

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

PETER G. SCHWEYER

22ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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A message from Rep. Schweyer

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to continue serving as your State Representative, it is truly an honor! I continue to focus my work on issues that I believe best represent the concerns and values we share as residents of Allentown.

The first few months of 2017 have been full of activity both here and in Harrisburg. My staff and I have been busy at various events throughout our community, with several more planned for the coming months. As you read through this newsletter, I hope you see a date that works for you to attend one of the events, so you can hear first-hand the issues I have been working on, and ask any questions you may have about happenings in Harrisburg.

One of the biggest failures in Harrisburg last year was lawmakers leaving for the holidays before funding our Unemployment Compensation Centers. Think about it: if you were laid off from work because your company closed or your job was shipped overseas, you should not be at risk of losing your home. That's why we have an unemployment compensation system featuring call centers so that these working people can apply for their benefits.

But last year, the legislature went home before we figured out a way to continue to pay for these call centers. With no money coming from the legislature, Gov. Wolf was forced to close three of these centers, one right here in Allentown. In all, 499 people lost their jobs, 87 of whom worked in Allentown. In addition, workers who were laid off had a much harder time getting their unemployment benefits.

Fortunately, we have taken the first steps toward fixing this crisis for working Pennsylvanians who have lost their job through no fault of their own. I had authored House Bill 34, which would have extended funding for these centers for one year. In April, Gov. Wolf signed into law a smaller version

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Senior Fair



I'm excited to join my colleague Rep. Mike Schlossberg (D-Lehigh) to host our annual Senior Fair from 9 a.m. to noon Friday, May 19 at the East Side Youth Center, 1140 E. Clair St.

In years past, the Senior Fair hosted approximately 500 seniors and 40+ vendors were represented from various governmental and community organizations. This event is a terrific opportunity for our constituents to learn about the vast number of community services available to them, all in one convenient location. Please consider spending the morning with us learning about these organizations and also taking advantage of some of the health screenings that will be offered by vendors in attendance.

Registration isn't necessary and light refreshments will be available.

For more information about the event, call my office at 610-791-6270.

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of that, S.B. 250, which will provide temporary funding to bring many of these workers back so that we can find a long-term solution. It will not reopen the Allentown center, but that will remain a long-term priority for me.

Working-class Pennsylvanians deserve that basic safety net as no one should lose their home or life savings while looking for work. You have my word that I will always fight for the working-class people of the Lehigh Valley.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, one of my duties is to consider how wisely we, as a legislature, spend your tax dollars. My goal is to ensure that every dollar spent is spent responsibly, benefitting all Allentown residents, including the youngest of voices, who represent our shared future.

Recently, Gov. Wolf unveiled his budget proposal which calls for increases to important educational programs like Pre-K Counts and Head Start. These programs offer an excellent opportunity for these children to hit the ground running when they enter kindergarten. I applaud the governor's progressive thinking, as both a father of school-age children, as well as a state representative, knowing what these increases would mean to families in my district.

Unfortunately, a 2017 budget proposed by my Republican colleagues includes, not an increase, but a potential \$50 million cut to Pre-K programs and assistance to low-income families who need child care. This is neither acceptable nor responsible. Investing in our future is key to success and growth in our commonwealth, and our children are our most important investment. As your voice in Harrisburg, I will fight against this decrease in funding.

If you have thoughts or concerns regarding these or other state issues, please remember that my office is located at 1912 S. Fourth St. in South Allentown; our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Stop by anytime if my staff or I can be of assistance.



Hands-On Science



I believe there's nothing better than hands-on learning in the classroom, and loved being able to join Mosser Elementary students when the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's "AG on The Go Van" stopped by their school for a morning of interactive learning.

These programs make it possible for our students to engage with science in such an immersive curriculum. I wholeheartedly support these endeavors and was pleased to partner with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and Allentown School District to bring this learning opportunity to our elementary schools. This program gave our students a chance to learn about how agriculture impacts all our lives.

Classes are led by a state-certified teacher with materials that have been aligned to state standards for science and technology, and the environment and ecology. Participating schools may select from two available lesson plans, "Farming, The Environment and You" or "Food, Nutrition and You," designed to not only emphasize a different aspect of agriculture, but also the various science concepts. This program is one that every school should welcome into their classrooms.

A big thank you to the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Agricultural Foundation for funding the traveling science class!

Building 21



I joined state Sen. Pat Browne and Rep. Mike Schlossberg to present a \$1 million grant to Allentown School District officials for Building 21.

The school started in September 2015 with 150 freshmen, as an alternative education high school that focuses on project-based learning in non-traditional classroom settings with more industry-focused and student-centered learning environments. Each year, the school will add another grade with up to 150 students in that grade. Eventually, Building 21 Allentown could have as many as 600 students.

The additional funding will help with renovations to the school to enable the creation of cutting edge learning spaces that will allow for the integration of technology into classrooms and flexible grouping of students, while creating an environment conducive to applied and project-based learning.

Minimum Wage



Creating a family-sustaining minimum wage is something that is important to struggling families. That's why I support an increase to the state's minimum wage. I hosted a policy hearing where my colleagues and I heard from the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, industry professionals and individuals about how an increase can positively impact the economy.

Small Business



There's no denying the importance of small business to Allentown's economic future. Recently, DJ Kormanik of Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley Inc. and I had an opportunity to discuss a program to help area residents take an initial concept and develop it into a start-up company.

