



State Representative

Winter 2017

# MARK LONGIETTI

**Capitol Office:**

127 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202007  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2007  
(717) 772-4035

**District Office:**

2213 Shenango Valley Freeway, Unit 2-E  
Hermitage, PA 16148  
(724) 981-4655

**Tourism & Recreational Development Committee**

Email: [mlongietti@pahouse.net](mailto:mlongietti@pahouse.net)

Website: [www.pahouse.com/Longietti](http://www.pahouse.com/Longietti)

 [www.facebook.com/RepLongietti](http://www.facebook.com/RepLongietti)

## Committee prepares for nation's 250th birthday

The members of the Tourism and Recreational Development Committee are eager to celebrate the semiquincentennial of the United States.

In just a few years (2026), we will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation. The Tourism and Recreational Development Committee has been proactively planning for this exciting time. In June, the committee welcomed representatives from USA250 to discuss Pennsylvania's role in the upcoming semiquincentennial.

USA250 Inc. is a nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania. Its purpose is to organize, advocate, promote and coordinate a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of America and the signing of the Declaration of Independence; and organize and facilitate a long-term conversation on a future that focuses on renewing America's core values, philosophy and form of governance and the nation's commitment to freedom.

Following the informational meeting, H.B. 1793 was introduced and was later supported by the entire House chamber. House Bill 1793 would establish the Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial. The purpose of the commission is to plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the U.S.'s 250th anniversary.

House Bill 1793 is modeled after the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016, which was enacted by Congress and signed into law by former President Obama in July 2016. The U.S. commission was established for the observance and commemoration of our 250th anniversary and related events through local, state, national and international activities. Now, Pennsylvania has the unique opportunity to be the first state to establish a state-level commission. This would position our state to be a focal point of the nation's celebration, particularly given our rich history.

## Longietti named chairman of House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee

At the beginning of the 2017-18 legislative session, I was appointed Democratic chairman of the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee.

I am excited for the opportunity to chair this important committee. Tourism is the state's second-largest industry, providing nearly \$40 billion in annual economic impact and supporting more than 450,000 jobs.

As the state continues to deal with severe budget shortfalls, it is important to understand that the tourism industry also provides \$4 billion annually in state and local taxes.

I have served on this committee my entire time in the legislature, so I am very familiar with the goals, purposes and processes of the committee and I have already established many important connections with people in the industry, such as Sharon's Karen Winner Sed, co-chair of the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership. The PTP shares the committee's goal of promoting the amazing tourism assets Pennsylvania offers.

Mercer County is a prime example of the wide variety of tourism opportunities, from the outlets in Grove City to the Avenue of 444 Flags in Hermitage, and WaterFire Sharon, which brings arts, culture and tourists to downtown Sharon three weekends a year.

This committee is crucial for providing ideas and support for sites and events throughout the region and the entire commonwealth.



***In 2017, only 342 of more than 130,000 schools nationally received the designation of National Blue Ribbon School, and Greenville Junior/Senior High was one of them! I presented Superintendent Mark Ferarra and Principals Mark Hogue and Brian Tokar with a House of Representatives citation for their recognition. Greenville is the first Mercer County high school to be honored. Congratulations to the students, parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, school board and the entire Greenville community!***

## 'Libre's Law' signed

### *New protections for animals*

In an outdoor ceremony in June, the governor signed and enacted Libre's Law – the comprehensive overhaul of Pennsylvania's animal protection laws. The new law gives voice and rights for animals who provide us companionship and service, but can't speak for themselves.

I was proud to support the effort, which culminated with Act 10 of 2017 – better known as Libre's Law named for the cute Boston terrier pup who was rescued from a Lancaster County farm after weeks of severe neglect.

As we know, how you treat animals is a strong indicator of how you treat other people.

This would not have been possible without the efforts of animal lovers and concerned citizens from across the commonwealth working together to push for these reforms.

It is now a felony to torture a pet, and anyone who severely abuses a horse or tethers a dog outside in extreme weather will face serious criminal charges and fines.

