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State Representative

BRIAN SIMS

182nd Legislative District

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Sims announces \$3.4 million in state grants for local projects

I am pleased to announce that local projects will receive a total of more than \$3.4 million in state grants.

The state will provide \$2.2 million to the Barnes Foundation for its garden pavilion and visitor amenity improvements project. This museum is a major cultural attraction for Philadelphians and visitors alike.

The state will also provide two grants totaling \$898,485 for developing park land in front of Park Towne Place Museum District Residences, 2200 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, into an active recreational space, with walking trails and reflective gardens featuring public art.

The funding will be in addition to \$200,000 in state funding which I helped to secure last year.

The city's Parks and Recreation Department is partnering with Aimco (Apartment Investment and Management Co.) and the Association for Public Art on the project.

The public-private partnership to improve the park area is consistent with the master plan for the Benjamin Franklin Parkway – More Park, Less Way, by providing a welcoming open green space along the parkway that will benefit residents, visitors and neighboring cultural institutions. The overall development will also create and retain jobs within the region.

The state also will provide \$376,736 to replace the dated headhouse to the 11th Street Market-Frankford Line elevated/subway stop and the heavily used bus shelter next to it on the 1100 block of Market Street. The new headhouse and shelter are intended to increase the visibility of transit assets available to the public.

Rep. Sims speaks at a Capitol rally for reproductive rights.



Budget overview

Republican foot-dragging in the service of special interests delayed completion of the state budget for nearly four months. I voted against the main budget bill because it relies heavily on one-time fixes such as borrowing and would do too little to provide sustainable, recurring revenue to fund education and vital social services. I and most Democratic legislators want to pass an extraction tax on natural gas drilled in Pennsylvania, close corporate tax loopholes and raise the minimum wage.

However, there were some positives that resulted from the budget process:

- We passed a law, which I supported, to put an end to the “stop-and-go” nuisance liquor-selling businesses that have been wreaking havoc in many Philadelphia neighborhoods. The state Liquor Control Board will now be able to immediately shut down a nuisance bar or store if it does not meet the Liquor Code’s seating, square footage, food or health requirements.
- We made a greater investment in schools, including increases in funding for Philadelphia public schools and funding necessary for our state-related universities such as Penn State and Temple to avoid tuition increases for in-state students. In addition, Gov. Tom Wolf and Mayor Jim Kenney’s appointees on the School Reform Commission voted to dissolve the SRC and restore local control.
- We also passed a fix, which I supported, for the Actual Value Initiative (AVI) to help even out property tax bills after the city’s reassessment while protecting funding for Philadelphia schools.

A new law I supported will establish the First Chance Trust Fund to aid children impacted by the prison system and reverse the direction of youth who may be on a path leading to incarceration in Pennsylvania.

The fund will be paid for by private, tax-deductible donations and a 1 percent surcharge on vendors that have a contract with the Department of Corrections exceeding \$5 million. It will create scholarships and provide grants to programs that benefit children who live in areas with high dropout rates, high incarceration rates and high crime rates.

The legislature will soon begin the 2018-19 budget process. As always, I welcome your input on the issues of importance to you so I can represent you to the best of my ability in Harrisburg.

Sims, colleagues call for prompt action in wake of sexual harassment allegations in Harrisburg

In December, I joined with three House Democratic colleagues to issue a statement and call for action in the wake of sexual harassment allegations in the Pennsylvania legislature.

“The recent reports and allegations emanating from Harrisburg are deeply troubling. For too long, stories of inappropriate behavior have been kept hush-hush, universally acknowledged but rarely acted upon,” we wrote to legislative leaders.

