

THE NORTHEAST NEWS

From State Representative

Ed Neilson



WINTER 2018

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Gov. Wolf presents 2018-19 budget proposal

Gov. Tom Wolf laid out his 2018-19 budget proposal in early February. He is keeping his commitment by proposing more for our schools in Philadelphia while working to increase investments in our pre-kindergarten/Head Start programs, state universities, and career and technical training programs.

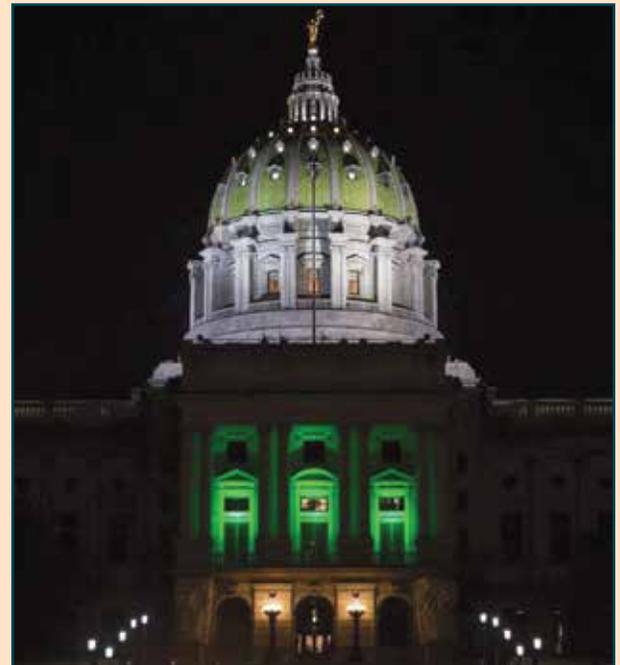
Here's a look at some of the numbers:

- \$100 million increase in Basic Education
- \$40 million increase in Pre-K Counts and Head Start
- \$20 million increase for Special Education
- \$15 million increase for the State System of Higher Education and
- \$10 million for Career and Technical Education

The governor is also building on the investments made in the fight against the opioid and heroin epidemic that is taking lives and destroying families in Philadelphia.

I am pleased Gov. Tom Wolf is sticking to his guns by pushing for a severance tax on natural-gas drilling here in the commonwealth. It's crazy to see such a tax in neighboring states – such as Ohio and Virginia – and yet, Pennsylvania fails to make the drilling industry pay its fair share for doing business here.

I hope there is little resistance from either side of the aisle this budget season because we all need to work together to move Pennsylvania forward.



It's been a great couple of months for our great city and the Philadelphia Eagles. The trip to the Super Bowl and ultimate win ended in a great celebration. The Capitol Building even joined in the team's road to the Super Bowl with green lights.

HELPING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS GET THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Every year, teachers are paying more out of their own pockets to purchase the necessary items they feel are essential for a positive learning environment. This is becoming the norm for schools across the commonwealth as districts face a significant decrease in the ability to purchase the materials due to budget constraints.

I am sponsoring legislation that will take some of that financial burden off our teachers. My legislation would provide a tax credit for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket classroom

expenses. Items covered under the tax credit would include books, supplies, computers, related software and services, and supplementary material.

Each teacher who purchases items that fall under those categories would be eligible to receive up to \$500 in tax credits.

We owe it to these hard-working teachers who want nothing but the best for our children.

Real ID Update

I have been championing legislation for Pennsylvania to become compliant with the federal government on Real ID. The state is moving closer to that, thanks to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security granting the commonwealth an extension, through Oct. 10, 2018, on Real ID enforcement.

This means you will be able to enter federal facilities and board commercial aircraft using current Pennsylvania driver's licenses and non-driver's ID cards, neither of which are Real ID-compliant yet, through that date.

PennDOT anticipates that Real ID-compliant licenses will be available in Pennsylvania in the spring of 2019. Until then, PennDOT will continue to request extensions from DHS until Real ID-compliant licenses and ID cards are available for purchase.

You will not be required to get a Real ID-compliant driver's license or ID card — you don't need a Real ID-compliant license to drive, for instance. But if you choose to get one, you will be able to use it to board a plane and enter federal buildings when DHS ultimately enforces the Real ID Act requirements.

PennDOT will implement a one-time \$30 fee in addition to the current standard driver's license/photo ID fee for a Real ID Act-compliant license or ID card. Renewing a Real ID Act-compliant ID, however, won't cost anything extra.

NOTE: If your driver's license expires before Real ID-compliant licenses are available in Pennsylvania, you will have to pay to renew your license and, if you choose to, pay again to get a Real ID-compliant license when it's available.

To learn more about the Real ID Act and its requirements, visit www.dmv.pa.gov or call my office at (215) 330-3714. My staff will be happy to answer questions about this or any other state government-related matter.

Bill moving forward to extend dyslexia & early literacy intervention pilot program

As a parent of a child with dyslexia, I am a big advocate for providing programs designed to help young people and adults dealing with this disorder.

Currently, a bill in the Senate, which is similar to a bill that I have in the House, is moving forward and would extend the Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program in Pennsylvania.

Established in 2014, Act 69 was created to define dyslexia and provide early intervention reading support for students in kindergarten through second grade. Senate Bill 776 would extend this work by showing how students who initially began the program in kindergarten would now perform on their third-grade PSSA tests. The results may provide more evidence in the program's success.

As of this writing, the bill sits in the Senate Appropriations Committee. I will champion and push for it to move quickly to the House for a vote and then to the governor for his signature to become law.