Those convicted of abusing or neglecting animals face forfeiture of their pets and animals.



*Libre joined the governor by adding his paw print to the new law. This new law gives animals that depend on us for care, comfort and compassion a new lease on life.*



## Committee meets with tourism and recreational development stakeholders

The Tourism and Recreational Development Committee held several informational meetings earlier this year to discuss issues impacting the tourism industry and recreational activities throughout the commonwealth.

The committee heard from various state agencies and organizations, including:

- Carrie Fischer Lepore, deputy secretary of the state Department of Community and Economic Development's Office of Marketing, Tourism and Film, shared an update on the marketing and outreach efforts made to promote the tourism industry.
- Craig Davis, president and CEO of VisitPITTSBURGH, shared the group's support of H.B. 520, which would implement a tourism promotion fee and establish a sports commission in Allegheny County. Unlike its peer cities, the Pittsburgh area currently lacks a sports commission which hampers its ability to attract significant sports tournaments, such as the Women's NCAA Basketball Final Four. A provision included in the Fiscal Code, enacted late this year, will help establish the commission.
- Cheryl Cook, deputy secretary of the state Department of Agriculture; David Hallstrom, president of the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs; and Paul Reichart, president of the Bloomsburg Fair, discussed the economic impact of county fairs across the commonwealth. The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs published a report, "Economic Impact of Pennsylvania's Fair Industry." The report cites Mercer County as a leader among three counties within the commonwealth that host five county fairs each. County fairs serve as economic drivers for both intrastate and interstate tourism.
- R. Ron Sertz, chairman of PA Sports, a 13-member team of the leading sports tourism organizations throughout Pennsylvania. PA Sports shared the outcomes of a comprehensive study on the impact of sports tourism across the state.

## Committee supports legislation opening up recreational lands

In June, the committee held a voting meeting to consider H.B. 544 which would increase the availability of recreational lands. The Recreational Use of Land and Water Act (RULWA) has not been updated for decades, even though the face of recreation has changed in many respects. I offered an amendment to strike the appropriate balance between providing a measure of liability protection for landowners who open their lands for recreational use, without charge, while ensuring that recreational users may seek recovery for injuries caused by the gross negligence of another. I am pleased to report that my amendment was adopted, thereby improving this legislation.

The bill also would provide an incentive for landowners to open up their land for recreational activities such as: biking, bird and wildlife watching, extreme sports and ATVing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and hunting.

House Bill 544 recently passed the House and awaits Senate action before reaching the governor's desk.



# Committee chairmen ward off hotel tax increase

During the arduous budget negotiations, there was a last-minute proposal introduced that would have added a statewide 5 percent increase to Pennsylvania's hotel tax. The proposed tax increase would have had detrimental effects on travel destinations in each region of the commonwealth. Fortunately, the proposal was scuttled following the bipartisan opposition of Tourism Committee leaders.

Republican Chairman David Millard and I agreed that this proposal would negatively impact the tourism industry. Major cities and smaller tourism marketing destinations across the commonwealth would have been affected with negative publicity due to the increased tax. As a result, potential visitors would not consider these cities as future travel destinations.

Two of our largest cities would have had the highest hotel tax in the country, and that negative publicity would have resulted

in bad business practices. Even Mercer County would have been negatively impacted. The hotel tax rate would have increased to 16 percent, making us uncompetitive among cities in neighboring Ohio.

In a bipartisan manner, Chairman Millard and I shared our thoughts on how the proposal would be harmful to the industry. We said it would impair our ability to compete, and to develop innovative measures to attract tourists. I emphasized how this proposal would impact domestic travel, reduce the interest of companies to hold meetings and large conventions in the state, result in lost jobs and discourage international tourists.

In the end, by joining our efforts in a bipartisan manner, we were able to stop this misguided proposal.

