsburgh has dropped by about 29,000 people, the number of young, college educated residents under age 35 has grown by 15,000.

Among the reasons Pittsburgh is drawing younger adults are the number of quality higher-education institutions in the area, a solid base of technology companies and research, a lower cost of living, and a strong arts and culture community.

Other Rust Belt cities such as Buffalo, Chicago and St. Louis are also experiencing population growth of millennials. To read more, check out the Pew Charitable Trust's feature at <http://bit.ly/Pittsburghmillennials>.

Plan now for medical insurance for 2017

Most medical insurance plans have open enrollment periods for coverage for the next calendar year.

Open Enrollment for 2017 Medicare plans began Oct. 15 and runs through Dec. 7, 2016.

Your choice will affect which doctors you can see and will also affect your out-of-pocket expenses. Some plans also cover you when you are away from home, so if you travel a lot, you will want to consider that, too.

Plan options will vary based on costs, and may affect your co-pays and deductibles as well as which doctors or hospitals will accept your insurance.

All plans are required to cover yearly wellness visits, including cancer screenings and a yearly "wellness visit" to sit and talk with your doctor, as well as name-brand drug discounts if your **prescription expenses reach the Part D drug coverage gap, or "donut hole."**

The Medicare website has a quick search function that will allow you to see what plans are available and to compare them to find the best for you. Visit <http://bit.ly/FindMyPlan> to start your search.

Learn more about Medicare at www.medicare.gov.

The Pennsylvania Department of Aging has specially trained counselors who can help determine the best plans for your family's specific Medicare needs. The APPRISE counselors host Open Enrollment programs throughout the state during the enrollment period. To learn more about the APPRISE program, or to check the event schedule, you can call 1-800-783-7067 or visit its website, www.aging.pa.gov/insurance.

If you purchase health insurance directly or on the ACA Marketplace, or need to for next year, the current open enrollment runs through Jan. 31, 2017. Policies currently in effect will remain valid through Dec. 31, 2016.

To ensure that your coverage does not lapse when changing plans, you must enroll in a new plan by Dec. 15, 2016.

You can learn more about choosing health insurance in Pennsylvania at <http://bit.ly/healthinsurancePA>.

To learn more about the ACA Marketplace, or to compare coverage or enroll in a plan that may qualify for a subsidy, visit the ACA website, www.Healthcare.gov.

ACA provides income-based federal subsidies to help pay insurance purchased through the Marketplace. Three out of every four subscribers who apply through the ACA Marketplace are eligible for federal subsidies to help pay the premiums.

Since ACA was enacted, Pennsylvania has become one of the leaders in the percentage of those who have health insurance. The state's uninsured rate has dropped to 6.4 percent, well below the national average of 9.1 percent.

If you have questions regarding health insurance coverage, please contact my staff at (412) 881-4208.



Baldwin EMS is 2016 Pa. EMS Agency of the Year

In September, state Rep. Bill Kortz and I presented a citation to the Baldwin Emergency Medical Services team, to salute them for being selected as the 2016 Pennsylvania EMS Agency of the Year by the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council and Department of Health.

To win the award, an EMS unit must be nominated and then judged on a number of criteria, including response time, staffing and training levels, community participation and local community cooperation.

Congratulations to the crew of the Baldwin EMS!

Baldwin Borough Police receive international accreditation

Congratulations to the Baldwin Borough Police Department for receiving two prestigious accreditations this year.

The Baldwin Police Department was one of only 15 departments in Pennsylvania to receive the International Accreditation by the Commission of Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. To receive this honor, the department successfully passed a review of 420 best police practices, including facilities, policies and equipment.

The department was also one of only 108 to receive accreditation from the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission. To receive this recognition, the police department successfully completed a review of 120 state-specific standards.

We are blessed to have such qualified first responders serving our communities.

Thank you to Chief Michael Scott and the entire force.



Rep. Readshaw was at the 2016 Labor Day Parade in Pittsburgh. Joining him were (l-r) Allegheny County Councilman Mike Finnerty, Pennsylvania Fire Commissioner Tim Solobay, state Sen. Wayne Fontana and Allegheny County Councilman John Palmiere.

Will your driver's license be a valid ID?

In 2013, the federal government passed the Real ID Act, meant to allow for easy cross-referencing driver's licenses across the country. The law has been phased in over several years, with the last pieces taking place in January 2017 and also in January 2018.

However, Pennsylvania passed its own law, which prohibits PennDOT from making the required changes to state licenses.

That means as of Jan. 30, 2017, Pennsylvanians will not be permitted into federal buildings without another type of approved ID, such as a passport or military ID.

Beginning in 2018, Pennsylvanians also will be banned from flying unless they have another type of government-approved ID.

I will keep you updated if any of these variables change.

Pennsylvania has the largest number of volunteer fire departments!

A recent Center for Rural PA study reports that there are an estimated 2,215 fire companies in Pennsylvania. Of those, 28 are career fire departments, 92 are combination career and volunteer, and 2,095 are strictly volunteer fire companies.

Pennsylvania has the largest number of volunteer fire companies in the nation, with approximately 12 percent of the nation's 20,000 all-volunteer fire companies. Our appreciation goes to all who volunteer!

