

News From State Representative

CHRISTINA SAPPEY

158th Legislative District | Chester County



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Dear Neighbor,

I hope this finds you and your family well. The leaves are starting to change, school buses are back on the roads, and our thoughts turn from seashells to apples and pumpkins.

Still, it's not the autumn we had hoped for. Many are struggling with physical and mental health challenges, and with loss of many kinds. As I travel the district, I hear over and over again how important it is for us to be together again in person – not just for social benefits but also to accelerate our economic recovery.

As the pandemic continues its hold on the world, here in Chester County we have the highest rate of vaccination in the state, and our schools and organizations are employing mitigation measures that ensure we are able to resume, continue, or begin in-person activities safely. In my recent economic forum, we learned that the Philadelphia collar counties, and the Commonwealth overall, have seen higher economic growth specifically because of the way we have combatted the virus. This is a good beginning, but still, we have a long and critically important journey ahead. This is among my highest priorities as your representative.

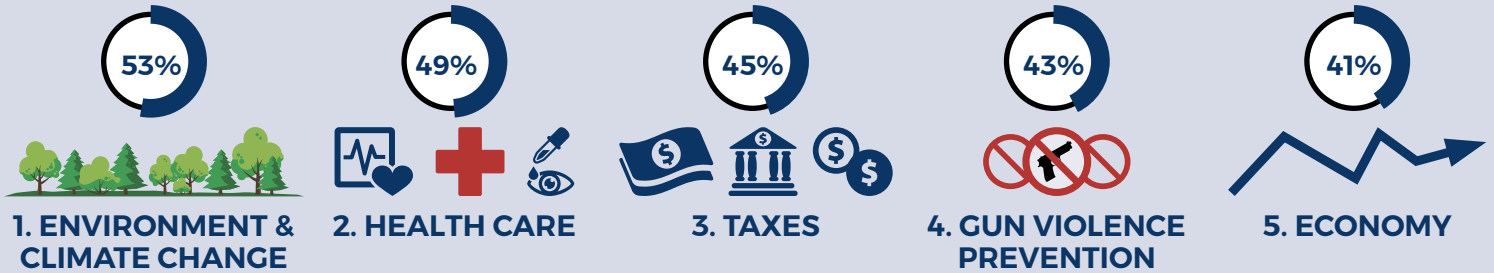
It remains to be seen what daily life will look like in the coming year, but it's clear that it will be different. Change can often be difficult, but it brings an opportunity to embrace innovation and creativity. The post-pandemic world that awaits us will compel us to come together to move forward, and I have every faith we will meet ongoing challenges because I have witnessed repeatedly your goodness, determination, and action. I so look forward to partnering with all of you to protect and preserve what we love and to creating new practices that, up until now, were unimaginable. I believe in the power of "us." Let's do this, together.

All the best,

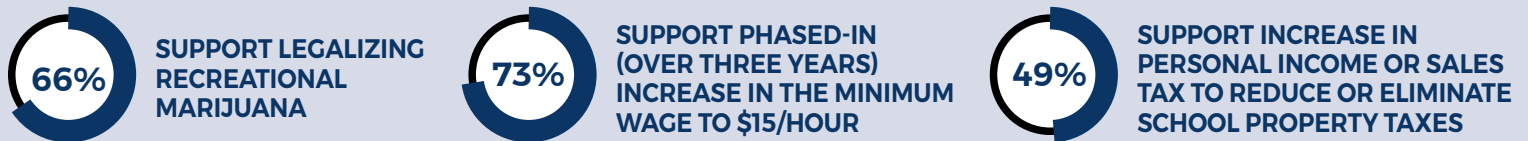
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christina Sappey".

SUMMER 2021 SURVEY RESULTS

WHEN PROVIDED WITH A LIST OF 16 PUBLIC POLICY TOPICS, THE FOLLOWING WERE SELECTED AS THE TOP FIVE PRIORITIES BY CONSTITUENTS:



RESPONDING CONSTITUENTS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING FEEDBACK ON THESE THREE ISSUES:



Thank you to everyone who participated in my summer survey. Your feedback is critical to my work as your representative, and I am thrilled with the number of responses my office received.