Saying goodbye to the School Reform Commission

In a historic move, the School Reform Commission voted in November to dissolve itself, giving control of our schools back to Philadelphia. Mayor Jim Kenney called for the SRC to disband in October with overwhelming support, including from Gov. Tom Wolf.

Before the School District of Philadelphia receives complete local control, Pennsylvania Education Secretary Pedro Rivera had to sign off on it, which he has done; then in June, Mayor Kenney will appoint a nine-member local board to replace the SRC.

This change was needed because at the end of the day, our students are a top priority. The success of this country starts in the classroom, and that includes the young, bright minds that make up the School District of Philadelphia. I support what's best for them, and what's best for them is a local school board that has their best interests at heart calling the shots.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate forms now available in my office

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program applications for the 2017 tax year are now available at my office — and my staff is ready to help you file yours for free!

Applications are also available online at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling 1-888-222-9190.

The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because they are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid each year.

The deadline to apply for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2017 is June 30, 2018.



I joined Philadelphia Councilman Bobby Henon for a pharmacy tour to raise awareness about Narcan, a crucial tool in the fight against the opioid epidemic.



In November, I toured Politz Hebrew Academy and learned about its school community, which provides quality education to students from our district and beyond. This unique institution is committed to helping their students achieve academic standards to the best of their abilities while preparing them for life as productive and ethical members of society.

May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light, may good luck pursue you each morning and night.

The Pennsylvania Treasurer's Office is seeking the owners of more than \$3.2 billion in unclaimed property. 1 in 10 Pennsylvanians has unclaimed property waiting for them. Could the commonwealth have something that belongs to you? Let my staff guide you to your "pot of gold."

Stop by my office during the month of March and we will share our luck to help you claim what's rightfully yours.

Examples of unclaimed property include:

- 👉 Closed bank accounts
- 👉 Uncashed checks, including paychecks
- 👉 Lost stocks and bonds
- 👉 Contents of safe deposit boxes
- 👉 Expired gift cards/certificates
- 👉 Proceeds from the demutualization of insurance companies



Bill that would eliminate workers' rights gets a 'no' vote

I voted in December against legislation that targets workers' voluntary contributions to the unions that represent them.

Senate Bill 166, also known as the "paycheck protection" bill, was intended to limit unions' political donations by prohibiting state, county and local governments from using their payroll systems to let workers voluntarily ask their employers to deduct money for their respective union's political action committees. The House defeated the bill, 102-90.

I feel this legislation would have taken back achievements and rights acquired after decades of efforts and advocacy through contract negotiations and the collective bargaining process.

I believe the bill was an attack on our union workers' rights and an attempt to silence their voice in the political process. Senate Bill 166 would have put in danger workplace

democracy and it would have translated into the weakening of the rights of public-sector employees. Workers would not have been able to have a voice for themselves to fight against efforts to privatize or eliminate their jobs. We could have potentially lost thousands of jobs.

I will note that states subjected to "paycheck protection" and similar policies experience higher rates of poverty, greater risk of worker injury and fewer benefits.

We cannot allow such policies to take root in our commonwealth. Our legislature needs to shift its priorities. It is time for the government to work for the people. It is time to grow our economy and create good jobs that support families, expand opportunities and protect your financial future; not prop up an economy rigged for the well-connected and corporate special interests.

Cracking down on 'stop-and-gos'

The new year brings changes on how the state will handle so-called "stop-and-go" nuisance establishments. This victory was made possible by the hard work of the Philadelphia Delegation.

Gov. Tom Wolf signed a bill into law that cracks down on these businesses. House Bill 674, now Act 44 of 2017, gives the Liquor Control Board the power to immediately shut down a "stop-and-go" if it does not meet the Liquor Code's seating, square footage, food or health requirements. It also allows local government entities, such as Philadelphia License and Inspections, to make recommendations to the Liquor Control Board on which establishments are believed to be violating these requirements. This law enforces a common set of business standards and lets the community identify which establishments are bad.

"Stop-and-gos" have been a danger for far too long, specifically putting our children at risk. These businesses will finally be held accountable for their actions. This is a huge victory in the ongoing fight to keep our neighborhoods safe.



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Philly schools make the grade on improvements

The School District of Philadelphia recently released its latest edition of the School Progress Reports. Overall, schools witnessed positive growth for the second year in a row.

The SPR are scored on four components: achievement, which is measured by test scores; progress, which is measured by test scores compared to previous years; climate; and career and college readiness.

I'm proud to say that Thomas Holme School, which is in my district and my alma mater, was honored as among the best in its respective grade level. Anne Frank Elementary was named the best school in its grade level. I must also give a shout out to the Philadelphia Academy Charter School for seeing improvements in all four categories.

I certainly look forward to seeing all the schools continue to improve not only in my district, but across the entire city.

SAVE THE DATE!

Senior Fair and Hoedown

April 13 – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Cannstatters

*9130 Academy Road
Philadelphia, PA 19114*

Cohosts: Rep. Mike Driscoll & Councilman Bobby Henon

Call my office at 215-330-3714 to register.



Philadelphia closer to becoming home for Amazon's HQ2

Amazon has selected Philadelphia as one of the top 20 cities in North America to house its second headquarters. Pittsburgh is the other in-state location vying to become the future home.

I joined some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in co-sponsoring House Resolution 571, which encourages Amazon to choose a location in the commonwealth to set up shop.

The HQ2 campus is estimated to be up to 8 million square feet and would be an economic boon for the entire commonwealth. It would create construction jobs and employ 50,000 full-time workers once it's in operation.

Hopefully Amazon will agree Pennsylvania is a good fit for the HQ2 campus, despite yet another credit downgrade given to the commonwealth last year because of Republican-driven budget delays and issues.