

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

NOVEMBER 2018

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

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Seniors ride for free with SEPTA Key

Seniors 65 and older are now eligible to travel for free on all SEPTA service lines within Pennsylvania. A half-fare discount for travel to and from New Jersey and Delaware remains in effect.

Seniors must now obtain a SEPTA Key Senior ID Card to ride for free. However, valid PA driver's licenses and non-driver ID cards issued before July 2017 will still be accepted until they need to be renewed.

My district office can process applications and take photos for SEPTA Key Senior ID Cards. Applicants must present a form of identification with a date of birth on it, such as a Pennsylvania driver's license or non-driver ID, U.S. passport, or birth certificate.

SEPTA Key Senior ID Cards can also be obtained while you wait on weekdays at SEPTA Headquarters at 1234

Market St. from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and the SEPTA Accessible Travel Center at Suburban Station in Center City from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

More information about the SEPTA Key Senior ID Card is available at <http://www.septa.org/fares/discount/seniors-ride-free-info.html>.



Start now to obtain REAL ID driver's license

After August 1, 2019, a REAL ID-compliant license or ID card, or a U.S. passport or military ID, will be necessary if you wish to board a domestic commercial flight or enter a federal facility. A REAL ID-compliant driver's license has enhanced security features required by federal law.

REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses and photo ID cards will be available beginning March 2019. PennDOT is encouraging customers to obtain and file in advance the documentation required to obtain a REAL ID. Individuals who have filed the necessary documentation

will be able to apply for a REAL ID online in spring 2019. More information is available at <https://is.gd/REALID>.

My district office can help obtain a certified copy of a Pennsylvania birth certificate. Sending an application through my office is the fastest way to apply for a birth certificate.

More information about REAL ID can be found at <https://www.dmv.pa.gov/Pages/REAL-ID-Frequently-Asked-Questions.aspx>.

Rebates available for alternative fuel vehicles

Pennsylvania's Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebate Program provides rebates of up to \$2,000 for electric, electric hybrids, and hydrogen vehicles and \$1,000 for CNG and propane vehicles.

Only Pennsylvania residents are eligible. The vehicle must be registered in Pennsylvania, purchased no more than six months before the rebate application is submitted, be new or leased and have an odometer reading of 500 miles or less at the time of purchase. Vehicle purchase price limitations exist.

An additional \$500 rebate is available for applicants

with household income below 200 percent of the Federal poverty income level.

Flexible fuel, diesel and standard hybrid vehicles are not eligible for a rebate.

Rebates will be awarded on a first-come first-served basis as long as funding is available.

Applications must be submitted through the PA Department of Environmental Protection's website at <https://bit.ly/2DfBvuU>. For assistance, call 1-866-294-3854 or email epafiginfo@pa.gov.

New medical marijuana dispensary opens near Bala Cynwyd



A new marijuana dispensary operated by Cure Pennsylvania has opened in Philadelphia at 4502 City Avenue near Bala Cynwyd (across from the Lord & Taylor department store). Cure offers a variety of forms of medical marijuana including oils, topicals, concentrates, pills and dry leaf.

There are now seven dispensaries in the region including locations in King of Prussia, Devon and Plymouth Meeting. For further information regarding Pennsylvania's medical marijuana program and to locate your closest dispensary please visit www.medicalmarijuana.pa.gov.

PACENET program expanded

More seniors will be eligible for PACENET because of a new law that increased income limits.

The total income limit for a qualifying single individual is now \$27,500, and the total combined income limit for a qualifying married couple is now \$35,500.

The PACENET program provides low-cost prescription drugs to Pennsylvanians 65 or older.

To apply for PACENET, visit <https://pacecares.magellanhealth.com/> or call 1-800-225-7223. My office can help you apply.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program deadline approaches

The application deadline for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is Dec. 31. This program provides a rebate on 2017 property taxes or rent to 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 by going to www.revenue.pa.gov, clicking on "Forms for Individuals" under the "Forms and Publications" button on the top of the page. My office can help you apply.

Free notary service at my district office

You can have most official documents notarized for free in my district office. Please call ahead to make sure a notary is available 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.

Heating assistance program accepting applications

Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is accepting applications until April 12. LIHEAP helps low-income families pay their heating bills.

LIHEAP provides two types of grants – a cash grant sent directly to utility or fuel delivery companies to pay a portion of the resident's heating bill, and a crisis grant for households without heat or in immediate danger of being without heat due to a furnace failure, utility shut off, or being low on heating fuel. LIHEAP cash grants – based on household income, family size, type of heating fuel and region – will range from \$200 to \$1,000 in 2018-19. The maximum LIHEAP crisis grant is \$600.

