



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Scott Conklin

WINTER 2024
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77TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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As state representative for the 77th Legislative District, I represent the townships of Ferguson, Halfmoon, Huston, Patton, Rush, Taylor, and Worth, and the boroughs of Philipsburg, Port Matilda, and State College. Since taking office in 2006, I continue to build upon my work as a former Centre County Commissioner by working in the House of Representatives to improve the lives of Centre County residents and all Pennsylvanians.

If you have any issues, contact my office at RepConklin@PAHouse.net.



Voting for a Budget to Benefit Pennsylvanians

In December, I voted for legislation to finalize the state budget, which made investments that benefit Centre County by:

- Investing more than \$242.09 million in Penn State University and \$29.97 million in Pennsylvania College of Technology, which will keep the cost of tuition down for students pursuing higher education and also support more than 105,000 jobs across the commonwealth.

- Investing in our kids, with historic increases to school districts in the 77th District, including \$15.53 million for Philipsburg-Osceola Area School District and a near 18% increase in funding for State College Area School District.
- Investing in the state's Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit by tripling it to match the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, easing one of the biggest financial burdens for more than 223,000 working families.

Grants Awarded to the 77th Legislative District

I advocated for more than \$7 million in funding to support the 77th District, including:

- \$3.4 million to State College Borough to replace the stormwater system on Calder Way.
- \$3.3 million to the Pennsylvania State University to provide for battery electric vehicle box trucks and install four DC fast EV chargers and one Level 2 EV charging plug across campus.
- \$1 million to State College Borough to replace the water system on Calder Way.
- \$750,000 to State College Borough to replace the sanitary sewer system on Calder Way.
- \$400,000 to Pinnacle Treatment to expand substance use disorder programs for residents in Centre County.
- \$225,000 to State College Borough to make improvements to Calder Way.
- \$200,000 to Patton Township to make improvements to Toftrees Ave.
- \$200,000 to Rush Township to construct headquarters for emergency medical services providers.
- \$180,000 to Patton Township to cover the costs of engineering, inspections, renovations, and shelter for residents affected by a sinkhole.
- \$166,480 to Huston Township to replace grinder pumps in the sewer system.

- \$129,600 to Rush Township to make improvements on Richard Street.
- \$108,365 to Spring Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited to restore the Bald Eagle Creek Watershed in Taylor Township.
- \$100,000 to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Centre County to repair homes.
- \$60,000 to Penn State to combat sexual assault and make the campus safer for students to learn.
- \$60,000 to Penn State to combat food insecurity on campus.
- \$55,000 to HOME Foundation to reduce low-income households' energy bills.
- \$49,500 to the Centre County Foundation to provide for payments to artists.
- \$32,447 to Discovery Space of Central Pennsylvania to provide for operations.
- \$30,000 to Centre County's Housing Navigation Program to assist with access to affordable housing.
- \$25,843 to Central Pennsylvania Festival of Arts to provide for operations.
- \$25,000 to HOME Foundation to provide services to assist with access to affordable housing.
- \$11,654 to Centre Region Active Adult Center to provide programs and services for older Pennsylvanians.
- \$10,000 to the State College Choral Society to provide for marketing.

Working on Legislation



Improving the Election Process

While mail-in ballots are legal in Pennsylvania, current law does not allow county election officials to pre-canvass absentee and mail-in ballots, which includes the preparation of ballots for scanning.

After hearing from staff at county boards of elections about issues with inspecting absentee or mail-in ballots, I introduced H.B. 847.

The bill – which the House State Government Committee reported to the House – would allow for pre-canvassing of ballots seven days prior to the primary or election. It would also require county election boards to notify electors of minor issues with their ballots, allowing voters to make corrections to ensure their vote counts. Furthermore, the bill would prevent a ballot from being disqualified if it is missing the inner envelope.

By passing this legislation, we would expedite the tabulation of votes, as well as eliminate delays that slow the democratic process, ensuring Pennsylvanians' votes are accurately counted.

As evidenced by the events of Jan. 6, 2021, we must work to restore trust in the electoral system – my bill, H.B. 847, would work to accomplish that.

Protecting Law Enforcement

The Office of State Inspector General works to deter fraud, waste, misconduct, and abuse in state programs and services. While OSIG's powers expanded in 2017, law enforcement officers working for OSIG did not have authorization to carry firearms, putting their lives at risk.

To ensure the protection of law enforcement officers at OSIG, I introduced H.B. 1706, which would empower these officers to carry firearms. More than 120 OSIG officers would benefit, ensuring these officers remain safe as they execute the duties of the OSIG. If passed, the bill would create a safer, more secure Pennsylvania, backed by a robust, empowered OSIG.

The bill, which passed the House by a vote of 201-2, now awaits consideration in the Senate.



Ensuring Civil Service Continues

Civil service is a pillar that uplifts democracy in our country and allows constituents like you to access state services offered by state departments and agencies.

Without legislation to extend temporary regulations for civil service, it would end. That's why I introduced H.B. 1839, which would extend the Office of Administration's temporary regulations for civil service, making them expire in six years, and allow the OA to make recommendations on amendments to Act 71 of 2018 before regulations expire.

The House State Government Committee reported my bill out of committee, referring it to the House for a vote.



Celebrating the Pennsylvania State Grange's 150th Anniversary

As a sixth-degree member of the Pennsylvania State Grange, I introduced a resolution to recognize Sept. 18, 2023, as State Grange Day in Pennsylvania, which the House adopted. Since September 1873, the Grange continues its work to strengthen rural communities. Currently, there are 170 local Granges with 5,700 members.