***Over the past few months, the Tourism and Recreational Development Committee has been actively exploring the commonwealth. Chairman Longietti and members of the committee have been engaging industry leaders and stakeholders with a shared goal of advocating for funding to adequately market tourists destinations throughout the commonwealth.***

## Pittsburgh Committee Tour



*A sneak peek of the Steelers' locker room.*

## Erie Tour



*Active research conducted by the Regional Science Consortium of Presque Isle.*



*Beautiful Presque Isle.*

## Philadelphia Committee Tour



*Philadelphia Museum of Art and the "Rocky Steps."*



*Committee hearings at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.*

## Bloomsburg Fair Tour



*Bloomsburg Speedway with members of the Bloomsburg Fair Board.*



*Committee hearing at Bloomsburg University on the economic impact of county fairs.*





**State Rep. Mark Longietti**  
P.O. Box 202007  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2007

lpo.kl.1217

## Pennsylvania needs to promote tourism to attract visitors

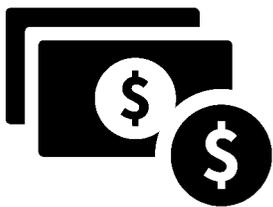
Most businesspeople will tell you that “it takes money to make money.” If you don’t promote your product then you lose sales to your competitors who do promote their products. A recent study commissioned by the Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association (PRLA) entitled “Competitive Analysis of Pennsylvania’s Tourism Budget,” affirms this point in regard to tourism. Simply put, Pennsylvania’s failure to properly invest in tourism promotion has resulted in lost visitors to other states, as well as lost jobs, income and tax revenues.

Specifically, in the 2008-09 budget year Pennsylvania dedicated almost \$30 million to tourism promotion. By 2014-15 that amount dipped to less than \$5 million. As a result, we lost 37 million visitors to other states, along with \$7.7 billion in lost visitor spending, 13,400 fewer jobs, \$3.1 billion in lost income from those jobs, and \$450 million in lost state tax revenue.

In contrast, Michigan increased its tourism promotion budget from \$8 million to \$30 million through the “Pure Michigan” ad campaign. As a result, it gained 22.4 million in out-of-state trips and \$6.6 billion in visitor spending, along with all the jobs, income and tax revenues that flow from the same.

The PRLA study concludes that for every \$1 we invest in tourism promotion, we could realize \$3.43 in added state tax revenues in the same budget year, due to increased visitor spending. That is why I have pushed for an increase in state funding for tourism promotion so that we can further grow our tourism industry. Simply put, Pennsylvania has vibrant cities, quaint towns and beautiful rural scenes, as well as many attractions, a rich history and an incredible outdoors, but we have to tell that story in order to attract more visitors.

## Longietti announces local recreation grants



Last month, I announced \$325,000 in recreation grants for our region.

Hermitage was awarded \$175,000 for construction of its Athletic Complex Phase 3 Expansion, which will add two large, open play fields and new parking facilities, along with an

extended trail system. The project includes excavating/grading, soccer field equipment, benches and bleachers, buffer yard planting, trail paving, drainage, topsoil and seeding.

The Buhl Community Recreation Center in Sharon received \$150,000 to install an ADA-accessible elevator in its three-story facility that currently has none, which has kept the second and third floors inaccessible to those who are handicapped or have limited mobility.

These projects will increase recreational opportunities for citizens of all ages in our community and will add to our rich quality of life. I appreciate the partnership between local and state officials in securing these important grants.

Gary Gulla, assistant city manager for Hermitage, said, “This project, funded by the Commonwealth Financing Authority, will enable us to construct additional play fields to meet the ever-increasing demand for youth sports facilities – and to further build out the recreational trail system at the complex. Representative Longietti’s efforts to secure the CFA funding will benefit the community by investing in recreational resources for future generations.”

Jason Kmick, executive director of the Sharon facility, said, “The board and staff of the Buhl Community Recreation Center are absolutely thrilled to be awarded this grant. We strongly believe that our project, once completed, will have an immediate impact and significantly improve the accessibility of our center. The support of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and our representative Mark Longietti to launch this project has afforded us an opportunity to further our mission and expand our capacity to provide greater access to health and wellness activities for all in our community.”