ADDRESSING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Pennsylvania has moved closer to joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which would establish a program to limit carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. This would help us combat climate change, reduce health issues caused by air pollution and create jobs in Pennsylvania.

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) voted 3-2 on September 1st to approve the regulation for Pennsylvania to participate in RGGI, one of the final steps. The final regulation will now be sent to the Attorney General for approval.

It's important to note that legislative initiatives have been introduced to stop RGGI. I will oppose these bills should they be brought forward for a vote.

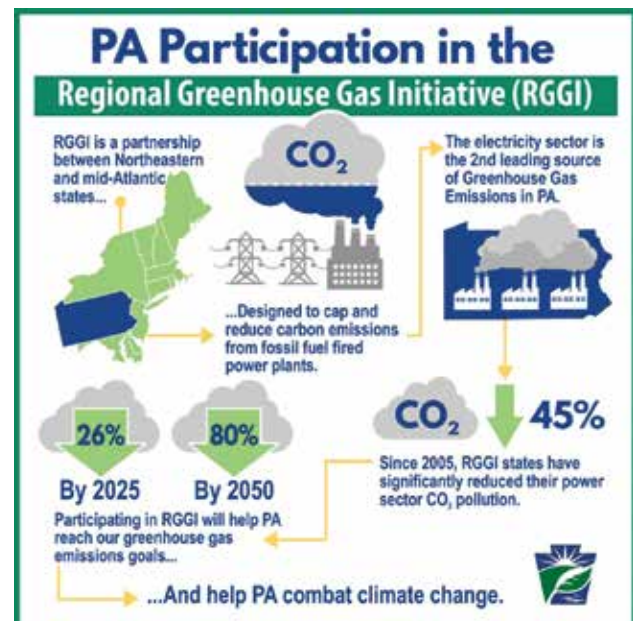
RGGI is a "cap and invest" program that sets a regulatory limit on CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel-fired power plants in participating states. Plants must purchase CO₂ allowances through a RGGI auction. The proceeds from this auction are then invested in energy efficiency and

clean energy. The allowed CO₂ limit would decline each year until 2030, ultimately reducing CO₂ emissions in Pennsylvania by 31% compared to 2019.

Pennsylvania is already feeling the impacts of climate change – seeing stronger, more frequent storms and additional health issues caused by poor air quality and hotter temperatures. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions would help us improve air quality, public health and ultimately protect our environment for generations to come.

The Department of Environmental Protection projects that joining RGGI would result in a net increase of 27,000 jobs in Pennsylvania and add millions to our gross state product by 2030. Economic growth in RGGI states has outpaced the rest of the nation by 31% while carbon emissions from power plants there have fallen by nearly 50%.

I've co-sponsored House Bill 1565, which would use the revenue from future RGGI auctions to make targeted investments to support workers and communities affected by energy transition, invest in communities disproportionately impacted by adverse environmental effects and further strengthen our growing clean energy for commercial and industrial sectors.



FIGHTING FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT FOR US

LEGISLATION SUPPORTING VETERANS

As a member of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I'm proud to support legislation that helps our veterans. This legislative session, the following bills were unanimously adopted by the House after moving through the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

HR 103, a resolution urging Congress to pass the Treatment and Relief through Emerging and Accessible Therapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Act (TREAT PTSD Act), which would give veterans access to a lifesaving PTSD treatment.

HB 995, which would establish the Veterans' Outreach and Support Network Program to help veterans and their families with the transition from military to civilian life. This bill is now with the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

The committee voted unanimously to advance the following bills to the full House where they currently await consideration.

HB 1427, which would use \$1 million from the American Rescue Plan Act for the VSO program, which helps veterans obtain their federal VA pension/benefits.

HB 1389, a plan to direct \$1 million from the American Rescue Plan to the PA Veterans Trust Fund, which provides grants to veterans and organizations that support them.