Innovation

Mike Krajsa, business and faculty instructor at Penn State University Lehigh Valley, recently met with me at the Lehigh Valley LaunchBox to explain how this space in downtown Allentown serves as an innovation hub for early stage entrepreneurs.



Sacred Heart Elementary School



Some talented third-grade students at Sacred Heart Elementary School created Christmas ornaments for my district office Christmas tree again this year. And because I always enjoy visiting classrooms, as a special “thank you” we had a pizza party, where I also had the chance to teach them a little bit about what I do.

Dodd Elementary School



I was happy to have a chance to spend time reading with students at Dodd Elementary School. These students took pride in sharing their literacy skills with me and I always enjoy a good book.

Technology

There are a lot of innovative companies thriving in Allentown. Cold Edge Technologies, a worldwide manufacturer of custom cryogenic solutions for laboratories and researchers, is just one example of growth and technology thriving at the Allentown Economic Development Center/Bridgeworks complex on Harrison Street.



Budget 2017 Update



As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, I have the unique opportunity to take a deep dive on the entire state budget and a lead role in advocating for our seniors, veterans, students and working Pennsylvanians by using taxpayer money more appropriately.

Budget negotiations are ongoing and as they do, I will continue to fight for the following priorities, which I believe are most important for the good people of Allentown:

- Adequate funding for education. The children and families of the Allentown School District (including my own) deserve the best education possible. In addition, we need to make sure that kids get a great head start on their studies by attending quality pre-K programs. Lastly, we need to keep college as accessible as possible for anyone who has the ability and desire for higher education.
- Strong programs for seniors, veterans and those with special needs. Not a day goes by without a senior calling my office seeking help with prescription drugs or a family calling for assistance for their child with autism or another special need. We are called by our shared moral conscience to support those who are most at risk.
- Stable school property taxes and supporting our seniors. Increasing state funding for ASD has the added benefit of stabilizing property taxes at home. This must happen, but it must happen while we increase funding for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for our seniors so that they can stay in their homes for as long as they choose.
- Jobs and job training opportunities. We must continue to invest in our community through road and bridge construction, incentives for investment in Allentown so that employers bring jobs to our city and training opportunities so that job seekers are prepared for the positions that are available.

My office is here to help

Help for seniors and veterans available in my office

Each month, I host an APPRISE counselor in my district office to assist seniors with questions about Medicare and other health care-related programs. The APPRISE counselor can help you with Medicare enrollment, Part A and Part B, prescription drug plans, Medicare Advantage plans and other health insurance options.



The volunteer APPRISE benefits counselor is available to meet with you from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the third Tuesday of every month.

On the third Friday of every month between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. a representative from the American Legion is available in my office to answer questions from veterans and their loved ones about pension benefits, survivor benefits and VA-related health care issues; as well as other veteran-related benefits you may be entitled to.

To meet with either the APPRISE counselor or American Legion representative, you must register for an appointment. To schedule a time, please contact my office at 610-791-6270.

Applications for Children's Health Insurance Program at my office

My office can help get your child enrolled in the state's Children's Health Insurance Program, known as CHIP.

It covers immunizations, wellness checkups, prescriptions, dental, vision and hearing services, diagnostic testing, emergency care, mental health care and hospitalization, as well as substance abuse rehabilitation and other services.

CHIP coverage is available to any child in Pennsylvania whose family earns too much to qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford to purchase private insurance or isn't covered by an employer.

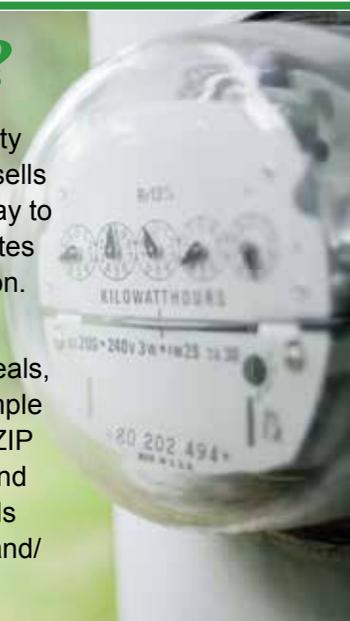
For an average four-person family, CHIP is free if the household income is less than \$50,440, low cost if the household income is between \$50,440 and \$76,145, or full cost if the household income exceeds \$76,145. Premiums vary, depending on the carrier.

To find out more about CHIP or to enroll your child, contact my office at 610-791-6270.

Did You Know?

You don't have to stick with one electricity supplier, or settle for an offer someone sells door-to-door. There's a much simpler way to shop for your electricity and compare rates from the state's Public Utility Commission.

Much like travel sites that allow you to compare prices and shop for the best deals, www.papowerswitch.com is fast and simple to use. All you need to do is enter your ZIP code and all of the available suppliers and their rates are provided along with details about the plans and options to sign up and/or switch.



Save the Date!

Join me for my Town Hall Meeting!

Thursday, May 25

6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Union Baptist Church

302 N. 6th St., Allentown





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Planning to volunteer this Summer?

The summer is fast approaching and that means so, too, is the annual call for volunteers as children get ready for activities galore.

Don't forget that if you're planning to volunteer with children, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, you'll need to have the appropriate clearances.

These include the following:

- Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP); and
- Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).

Additionally, a fingerprint-based federal criminal history (FBI) submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent is required if:

- The volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years.

Volunteers who are not required to obtain the FBI Clearance because they are applying for an unpaid position and have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under §6344.

You must have your clearances before you can begin volunteering and, once obtained, the clearances are valid for 60 months.

More information is available online at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov.

Get All the Latest Updates

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