



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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161ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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FALL 2020



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Supporting those who keep us safe

Our fire and emergency services organizations provide crucial aid to our communities, and they need our support now more than ever. I will always fight to make sure we have the backs of those who are risking their lives on our behalf.

Here's a look at some recent legislative developments to aid our frontline heroes.

COVID-19 relief grants for fire, EMS agencies

As the pandemic has torn through our communities, our first responders have remained on the job to keep us safe and healthy. But these organizations have felt the economic impact of this health crisis.

Through legislation passed by the General Assembly, with my support, \$50 million in grants was made available to provide direct relief to fire and emergency medical services agencies impacted by COVID-19.

Of the \$50 million, \$44 million was made available to fire and rescue companies and the remaining \$6 million was targeted for EMS companies. The grant application period closed in early August. The funds can be used for operational or equipment expenses.



Two years ago, I fought for a \$1 million state grant to support Aston Township Fire Department's new firehouse project, so I was proud to be at the groundbreaking ceremony in July!

More legislation to support first responders

In 2018, the Senate Resolution 6 Committee issued a report (which you can read on my website, www.RepLeanne.com) detailing the crisis facing our fire and emergency medical services organizations. These organizations face increasing costs, decreasing financial support and a sharp decrease in volunteers – issues only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year the House passed multiple bills based on recommendations in the report, and most of them are now with the Senate. I'll keep you updated with any developments.

Supporting those who keep us safe

2019-20 Fire/EMS grants

Congratulations to the recipients of 2019-20 Fire/EMS Grants!

Aston Township Fire Company..... \$25,748 (Fire)
..... \$9,192 (EMS)

Brookhaven Fire Company..... \$12,850 (Fire)
..... \$9,192 (EMS)

Folsom Fire Company..... \$13,015

Garden City Fire Company\$14,111

Holmes Fire Company.....\$14,111 (Fire)
..... \$9,192 (EMS)

Milmont Fire Company No. 1 \$11,509

South Media Fire Company No. 1 \$14,248

Swarthmore Fire & Protective Association..... \$14,248 (Fire)
..... \$9,192 (EMS)

Woodlyn Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 \$13,974 (Fire)
..... \$9,192 (EMS)



I was honored to join St. John Chrysostom in Wallingford for the church's Blue Mass honoring police and firefighters last fall. I presented flags flown in their honor over the state Capitol to Nether Providence Police, Garden City Fire Company No. 1 and South Media Fire Company.



I visited South Media Fire Company last fall to talk about the challenges and opportunities facing volunteer firefighters.



Earlier this year, I visited Brookhaven Fire Company and Chief Montella. I was proud to help the company obtain a \$24,000 grant to purchase new equipment to help with vehicle entrapments.

Extending protections for PA National Guard members

Pennsylvania's National Guard members called to active duty to help fight the pandemic received new job protections with the bipartisan passage of legislation extending the Pennsylvania Heart and Lung Act.

The new law – signed by the governor in late April – ensures that Guard members, police, firefighters and other public safety workers continue receiving their full salary and benefits for up to 60 days if they are temporarily unable to work because of COVID-19.

In addition to extending protections to Guard members, the new law eliminates a near-impossible proof standard that would have required workers to show that their COVID-19 infection or exposure was the direct result of their work and could not have resulted from a non-job-related exposure. Now, workers are covered by the act as long as they contracted COVID-19 or suffered an exposure leading to quarantine.

New law tackles depression, PTSD among frontline emergency workers

We ask a lot from our first responders, who stand ready on a moment's notice to intervene between our community and disaster. And the stress of the job takes a heavy toll.

So I was proud to support H.B. 1459 to establish an emergency responder mental health and stress management program. Gov. Tom Wolf signed the bill into law in late July.

The new law creates new procedures to help agencies and

departments better address trauma, post-traumatic stress and other behavioral health conditions emergency responders face.

It also creates a peer-to-peer support program, a toll-free helpline for first responders, a "critical incident" stress management program to address the impact of responding to fatal or near-fatal incidents, and trauma and suicide awareness training for employers.

