

# **GREG VITALI**

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

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## **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

DECEMBER 2017

# **GREG VITALI**

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT**

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## **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 2016 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](http://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.

## ***Help Available for Identity Theft, Fraud Victims***

If you suspect that you've been the victim of identity theft or fraud, there are public resources that can help.

The Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office website at [www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov) can help you learn more about identity theft and the latest scams affecting Pennsylvanians. A federal government website at [www.usa.gov/identity-theft](http://www.usa.gov/identity-theft) contains a directory of resources to help you safeguard your identity, determine if you are at risk and take steps to recover if your financial identity has been compromised.

Currently, 5.5 million Pennsylvanians are at an elevated risk of having their identities stolen since it was revealed in early September that a data breach at Equifax exposed their personal information. Equifax is one of the nation's three consumer credit reporting agencies.

Equifax established a dedicated website, [www.equifaxsecurity2017.com](http://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com), to help consumers determine if their information was impacted. When you

visit the website, click on the "Am I Impacted" tab near the bottom of the page.

Additionally, Equifax has a dedicated call center at 1-866-447-7559, which is open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Unless you call Equifax and leave a message at their call center, they will not contact you by phone. Please beware of potential scammers who may represent that they are from Equifax if you did not leave a message at the call center.

If you have been affected by this breach, contact the State Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection helpline at 1-800-441-2555 or via email at [scams@attorneygeneral.gov](mailto:scams@attorneygeneral.gov). You also can call the Federal Trade Commission through their Identity Theft Hotline at 1-877-438-4338 or contact them online at [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov).

You will receive instructions on how to begin to recover.

## ***Medical Marijuana Patient and Caregiver Registry is Open***

Patients and caregivers across Pennsylvania can now learn more about or register for the state's medical marijuana program at [www.medicalmarijuana.pa.gov](http://www.medicalmarijuana.pa.gov).

The state is expected to deliver medication to patients in the next six months.

Patients who want to participate in the program must follow these steps:

1. Visit the Patients and Caregivers Registry online at <https://padohmmp.custhelp.com/app/login> and create a patient profile.
2. Obtain a physician's certification that you suffer from one of the 17 serious medical conditions. To find a physician, go to <http://bit.ly/2ARVRWF>.
3. Return to the Patient and Caregivers Registry online and pay for a medical marijuana ID card (\$50).
4. Obtain medical marijuana from an approved dispensary in Pennsylvania.

Dispensary locations slated for Southeast Pennsylvania include Devon, King of Prussia, Upper Darby and Yeadon.

In the meantime, "Safe Harbor" letters are available for parents, legal guardians, and caregivers who want to obtain medical marijuana for patients under the age of 18 immediately. These letters permit parents to obtain

medical marijuana outside the state and legally possess it in Pennsylvania to administer to their child.

Questions about the Medical Marijuana Program can be emailed to [RA-DHMedMarijuana@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DHMedMarijuana@pa.gov). More information is also available on the Department of Health website at [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov).

## ***Opioid Addiction Help Available***

Each Pennsylvania county has an administrative office that oversees the delivery of drug and alcohol treatment and prevention services.

In our region, someone seeking help for themselves or a loved one should contact:

- **Delaware County Office of Behavioral Health**  
610-713-2365  
20 S. 69th St., Upper Darby
- **Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol**  
610-278-3642  
Montgomery County Human Services Center  
430 DeKalb St., Norristown

Anyone with a drug or alcohol problem also can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at 1-800-662-4357 to access free 24-hour referrals and information about substance-abuse disorders.

## ***Voters Approve Property Tax Ballot Question***

Voters approved a ballot question this fall allowing the General Assembly to pass laws permitting local municipalities to eliminate up to 100 percent of taxes on property that is the owner's primary residence.

The Pennsylvania Constitution previously capped the exclusion on property taxes on a primary residence at 50 percent.

Any tax reduction enacted under this new law must be offset with another revenue source such as a local income tax. The offset cannot come from raising other property taxes.

The ballot measure passed with 54 percent support.

It's important to note that the ballot question itself did not reduce or eliminate any property taxes. The question only permitted state lawmakers to choose to allow local governments, school districts and other authorities to make such changes.

Currently, there is neither a timetable for such legislation, nor a model for how any such bill would read or apply.

## ***Upcoming Hazardous Household Waste Collections***

There will be household hazardous waste collections in the southeastern Pennsylvania region in 2018. All events will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., rain or shine.

- **Sat., May 5 at the Emergency Services Training Center** – 1700 Calcon Hook Road, Sharon Hill.
- **Sat., June 9 at Rose Tree Park** – 1671 N. Providence Road (Route 252), Media.
- **Sunday, Sept. 16 at Penn State University** – Brandywine Campus – 25 Yearsley Mill Road, Media
- **Saturday, Oct. 6 at the Upper Chichester Municipal Building** – 8500 Furey Road, Upper Chichester.