HB 1055, legislation that would protect veterans' personal information by making discharge papers, known as DD-214s, inaccessible to anyone other than the veteran or an immediate family member for 85 years instead of the current 75.

HB 1220, a bill calling for an increase to the state Blind and Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans pension programs amount from \$150 to \$200 per month.

I am also part of a bipartisan effort to provide property tax relief for disabled veterans. Recently, I joined colleagues in calling for the following bills, which I've cosponsored or introduced, to be brought forward for a vote.

HB 1032 seeks to expand property tax relief for disabled veterans. Property tax exemption is available in Pennsylvania for eligible disabled veterans, but wartime service is required. My legislation would seek to amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to extend that relief to any veteran determined to be 100% disabled from their service time, regardless of wartime service, and who is in financial need.

YOU'RE INVITED! ANNUAL VETERANS BREAKFAST

NOVEMBER 12 • 9 A.M.

Unionville Presbyterian Church
812 Wollaston Road, Kennett Square

Veterans and their families are invited to join me for breakfast in recognition of their service!

Information on state services and resources for veterans will be available.

Please RSVP by November 1 to
repsappay@pahouse.net or call
484-200-8264.

HB 910 and 1815 would amend the state Constitution to extend property tax exemption to all 100% disabled veterans, regardless of wartime service, as well as provide exemption to the surviving spouse of a U.S. Armed Forces member killed in action or who died from injuries received during active service.

Property Tax Exemptions for 100% Permanently Disabled Veterans – This proposal would remove the income limit on the property tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans.



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE MUSHROOM INDUSTRY

In July, I hosted a House Democratic Policy Committee meeting in New Garden Township to discuss the importance of our mushroom industry, which provides 9,300 jobs in PA and has an economic impact of over \$1.2 billion.

The committee heard testimony from the American Mushroom Institute, New Garden Township and Laurel Valley Farms on the nutritional, environmental, and economic impact of the mushroom industry on Chester County and Southeastern Pennsylvania. More information from this event is available at RepSappey.com



LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING IS UNDERWAY

Every 10 years following the U.S. Census, the boundaries of Pennsylvania's state House and Senate districts, as well as its congressional districts, must be redrawn to reflect changes and shifts in population.

This important process is now underway in PA.

Our state constitution requires district lines to be redrawn so that each district has roughly the same number of people living within it. Districts also are required to be drawn compact, contiguous and to keep communities whole.

Current PA state law puts state legislators in charge of redistricting, which many people find to be a conflict of interest as maps are too often drawn to benefit political parties, rather than people and the communities they live in. This benefit to political parties, known as gerrymandering, has produced lines in some districts

that defy common sense and clearly ignore the requirements of our constitution.

After 2020 Census data was released in April, the Legislative Reapportionment Commission began to organize its work and held its first public hearing in July. Maps will be presented to the public later this year and are scheduled to become final for the 2022 elections.

State House and Senate maps are drawn by a 5-member Legislative Reapportionment Commission, made up of four legislative leaders, two from each party, and an independent chairman chosen by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Congressional redistricting is done by legislative action, where a "map" is proposed in a bill, considered by the General Assembly and sent to the Governor for his signature.

You can follow the redistricting process at www.redistricting.state.pa.us.

PROMOTING CAREERS IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The PA Outdoor Corps, a career development program managed by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), is expanding to include a Cultural Resource Crew. Currently, PA Outdoor Corps provides paid, hands-on environmental, forestry and land conservation education and work experience to young adults. With the addition of the Cultural Resource Crew, participants will now have the opportunity to further cultural trade careers such as historic preservation and craftsmanship, archeology and anthropology.

There is a growing need for these types of skills, especially given the historical significance throughout our region. It is important that we have the trained

workforce to maintain, repair and preserve our cherished sites.

DCNR is in charge of over 2.2 million acres of state land that includes significant sites ranging from historic iron furnaces to underground railroad stops. By utilizing PA Outdoor Corps, DCNR is able to efficiently complete projects to manage public space, protect habitats, and identify and preserve historic sites. Corps members work directly with DCNR staff on active projects, providing real world experience, skills and professional networking.

