

The hour of 10:00 has arrived and I want to thank everyone for attending on a busy session day. As a long serving member and Chairman of the House of Representatives from the 32<sup>nd</sup> district of western Pennsylvania- I am frustrated by the partisanship and lack of cooperation by the Republican majority party who controls the agenda in Harrisburg and sets our legislative agenda every week.

There are so many Democratic and Republican bills that have bi-partisan interest- these bills could improve the lives of everyday Pennsylvanians or hold accountable those who deserve it- and so many bills are stifled by the Republican majority and never reach the floor for a fair up or down vote. I work full time for the 32<sup>nd</sup> district and have introduced over 80 pieces of legislation this session, more than any other member in the House. Why so many bills? Because the voters sent us here to do important work for the people of this Commonwealth and I am still working hard every day for the people of my district and all Pennsylvanian's.

So today, I want to focus on a sampling of my bills which I prime sponsored, and let the good people of Pennsylvania decide if these bills deserve a vote on the House floor or whether they should continue to be bottled up by the Republican majority and be buried from the public? These are bills the public may be familiar with, many have been polled and still they do not see a vote-why?

The statistics of partisanship are overwhelming, and they speak for themselves. Only 100 general bills were enacted last year (2021) and almost 3,000 bills were introduced. That's 3% of all bills that have been introduced.

And of the laws passed last year, 1 out of 5 were naming roads or bridges! Let that sink in—in a pandemic year, 20% of our new laws named roads or bridges. The bridge-naming process is wasting taxpayer resources and distracting us from passing laws that actually help Pennsylvanians!

Last session, 63 bills introduced by House Democrats passed, while the majority party passed 468 of their own bills. Only 11.8% of the bills that passed the House were Democratic bills.

This session, it's even worse - only 14 Democratic bills have passed the House. Meanwhile, the majority party has passed 257 of their own bills. That means only 5% - FIVE PERCENT – of bills passed were introduced by House Democrats, and a whopping 95% were Republican bills. This is extreme partisanship, it is hurting our legislative process, and it is hurting Pennsylvania.

I've been a State Representative for some time. Making law should be straightforward: you have an idea, you sell people on that idea, and you vote yes or no on the idea. But the majority party has made this building so hyper-partisan that apparently, you can't even attach gun-related amendments to a firearms bill!

That's outrageous. We were sent here to do the people's work. We're a big state with a lot of different views. The majority party should be listening to other voices so we can have ONE Pennsylvania, not Red versus Blue or East versus West.

That's why I introduce bills that I think would benefit all Pennsylvanians—but the Republicans just won't bring them up for a vote.

For example, some of you may know that I have been trying to pass several pieces of legislation to eliminate conflicts of interest in state government, particularly in the legislature. I have introduced House Bill 318 to prohibit members from having outside income for several sessions now, but it has never been brought up for a vote either.

In the 1960s Pennsylvanians decided it was time to modernize their state government. As part of this modernization, Pennsylvanians came to the conclusion that they wanted a full-time, professionalized state legislature. They wanted a legislature that would be dedicated to serving their needs and would not be encumbered by duties that come with outside employment.

When Members are not working in Harrisburg or voting in session, we are supposed to be back in our districts working for our constituents. So I have to ask, "Who has time for another full-time job?"

This is a full-time legislature, I believe it is a full-time job, and we are paid a good salary with good benefits to do this job. And we are asked to vote on legislation that deals with all kinds of businesses in the private sector. So I believe that any outside employment by members is a conflict of interest. They are often voting on legislation that affects their other jobs, which gives them an unfair advantage over ordinary citizens of this state.

Now since the majority party refuses to move this bill forward, I have offered it as an amendment to other related bills. Just last month I attempted to amend the language into another bill on the floor, but the Republicans voted it down on a procedural maneuver and the majority leader had the nerve to say that some members need outside income because of the cost of living around the state. I think that is a slap in the face to hardworking Pennsylvanians who are struggling right now. Members of the general assembly are paid a salary well above the average income in this state.

Other bills I have introduced include:

- HB1824, which would require municipalities and school districts to hold public hearings for using federal COVID stimulus money.
- HB209, which would make pharmaceutical prices more transparent.
- HB2054, which would require surgeons to disclose to patients whether they are planning on performing surgeries at the same time.
- HB311, which would require prospective school employees to undergo a drug test.
- HB312, which would require school administrators make quarterly reports of school violence incidents.
- HB760, which would freeze property taxes for senior citizens.
- HB1718, which would increase penalties for unlicensed carrying of a firearm on a second or subsequent offense.
- HB1707, which would prohibit Members from owning or serving on the board of a charter school.
- HB212, which protects residents by increasing direct care hours in nursing homes.
- HB316, which allows in-person early voting.

Nearly all of these bills have bipartisan support and the public's support. But because there's a (D) behind my name, the current Republican majority will likely make sure they never see the light of day. That's a disgrace. I'm a member for all the people, and these bills affect people's lives, regardless of whether they're a Republican or Democrat, young or old, or living in the East or West.

I challenge the majority party to do better. Because if they can't govern for the whole state, maybe the people should change who is in charge.