



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Gerald Mullery

Winter 2016

119th Legislative District

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PENNSYLVANIA NEEDS COMPROMISE FOR OVERDUE BUDGET

At this writing, Pennsylvania remains without a complete budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year, and Gov. Tom Wolf already announced his budget proposal for 2016-17.

With a Democratic governor and Republican majorities in the House and Senate, it's not unusual to have disagreements. However, with a seven-month-plus budget impasse, it's time for a compromise.

Pennsylvania needs to break away from policies that have led to the structural deficit, underfunding of schools and programs crucial to vulnerable citizens, higher property taxes and multiple downgrades to its credit rating.

None of the budget options considered so far deserves acclaim. A better budget for all can be achieved with property tax relief and a severance tax on Marcellus Shale gas drilling companies.

I support a severance tax that would help restore fairness to our property taxpayers, our responsibility to our schools, and balance to our state budget and pension plans, by making Pennsylvania's \$11 billion Marcellus Shale natural gas and oil industry pay its fair share.

Pennsylvania has an abundance of natural gas reserves, but its taxpayers should benefit rather than be victimized by its extraction. Instead, Pennsylvania is the only major natural gas-producing state not to tax production at the wellhead.

The budget also needs to focus on property tax relief, and stop avoiding the issue that has harmed too many Pennsylvanians. Any system that pays for public schools at the risk of a senior citizen – or any resident – losing his or her home because they can't pay must be replaced.

As elected officials, we should make property tax relief and a severance tax our main focuses, before we even consider increasing the state's sales and personal income taxes.

We need to get this done!



PSP-Hazleton, Troop N was recently recognized for 110 years of service. I was honored to participate in its memorial program.

SOUTH VALLEY PARKWAY PROJECT

Work is underway to construct the South Valley Parkway in Hanover Township and Nanticoke. While the construction may cause headaches for your commute to work or other travels, PennDOT said the finished project will alleviate safety and congestion problems along Middle Road.

The project will reconfigure the existing PA 29, Exit 2 interchange with new ramps, new roundabout intersections, the removal of the existing ramps, and reconstruction of PA 29 where the new interchange ramps tie into the highway, northwest of the existing exit. There will also be a new roadway built that will travel through undeveloped forest and reclaimed mine land north of Middle Road, and reconnect just east of Kosciusko Street.

Three roundabouts will be installed at the existing Middle Road intersections with Kosciusko, Espy and Prospect streets.

The overall project is expected to be completed by August 2020.

CLEANUP OF BLISS BANK

A nonprofit organization is working to clean up an environmental eyesore while protecting our drinking water resources.

The site, known as Bliss Bank, is located in Nanticoke and Hanover and Newport townships, and contains huge piles of culm as well as empty pits. Last year, Earth Conservancy received a \$400,000 grant from the EPA's Brownfields Cleanup Program. The money will be used to reduce acid mine drainage that flows into the Nanticoke Creek Watershed and the Susquehanna River. The cleanup will reduce illegal dumping and trespassing at the site.

I believe cleanup of Bliss Bank is not only beneficial for the environment, but also could eventually create economic opportunities for our area. The property could potentially be used for mixed-use development.

A recent EPA study found that residential property values increased by more than 7 percent once a nearby brownfield was cleaned up.



Several hometown heroes were honored at the Red Cross Heroes breakfast.



My colleagues, Senior Officer Eric J. Williams' family, and friends joined in the dedication of a bridge in his name.

CLUB LICENSEES LEGISLATION

I recently introduced legislation to help ease the reporting and fundraising burdens on club licensees.

State law currently requires clubs with proceeds exceeding \$20,000 yearly to submit annual reports. These reports provide information on proceeds from each game of chance and the amount of prizes awarded, itemized weekly.

My legislation, H.B. 1807, would ease the reporting timeline, allowing clubs to itemize quarterly instead of weekly. Many times, filling out these necessary reports is burdensome for our veteran and fraternal organizations and other nonprofit clubs.

The treasurer of the Home Association, which owns the property that the Freeland VFW sits on, said my proposed change would take the stress out of the reporting proceeds.