I look forward to continuing my membership in the Grange, as well as supporting the Grange in my capacity as state representative for the 77th Legislative District.

It was also great to speak with WPSU at Penn State, which is a member of PBS and NPR.



Continuing My Work to Benefit Pennsylvanians

In addition to those three bills, I introduced four other pieces of legislation, which would address issues in Pennsylvania by:

- Requiring the State Employees' Retirement System to complete testing to evaluate the system's response to economic conditions by Oct. 1.
 - **H.B. 778** – referred to the House State Government Committee.
- Requiring schools to provide the Pennsylvania State Police and municipal police departments with current blueprints of each school building to allow police officers to prepare in an emergency.
 - **H.B. 1260** – referred to the House Education Committee.
- Requiring heat-detection devices in emergency vehicles transporting police dogs, such as Totti, who died at State Correctional Institute Rockview in Benner Township after being left inside a hot vehicle for more than two hours.
 - **H.B. 1334** – referred to the House Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee.
- Establishing a database containing information on those convicted of arson.
 - **H.B. 1591** – referred to the House Judiciary Committee.



Working as Chair of the House State Government Committee

As the chair of the House State Government Committee, I presided over a dozen voting meetings and hearings where we reported more than 60 bills out of committee, including bills which would:

- Establish open primaries in Pennsylvania, allowing independent voters to have a say in primaries.
- Prohibit contracts, grants, and tax credits for companies conducting business with Russia or Belarus.
- Ban TikTok on state-owned networks and devices.
- Establish a program to streamline communications between police departments and the public.
- Require departments to issue biannual reports to identify and address issues prior to emergencies.
- Provide for electronic filing of campaign finance reports.
- Require fiscal notes for ballot questions on public debt.
- Prohibit hair type, hair texture, and hairstyle discrimination.

- Prohibit discrimination based on marital status and family caregiver status.
- Provide a cost-of-living adjustment for retired public school employees and state employees.
- Direct the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study to minimize the time required to vote and ensure the average time to vote does not promote inequities.
- Direct the JSGC to conduct a study on artificial intelligence and its impact and potential impact on Pennsylvania.
- Direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to make recommendations for implementing pay based on location for state government employees.

Through these bills and the bills I sponsored, we worked to improve Pennsylvania's government so that it works for all Pennsylvanians.



Transitioning to Chair of the House Commerce Committee

As of Tuesday, Jan. 2, I now serve as majority chair of the PA House Commerce Committee.

As chair of the Commerce Committee, I will work to advance legislation that protects consumers, as well as drives Pennsylvania's economy forward, through legislation such as H.B. 1201. By protecting consumers' right to privacy, we address issues exemplified by Cambridge Analytica, which posed a threat to national security when it utilized users' data to disseminate misinformation on American elections. As such, we must protect consumers' privacy, in addition to fending off interference in our elections.

In the committee, we're also working to advance H.B. 1646, which would allow older adults to designate an individual to receive notification regarding delinquent real estate taxes on their behalf, and H.B. 1818, which allows copies of information submitted to a newspaper to be used as an advertisement to be posted for the purpose of conducting sales of personal property, allowing self-storage facilities to post the information on their website.

In addition to that, I will work to introduce the Contract Automatic Renewal Act, which would require sellers to provide notification when an automatic contract renewal approaches. This legislation would provide more transparency for consumers.

Advocating for Patton Township Residents Affected by a Sinkhole

Natural disasters displaced more than 3.3 million Americans in 2022, and in Centre County, we felt the effects of natural disasters when a sinkhole opened in Patton Township.

After talking to Patton Township residents displaced by the sinkhole, I worked closely with Gov. Josh Shapiro's administration to secure a grant of \$180,000 to the township to cover the costs of engineering, inspections, renovations, and shelter for residents affected. This funding helped to ease the financial burden on residents as they restored their homes.

I'm also working to introduce legislation to provide tax credits to hotels and motels that provide Pennsylvanians displaced by a disaster with a discounted or compensated room. This legislation would not only benefit residents seeking emergency housing during the aftermath of a disaster, but also incentivize hotels and motels to provide support to victims who may otherwise slip through the cracks as existing programs and services may not provide relief.





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Services Available to You

Assistance Available for Paying Property Taxes and Rent

With the expansion of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older may qualify if they meet maximum income limits of \$45,000. If eligible, applicants will receive \$380 to \$1,000, depending on their income.

Apply online at https://mypath.pa.gov/_/ or call my office for assistance.

Assistance Available for Pursuing Higher Education

Students pursuing higher education may qualify for financial assistance through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Pennsylvania State Grant Program by:



FAFSA – Wednesday, May 1 for new students; however other applicants must apply by Thursday, August 1.



PA State Grant Program – Wednesday, May 1 or Thursday, August 15 for community college and technical schools.

Scan the QR codes to apply for student aid and for more information on the FAFSA and PA State Grant Program!

Mark Your Calendar for the April 23 Primary

The primary is currently scheduled for Tuesday, April 23. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you prefer, you may cast your ballot earlier through an absentee or mail-in ballot.

To locate your polling place for the presidential primary, visit <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/PollingPlaceInfo.aspx>.

You can also update your voter registration at the Centre County Board of Elections, located at Willowbank Office Building, 420 Holmes St., Bellefonte, PA 16823, or apply online at <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>.

State College Borough Council Members Sworn into Office



I was proud and honored to attend the swearing-in of newly elected officials in the Borough of State College, and I look forward to working with them to advance shared goals and secure important grants for new projects in the community.

I was exceptionally proud of one of my legislative assistants, Josh Portney, who is the youngest councilmember elected in State College since 1973.