We also said: “To our colleagues and staff, we promise a renewed effort to promote and foster equality and respect in every Capitol office, hallway, and corner. We promise to offer no safe harbor and to not casually dismiss a red flag. We promise to work harder to create a better environment where every staffer, member, and intern feels safe and respected at work, and we are committed to developing a better reporting system for when things go wrong. In an institution where women are still underrepresented, we promise to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

“In addition, we are calling for three immediate changes:

(1) We understand that all four caucuses have received numerous right-to-know requests regarding sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. We call upon Democratic and Republican leadership alike to expedite their review and to release all information to the public ahead of schedule. This should include the number of complaints filed over the last ten years, the extent of their investigation, what if any remedial action was taken, and concise settlement or trial awards that were paid out to victims and their attorneys. Leadership must also provide the details of how each award was paid for and the total cost incurred in representing the caucus or the accused in the matter. This is taxpayer money, and citizens have a right to know how pervasive this problem is and how much it takes away from resources that should be spent on bettering the lives of Pennsylvanians.

(2) We are also aware of pending co-sponsorship memoranda in the House and Senate that will likely lead to larger, more substantial progress on this issue. We call upon the majority leaders to promise their immediate consideration upon their introduction. These bills should be the first bills discussed in 2018.

(3) Every employee of the General Assembly must have a consistent, clear, and fair avenue to report such claims and to have them properly addressed regardless of which caucus they work for. We call upon our leadership to rectify any shortfall in this process immediately and to make this process public.

“Efforts to mandate additional training, to provide superior support for victims, and to bring much-needed transparency are good first steps, but we must do more – a real commitment to changing our culture must be made.”



Rep. Sims speaks at a Capitol rally for legislation for equal pay for women. He has reintroduced legislation (H.B. 1243) with Rep. Tina Davis that would strengthen Pennsylvania’s outdated equal-pay law.

Sims elected vice chair of PA SAFE Caucus, which pushes for gun reforms

In February, I was elected vice chair of the PA SAFE caucus, which pushes for commonsense gun safety reforms in the Pennsylvania legislature.

I’m honored that my colleagues chose me for this role, and I will continue advocating for much-needed gun safety laws in Pennsylvania. So much attention is paid to terrorism when many more Pennsylvanians and Americans die each year from so-called “routine” gun violence. There is solid public support for reforms such as “no fly, no buy” to keep people on the terror watch list from buying guns, for example.

More information about the PA SAFE Caucus is available at www.pahouse.com/PASafe



Rep. Sims speaks with students at The Academy at Palumbo’s Career Day.

Funding renewed for Children's Health Insurance Program

After a shameful delay of nearly four months, the Republican-controlled Congress has finally passed funding to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program for another six years. Pennsylvania would have run out of money for this program by the spring.

CHIP provides health insurance coverage to children of working families who earn too much to qualify for Medical Assistance, but cannot afford to buy private insurance.

This program got its start in Pennsylvania 25 years ago. In fact, the federal government used our program as the model for CHIP at the federal level.

The program is vital to 9 million children and expecting mothers nationwide, including more than 180,000 Pennsylvania children. More than 24,000 of them are here in Philadelphia. Additionally, there were attempts in Harrisburg to use this crucial program to deny transgender children the health care they need. My colleagues and I in the LGBT Equality Caucus thwarted those attempts.

I'm glad pressure from Democrats and the public finally convinced Congress to fund this important program for six more years.



Rep. Sims speaks at a news conference at City Hall about legislation he has sponsored to protect Pennsylvania minors from the harmful practice of anti-LGBT "conversion therapy."



Rep. Sims participates in a "SRCYaLater" rally celebrating the upcoming return of local control for Philadelphia schools.



Rep. Sims talks with Principal Stephanie McKenna at McCall Elementary.