Household hazardous waste includes household products labeled poisonous, toxic, flammable, caustic, corrosive, reactive or explosive. Items containing Freon and electronic waste will not be accepted.

For more information about collections in Delaware County, you may call the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority at 610-892-9627 or visit [www.co.delaware.pa.us/SWA](http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/SWA).

For more information about collections in Montgomery County, you may call the Montgomery County recycling hotline at 610-278-3618 or visit [www.montcopa.org/recycling](http://www.montcopa.org/recycling).

## ***Keystone Exams Delayed***

Implementation of the Keystone Exams as a high school graduation requirement was delayed another year as part of budget-related legislation passed in November.

Passing the exams will not be required for graduation until the 2019-20 school year. The graduation requirement had been scheduled to take effect for the class of 2017. The delay will allow the state Education Department time to refine and improve the tests.

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course tests designed to assess proficiency in several subject areas. They were implemented in the 2012-13 school year for juniors and seniors as a component of Pennsylvania's system of high school graduation requirements, but due to concerns over their effectiveness in measuring student aptitude

across different curriculums, the requirement to pass them before graduation has been delayed each school year.

Once the tests are implemented, students who fail to score "proficient" on a Keystone exam twice, or once during 12th grade, could graduate by completing a substitute known as a project-based assessment.

Another law passed this summer will allow students in vocational programs to graduate regardless of their performance on the Algebra 1, literature and biology sections of the exams if they attain an industry-based certification, succeed on an industry-based test or show continued meaningful engagement in their field.

## ***Persian Gulf Veterans Benefit Program Ends August 2018***

Eligible veterans who served on active duty in the Persian Gulf Theater of Operations between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991 have until Aug. 31, 2018, to collect a special one-time payment to honor their service.

The program pays \$75 a month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in the theater of operations, an

additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for an additional \$5,000.

Please visit [www.dmva.pa.gov](http://www.dmva.pa.gov) for more information about the program and other veterans programs in the state. You can also call 1-866-458-9182 for assistance or more information on the program.

## ***Check Vehicles for Flood Damage Before Buying***

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation recently warned that consumers should be on the lookout for flood-damaged cars being sold as undamaged new or used vehicles. Such vehicles could have made their way up to markets here, following a damaging hurricane season in the South.

Flood-impacted vehicles can legally be sold in Pennsylvania as long as they possess a Flood or Reconstructed Flood title. Flood-impacted vehicles that have been issued a certificate of salvage are required to pass an enhanced vehicle safety inspection prior to being issued a title in Pennsylvania.

If you are offered a vehicle for what appears to be a very low price, you can check several areas on the vehicle to see if it was damaged in a flood.

Such signs include water stains, mold or sand, musty odors, signs of paint oxidation, fog or moisture inside the interior and exterior lights.

## ***College Avenue Bridge Replacement Update***

Work is ongoing to replace the structurally deficient College Avenue bridge over the SEPTA railroad tracks at Haverford Road in Haverford Township.

The bridge was initially scheduled to be completed in November 2017. The revised completion date is May 2018. Early delays were caused by the failure of PECO, Verizon and Comcast to move their utility lines located near the bridge.

To ensure construction goes smoothly, PennDOT is now scheduling regular meetings among utilities, contractors and local officials.

The \$5.2 million state-funded project will improve the traffic signals at College Avenue and Haverford Road and add left-turn lanes on College Avenue at the intersection.

Once construction is complete on the College Avenue bridge, replacement of the Ardmore Avenue bridge is expected to follow.

## ***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.

Examples of documents that my office is not able to notarize include car titles, wills, powers of attorney (financial and advance directives for health care), and the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9.

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.

## ***Gambling Expanded Across State***

In an effort to raise revenues for the state budget, legislation was enacted in November authorizing new forms of gambling across Pennsylvania, including:

- Up to 10 mini-casinos, which may operate between 300 and 750 slot machines and 30 table games
- iGaming, which includes internet-based poker, slot machines and table games
- Fantasy sports betting
- iLottery, which connects people to Pa. Lottery games online
- Up to five video game terminals in qualified truck stops

- Casino-operated simulcast horse racing
- Internet-based gaming on tablets at qualified airports

The expansion is expected to generate about \$200 million to the General Fund in licenses and fees in 2017-18 and then about \$90 million to \$100 million in recurring revenue beginning in 2018-19.

I voted against this legislation because it is bad public policy to raise public funds on addictive behavior.

For help with a gambling problem, call Pennsylvania's gambling helpline at 1-877-565-2112 or go to [www.paproblemgambling.com](http://www.paproblemgambling.com).