Standing up for climate action



In July, I fought against a bill that would effectively stop Pennsylvania from being able to take the biggest climate action we've ever seen – joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

H.B. 2025 would create the Pennsylvania Carbon Dioxide Cap and Trade Authorization Act and prohibit the

Department of Environmental Protection from adopting any action or joining any program – such as RGGI – designed to limit carbon dioxide emissions unless the General Assembly authorizes it.

Gov. Wolf announced last year that Pennsylvania would join our 10 nearest neighbors in RGGI. It would help us dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions and other air pollutants, help us create clean energy jobs and help improve our air quality for generations.

H.B. 2025 would stop him in his tracks. I voted no, but the bill still passed the House and has been sent to the Senate. Gov. Wolf has pledged to veto the bill if it reaches his desk.

After the bill passed, the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee held a hearing on RGGI, and the majority party chairman only invited testifiers who oppose the initiative. I spoke up against well-funded special interest groups known for opposing environmental policy.

If we do nothing to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, it will impact Pennsylvanians for generations to come. I'll continue to fight for our rights to clean air and water.

Fighting for your needs in the state budget

The COVID-19 health crisis restricted the revenue outlook necessary to put a sound, realistic budget together for the full 2020-21 fiscal year.

Instead, the House passed a spending plan to last five months, with the exception of education, which is funded for the full year at the 2019-20 rate. We'll have to revisit the state budget in November.

The budget that the governor signed includes federal CARES Act funding to aid programs and services that are critical in helping our state get through this pandemic safely.

This is funding that has made available grants for employers to offer hazard pay to workers in life-sustaining industries, small business assistance grants, rent and mortgage assistance, and more. We were also able to ensure \$300 million in property tax relief was still available despite a loss in revenue from when casinos were closed during the pandemic.

I'll continue fighting to put your needs first as we complete the budget and make future spending decisions.



Supporting K-9 units with standardized training

K-9 handlers and their dogs are powerful dedicated teams that work together to keep us safe.

These specialty officers and their companions endure difficult training but the non-standardized training of municipal and state K-9 units can create drastic learning curves between the two, with some municipal units training for much shorter or longer periods than state units. After hearing from local K-9 officers about the challenges they face, I introduced legislation, H.B. 2186, to require the Municipal Police Officer's Education and Training Commission to work together with the State Police to establish K-9 team and K-9 specialty team training and certification standards following national standards.

These standards would help us support our K-9 teams as they work on our behalf. Our municipal K-9 teams deserve to be trained properly and to a standard that will protect both handler and K-9.

I met with Upper Chichester Township Police Officer Gilmore and K-9 Elou, a dog trained for arson investigations, for input on my K-9 training legislation.



Making progress on police reform

In July, Gov. Wolf signed two pieces of important legislation that represent a step in the right direction on police reform.

I was proud to support the following two bills, which were signed into law:

- **H.B. 1910, now Act 59**, adds mandatory training for law enforcement officers, including training on interacting with individuals of diverse backgrounds, training on use of force and de-escalation, and requires post-traumatic stress disorder evaluations, by request of the officer or a supervisor or within 30 days of an incident involving lethal use of force.
- **H.B. 1841, now Act 57**, creates a statewide database to maintain records of misconduct by law enforcement officers and requires an employer to disclose employment information to another employer for the purpose of background checks when hiring a law enforcement officer.

The action on these bills followed weeks of peaceful protests around our community, state and country, sparked by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

We have much more work to do to address systemic racism and improve police-community relations. There are more bills waiting for action in the House, and I'll be pushing that we consider them in the near future.

Grant awarded for Concord Road intersection improvements

I'm always pleased to help bring state dollars back to our community, so I was happy to announce in July that Aston Township was awarded a \$1.8 million state grant to support intersection improvements along Concord Road.

The township will use the funding, from the state's Multimodal Transportation Fund, to convert two traditional intersections along a highly traveled portion of Concord Road into modern roundabouts to reduce congestion, improve air quality and enhance pedestrian mobility.