"It is very time-consuming to gather the needed statistics for these itemized weekly reports," Ed Barna said. "If Representative Mullery's legislation becomes law, going from weekly to monthly itemization would make it easier to compile these necessary reports."

My bill also would increase the fundraising limit from \$40,000 to \$60,000 annually, allowing clubs to satisfy their charitable mission.

"We receive many donation requests from organizations like the YMCA, Freeland Little League and the Babe Ruth League," Barna said. "The VFW is able to help because of its bar and small games of chance. Without these games, there would be no incentive for people to patronize the bar, and then we would not have the funding to help these groups."

"I would like to personally thank Representative Mullery for introducing legislation to increase limits on small games of chance for private clubs," said John Sullivan, service officer, American Legion Post 473. "This increase will greatly enhance our abilities to help other veterans and needy people, and continue to support the people and the programs of the Freeland area."

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM EXTENDED

I voted to extend the state's health insurance program for children, CHIP, through the end of 2017. Gov. Tom Wolf signed the bill into law in December.

CHIP covers immunizations, wellness checkups, prescriptions, dental, vision and hearing services, diagnostic testing, emergency care, mental health benefits and hospitalization, as well as substance abuse rehabilitation

and other services.

CHIP coverage is available to any child in Pennsylvania whose family earns too much to qualify for Medicaid, but can't afford to purchase private insurance or isn't covered by an employer.

For an average four-person family, CHIP is free if the household income is between \$32,253 and \$50,440, low cost if the household income is

between \$50,440 and \$76,145, or full cost if the household income exceeds \$76,145. Premiums vary, depending on the carrier.

If your child doesn't have health insurance, or if you know of a child who isn't covered, you can find out more about CHIP, including providers in the area, and how to enroll at www.chipcoverspakids.com or by contacting my office.



I always enjoy participating in Head Start's "Reading Adventure" Program.



Constituents from the Freeland Senior Center enjoyed a recent tour of the Capitol.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION AVAILABLE IN PA.



Gov. Tom Wolf and Secretary of State Pedro Cortes launched a website last year to make it easier for you to register to vote.

By visiting www.register.votespa.com, you also can make updates to your voter record, such as change of name and address, and request assistance at a polling place.

This online system is more secure because the form goes directly to the proper Luzerne County voter registration office for processing, instead of your paperwork transferring through several hands before getting to the right person.

PERSIAN GULF VETERANS BONUS PROGRAM EXTENDED

I am pleased to support and announce that the state has extended the Persian Gulf Veterans Bonus Program for veterans of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

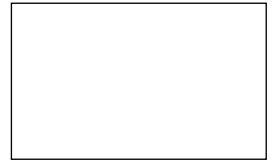
Those who served on active duty between Aug. 2, 1990, and Aug. 31, 1991, may qualify for the bonus. In addition, those who received the Southwest Asia Service Medal, were a legal resident of Pennsylvania at the time of military service and served under honorable conditions are eligible to apply for the program.

To apply visit www.persiangufbonus.pa.gov.

The program pays \$75 a month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in the operations, an additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for an additional \$5,000.



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FREE SHREDDING EVENT APRIL 9 IN NANTICOKE

I will host a free shredding event to help you destroy unwanted documents that contain personal information and could be used by identity thieves.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to noon
**Saturday, April 9 at the Greater Nanticoke Area
High School's parking lot off Kosciuszko Street.**

What to bring: Paper documents that contain personal information, such as Social Security, credit card and bank account numbers.

What not to bring: Business documents, cassettes, binders, plastics, magazines, newspapers or books.

For a complete list of items or for further information, please contact my Nanticoke office at 570-740-7031.

**Protect
yourself from
IDENTITY
THEFT!**

PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM

Applications are now available for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with permanent disabilities 18 or older may qualify for the program. The annual income

limit for homeowners is \$35,000 and \$15,000 for renters. When calculating your annual income, you only need to count half of your Social Security income.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Fish-For-Free Days



Your Fishing Holidays!

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission has announced this year's Fish-for-Free days. On Sunday, May 29, and Monday, July 4, anyone can legally fish on any Pennsylvania waterway without a fishing license. All other fishing regulations still apply.



It was my pleasure to join members of the Nanticoke Fire Department and the New York Fire Department at a 9/11 Memorial dedication.