This season's income limits for LIHEAP cash and crisis grants are \$18,210 (yearly) for an individual and the limit increases by \$6,480 for each additional person in the household.

Residents who received a LIHEAP grant last season and are still residing at the same address already should have received a green postcard or a 2018-19 LIHEAP application with a registration number.

Those who did not receive LIHEAP last season may obtain an application from my office, call LIHEAP directly at 1-866-857-7095, or apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

Protections for cats and dogs left in vehicles

A new law gives authorities more power to assist dogs and cats left unattended in vehicles. Now police officers, humane officers, animal control officers and other public safety professionals will not be held liable for damage for breaking into an unattended vehicle to remove a dog or cat if they believe the animal is in

imminent danger and after a reasonable search for the vehicle owner.

Existing law had already allowed authorities to enter real property to help a neglected animal.

If you see a dog or cat in distress please call 911.

New law eliminates driver's license suspensions for minor offenses

A new law eliminates driver's license suspensions for numerous non-driving infractions, including less serious drug charges, underage purchase, consumption, and possession of alcohol and tobacco, as well as carrying a false identification card by a minor.

This change in law reflects the concern that license suspensions should be used more sparingly because of the potential for loss of employment with its attendant problems that may result.

New laws to address drug abuse



Pennsylvania recently passed two more laws to address the problem of drug abuse.

The first mandates physicians electronically transmit opioid and certain other narcotic prescriptions to pharmacies. This will help prevent a person from altering a paper script to improperly obtain narcotics.

The second law creates a new summary offense for selling over-the-counter cough medicines containing dextromethorphan (DXM), such as Robitussin and NyQuil, to a minor.

New law provides more guardianship rights for relatives

A new Pennsylvania law allows parents to designate temporary guardians for when they are no longer able to care for their minor child due to entering drug or alcohol treatment. In the absence of this designation, grandparents, aunts and uncles, or adult siblings of a minor child could petition a court for temporary guardianship.

Guardianship would be granted by courts in 90-day

DUI penalties increased

Under a new law, drivers who cause a fatal accident while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will face a minimum term of five years in jail for each death caused (up from the current three years) if they had a previous DUI conviction. The minimum

increments for up to one year. Temporary guardianship gives the relative the right to make vital, basic decisions for the child relating to, for example, medical care or education.

This law protects long-term parental rights, while considering the needs of the child to be with loving family members, rather than in foster care or another arrangement.

Domestic abuse gun forfeiture law enacted

Recent legislation will force domestic abusers to surrender their guns within 24 hours, instead of the current 60 days. This law applies to individuals convicted of a domestic violence crime, such as assault or reckless endangerment against a domestic partner, and to individuals who are subject to a final Protection from Abuse order.

Guns must be surrendered to law enforcement officers, an authorized gun dealer, or their attorney; not a family member or friend as permitted under current law.

These changes will afford greater protection to victims of domestic violence.

Keystone Exams graduation requirement again postponed

Recent legislation has delayed the use of Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement until the 2021-2022 school year.

The Keystone Exams were implemented in 2012 as an end-of-course statewide test to assess a student's proficiency in certain subjects. Currently there are exams in three subject areas: biology, literature and algebra.

The law also provides some alternative ways for students to meet the graduation requirement without passing all three exams. These alternatives include meeting grade requirements covered by the exams, meeting a composite score for all three exams or successfully completing alternative assessments or a pre-apprenticeship program.

Teachers have expressed concern about spending too much time teaching students how to take a test rather than teaching the course material.

The new rules will follow current high school freshmen and go into effect after the moratorium in 2021-22.

Organ donation laws updated

A new state law has streamlined the process for organ donation.

You can become an organ donor by making a designation at a PennDOT Photo License Center when you have your photo taken for a driver's license or ID card. Those under the age of 18 are required to have the consent of a parent or guardian.

You can also register online to become an organ donor at <https://www.donatelifepa.org/register/>.

Receive newsletters electronically

I am sending newsletters via email to reduce postage costs and save paper.

If you want to receive only an electronic copy, go to my website, www.gregvitali.com, and click on "Sign up to receive your newsletters here" on the bottom right of the page.

Join my email update list

I maintain an email list for those who wish to receive periodic email updates from me about public meetings, traffic alerts, community events, state and local programs and services, and other items of interest to the community. If you would like to be added to that list, please email my office at RepVitali@pahouse.net.

Follow me on social media

You can follow me on Facebook at [Facebook.com/RepVitali](https://www.facebook.com/RepVitali). There you will find updates from Harrisburg, district news and other important state-related information.

You also can follow me on [Twitter @GregVitali](https://twitter.com/GregVitali).