Reducing congestion is critical for the safety of drivers and others on the road, so I look forward to seeing these improvements come to fruition.



REAL ID UPDATE: Enforcement deadline postponed to October 2021

In response to COVID-19 and the national emergency declaration, the Department of Homeland Security postponed the enforcement date for Real ID by one year to October 1, 2021.

PennDOT temporarily paused Real ID issuance in the Commonwealth out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of public health. Issuance of Real ID is expected to resume in late summer.

Real ID is optional in Pennsylvania. There is no requirement that any resident obtain a Real ID; PennDOT will continue to offer standard-issue driver's licenses and photo IDs once issuance resumes.

Visit www.penndot.gov for the latest information on Real ID as well as other services impacted by COVID-19. Call my office if you have questions.

THANK YOU to everyone who donated to the collection organized by our summer intern, Jamie Alexander! Jamie collected an entire truckload of supplies for the Domestic Abuse Project of Delaware County.

Working to expand access to contraception

I was deeply disappointed in July, when the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision allowing employers with religious or moral objections to decline to provide health care coverage for contraception.

Contraception is health care, and employers should not be allowed to decide what medical care a woman has the right to receive. Access to health care is inextricably linked to economic mobility, and basic preventative care like birth control should

not be a luxury that is only available to some. We should be reducing barriers to health care, not creating more.

That's why I am reintroducing legislation to protect and expand access to birth control in Pennsylvania.

Everyone deserves quality, affordable health care, and I intend to keep fighting to see that everyone has access to it. It's time to support women and preserve their fundamental right to health care.

Now available in PA: No-excuse, mail-in voting

Mail-in voting is now available in Pennsylvania, and offers a safe, convenient way to cast your ballot – particularly during this time of COVID-19.

Any registered voter may request a mail-in ballot, without providing an excuse.

You can apply for a mail-in ballot online with a valid Pennsylvania driver's license or photo ID by visiting www.votespa.com/ApplyMailBallot. You can provide an email address to receive notifications about your application and ballot status.

Oct. 19: Last day to register to vote in the general election

Oct. 27: Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot

Visit www.votespa.com for the latest updates.

In June, Gov. Tom Wolf signed House Bill 2502, now Act 35, which requires the Department of State to prepare a report on the June 2 primary, which was impacted by COVID-19 and an overwhelming interest in mail-in voting. This report will help identify any issues that need to be addressed before the Nov. 3 general election.

MODERNIZING THE VOTE FOR 2020

No-Excuse Mail-In Voting

- You can now apply to vote by mail - no excuse needed.
- Convenient and on your own schedule.
- You can return your completed ballot by mail in the envelope provided or drop it off in person to your county board of election's office.
- Apply for a mail-in ballot by 5pm on the Tuesday before the election.



votesPA.com



State Representative

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Due to COVID-19, our events have looked different this year as my staff and I worked to keep you informed and offer services, while following health and safety guidelines.

Visit my website, www.RepLeanne.com, to sign up for my weekly e-newsletter, where I'll share announcements about upcoming events – such as blood drives, a spotted lanternfly information session, Medicare individual counseling sessions and more!

Telephone Town Hall

Sept. 2nd • 7 p.m.

Weigh in on state issues without leaving home! Residents of the 161st District will receive a call to their home phones at 7 p.m. and can stay on the line to listen or ask questions.

FREE Document Shredding & Drug Collection Event

Oct. 17th • 9 a.m. to noon

Aston Community Center • 3270 Concord Road • Aston, PA 19014

Bring unwanted personal documents to have them securely shredded on site!

ADDITIONAL UPCOMING EVENTS

Please save the dates and follow me online for updates!

Spotted Lanternfly Town Hall
Virtual

Tuesday, August 25 @ 6:30 p.m.

Blood Drives
Locations TBA

Thursday, September 24

Tuesday, October 13

Expungement Clinic
Virtual

Thursday, October 29

Call 610-534-6880 to register!