Legislative Initiatives

Legislation I have introduced in the 2017-18 session includes:

- **Equal Pay for Equal Work:** I have reintroduced legislation to ensure Pennsylvania women receive equal pay for equal work. Our laws have not been updated since 1967, and remain too weak and ineffective to address the problems women face in the workplace. Paying women equally for their work isn't just the right thing to do – it would help foster what we all want: a stronger economy that works for every Pennsylvanian.
- **It's On Us:** I'm partnering with Governor Wolf to combat violence and sexual assault in schools across the commonwealth. My legislation (H.B.1753) in the It's On Us initiative would mandate annual reporting of sexual assault and domestic violence to the Department of Education. This information would be publicly accessible on the department's website.
- **Boost jobs and the environment:** My Sustainable Development and Manufacturing Tax Credit Package (H.B.s 1178-1181) would encourage sustainable development, green building and green manufacturing practices and would stimulate job growth in Pennsylvania.
- **Let voters pick their representatives, instead of the other way around:** H.B. 1114 would reform how district lines are drawn for the state legislature and Pennsylvania's seats in the U.S. House by creating non-partisan redistricting commissions.
- **Make it easier to vote:** H.B. 1117 would allow "in-person" absentee ballot voting before the primary or general election, as well as no-excuse-needed absentee ballot voting by mail.
- **Cover PEP and PrEP HIV medication:** H.B.s 1107 and 1112 would require private insurance companies to cover Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) HIV medication. These bills are designed to help in the battle against HIV/AIDS and would provide Pennsylvanians with access to medication that they may otherwise be unable to afford.
- **Protect consumers:** I have introduced and co-sponsored a two-bill consumer protection package, including legislation with Rep. Madeleine Dean (H.B. 1119) that would require car dealerships that sell used cars to disclose unperformed manufacturer recall work before selling a used car. I have also reintroduced a bill (H.B. 756) with Rep. Tom Murt that would increase protections for consumers who enter into contracts with automatic renewal provisions.
- **Expand the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for renters:** H.B. 1118 would increase the maximum income limit for state Property Tax/Rent Rebates for renters from \$15,000 to \$20,000.



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INSIDE:

- State budget overview – more funding for education
- Call for action on sexual harassment
- \$3.4 million for local projects

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I want to hear from you

I enjoy speaking with neighborhood associations, school parent-teacher organizations and other local groups. To invite me, just call my office at 215-246-1501 or email RepSims@pahouse.net.



Don't miss out! Opt in to stay informed

If you receive my occasional email updates, I hope you find them to be useful and informative. Starting in mid-March, due to a House rule covering periods before primary and general elections for the House, I will be unable to send you these email updates until May 16 UNLESS you have specifically opted in to keep receiving them.



To make sure you keep receiving updates about important events like my recent job fair and senior fair, the pending state budget and more, **please visit www.pahouse.com/Sims/ contact and send me a quick email to opt in, if you haven't opted in already.**

You can also keep up with news from my office by "Liking" my Facebook page (www.facebook.com/RepBrianSims) and following me on Twitter: [@RepSims](https://twitter.com/RepSims).

Heating aid via LIHEAP now available

The 2017-18 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is open and accepting applications for heating assistance grants.



LIHEAP offers cash grants of \$200 to \$1,000 that are sent directly to the utility company to defray heating costs for eligible households, and crisis benefits of \$25 to \$500 for households in immediate danger of being without heat, from such emergency situations as broken heating equipment or leaking lines, lack of fuel or utility service termination.

We have LIHEAP applications available at my office and we can help you file it.

Besides my office, LIHEAP information is available by calling the statewide LIHEAP Client Helpline at 1-866-857-7095. You also may apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

The state Department of Human Services, which administers the federally funded program, mailed applications or information to people who received LIHEAP last season.

This season's income guidelines for both LIHEAP cash and crisis grants are \$18,090 for an individual and \$24,360 for couples, and these guidelines increase for each additional person in the household.

Important voting deadline

Do you know someone who's not registered to vote? April 16 is the deadline to register in time to vote in the May 15 primary, when candidates for U.S. senator, U.S. representative and many other offices will be on the ballot. Pennsylvania now has **online registration at www.votespa.com.**

For more information, call the Philadelphia voter registration office at 215-686-1591.