Those interested in joining the PA Outdoor Corps should contact my district office for additional information at 484-200-8264.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

One of the most frequent concerns brought to me is that of land development. Some of us have lived here for generations. Some of us have moved to the area more recently; however, we all agree that open space conservation and our historic and agricultural heritage are high priorities. Unfortunately, many of us find out about development plans in our community too late. It's for these reasons I believe it's crucial for us to understand and participate in the municipal land development process. You can do this by regularly checking your township's website for scheduled monthly meetings of your township planning commission and board of supervisors. Time for public comment is scheduled at these meetings and this is where your questions and concerns on future development matter greatly. After a plan has been approved, it's usually too late to change or stop development, so your early engagement in the process is important.

In Pennsylvania, the land development process is complicated, and it may take 1-3 years before construction actually begins on a project. There are five general steps in the development approval process, each of which contains various smaller steps and opportunity for plan revisions, public feedback, and appeals:

➡ **1. Zoning and local ordinance review:**

Local zoning and ordinances help to determine how property can be used. Long before a development is proposed, it is important for residents and local municipal leaders to review these and ensure they are designed to benefit and protect existing neighbors and the environment.

The Zoning Hearing Board, made up of local residents, determines if a proposed project fits these guidelines and is the first line of defense for residents facing a potential development.

A proposed development starts with a review of the municipality's zoning ordinances to determine whether the builder may need to apply for an exemption, such as a variance or conditional use approval.

A variance is when the proposed use of a property falls outside of the zoning ordinance and is subject to approval. Conditional use means that the proposed use of the property is permitted, but only under specific standards and is subject to review.

If an exemption is necessary, the developer would then appear before the Zoning Hearing Board for the required reviews and approvals. Hearings hosted by this board provide an opportunity for public input on the use of the land.

➡ **2. Create concept plan:** The developer will start making initial plans based on Zoning Hearing Board approvals. At this time, unofficial conversations may begin with the municipality regarding the needs of the community. Public participation in the municipality's regularly scheduled meetings is critical throughout this step so municipal leaders and the developer are aware of local residents' concerns.

➡ **3. Municipal review:** The unofficial conversations between the municipality and a developer take on a formal role in the review stage. At this point, the project plans have been completed and the developer appears before the municipal and/or county planning commissions for approval. This stage provides another opportunity for the public to provide input on the project before plans are approved or denied.

➡ **4. Ancillary permit approvals:** The final opportunity for public comment occurs during ancillary permit approvals. Depending on the location and conditions of the project, there may be additional permits and requirements that require a vote by local commissions or boards. For example, if the project is located within a historical district, approval may be needed from the historical commission.

➡ **5. Project finalization:** At this point, if the builder has received all permits and approvals, construction can begin. During this final phase, there may be building, occupancy, and utility permits that must be inspected and approved.



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CHESTER WATER AUTHORITY (CWA) UPDATE

Recently, the Commonwealth Court ruled 5-2 that the City of Chester alone has the authority to dissolve CWA. The case now returns to the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas to decide if the city has the right, because of their current financial situation, to sell CWA and if so, where the profits of such a sale would go. CWA has requested an early review by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to avoid lengthy litigation and help bring closure to this case. The PA Supreme Court has full discretion over what cases they consider. My office is watching this issue closely and will keep residents apprised.

I continue to oppose any sale of CWA and support several bipartisan initiatives in Harrisburg to empower ratepayers. I have introduced HB 144 and cosponsored HB 97, which would require a ratepayer referendum prior to a sale. HB 144 would further ensure consumers are informed with rate histories and where their water is coming from or being sold to, and protect access to public lands during and after the sale process.

I have also cosponsored Rep. John Lawrence's and Rep. Leanne Krueger's HB 1936, which would amend the valuation procedure for public utilities. According to the Consumer Advocate, the current valuation process improperly increases sales prices for existing water systems. This ultimately encourages local governments to sell a utility, which increases rates for consumers. This bill would amend the valuation process to disincentivize sales of well-operated systems, such as CWA, and keep rates low for customers.