



Legislative Update from

State Representative

Marc J. Gergely

35th Legislative District

WORKING FOR YOU

WINTER 2016

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Budget impasse frustrating, unacceptable

For the past four years, Pennsylvania has suffered through too many budgets full of smoke and mirrors that didn't help our state move forward. In his first budget address, Gov. Tom Wolf outlined a plan that would have changed the status quo and ended the gimmicks previously used to balance our budget.

Unfortunately, last summer the Republicans in the General Assembly passed another budget based on the gimmicks used in the previous four budgets. It did nothing to fix Pennsylvania's structural deficit, properly fund schools or help homeowners lower their property taxes. Gov. Wolf rightfully vetoed this fruitless attempt at a budget, and both sides have been unable to come to a compromise since that time.

As a former steel industry employee, Rep. Gergely understands that hard-working families from the Mon Valley are doing what they need to do to provide for their families. Watching state government unable to pass a budget is frustrating, especially as it drags on and impacts schools and human services providers.

Regrettably, it seems that not all parties are on board with doing what is best for Pennsylvania.

This past November, it seemed as though a breakthrough had been made. All five parties involved – House Democrats, House Republicans, Senate Democrats, Senate Republicans and Gov. Wolf – agreed to a budget framework that would have ended the stalemate and put Pennsylvania back on the right track.

As December came and went, however, it became clear that House Republicans were stepping away from the agreement that all other parties still supported. Inexplicably, the Speaker of the House began cancelling session days. Then, shortly before Christmas when a finish appeared imminent, the Speaker adjourned for the holiday and sent all representatives home.

Rep. Gergely spoke out strongly against this move and the harm it would bring to Pennsylvania. A bipartisan group of legislators were ready to vote and pass the agreed-to budget framework, but the Speaker would not let that happen. Unfortunately, because of this action the budget impasse has dragged on and Pennsylvania continues not to have a fully funded budget.

These actions simply cannot continue. The budget is long past due and the political gamesmanship that has gone on and continues to occur does nothing but harm Pennsylvania. Due to the budgeting mistakes of the past four years, Pennsylvania's credit rating was downgraded multiple times. Now, based on the poorly planned budget put forth by the House GOP, credit agencies are again threatening another downgrade.

Until the structural deficit is fixed, the threat of further downgrades will continue. Rep. Gergely will continue fighting for what residents of the 35th Legislative District need – lower property taxes, increased education funding, jobs that pay and a budget that works for them.



Rep. Gergely during Gov. Tom Wolf's budget address.



Sportsman's Corner

Delayed Harvest and Keystone Select trout fishing available in Western PA

If you're an avid fisherman, you may be interested in the Delayed Harvest and Keystone Select fishing opportunities provided by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Delayed Harvest fishing is open year-round, though fishing must be done with an artificial lure only. Full information on Delayed Harvest fishing can be found at www.fishandboat.com, but below are several Delayed Harvest waters in Allegheny County:

- Bull Creek – 1.0 mile; from the first bridge on T-721 downstream to the T-721 bridge in Millerstown.
- Deer Creek – 1.9 miles; from the SR 0910 Bridge downstream to the lower boundary of Rose Ridge Golf Course.
- Pine Creek – 1.4 miles; from the abandoned railroad bridge near the T-575 and Duncan Ave. intersection downstream to 150 yards downstream of the SR 4019 bridge.

Anglers also have the opportunity to fish in Keystone Select stocked trout waters in Southwestern Pennsylvania. This is a new program by the PFBC that provides you with an opportunity to fish for larger trout in select waters. Approximately 3,200 large trout, between 2 and 3 years old and measuring between 14 and 20 inches will be distributed among these select waters across the state. Delayed Harvest rules do apply to the Keystone Select waterways.

The nearest Keystone Select waterways to our area are:

- Loyalhanna Creek, Westmoreland County – Upper limit is State Road 711, lower limit is State Road 2045.
- Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County – Upper Limit is 200 yards downstream of Countryman Road bridge, lower limit is the bridge upstream of the Laurel Hill Lake.

2016 Fishing Licenses

Resident	Age 16-64	\$22.70
Senior Resident		
(Annual)	Age 65 & Up	\$11.70
Senior Resident		
(Lifetime)	Age 65 & Up	\$51.70
1-Day Resident	Age 16 & Up	\$11.70
Mentored Youth		
Permit	Age 15 & Under	\$0.00
Voluntary Youth Fishing		
License	Age 15 & Under	\$2.70
For a full list of license prices and options, please visit www.GoneFishingPa.com .		

Mentored youth hunters will have rabbit, dove opportunities

Mentored youth hunters will see new opportunities in the 2016-17 license year.

At its June meeting, the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to a measure that would add rabbits and mourning doves to the list of species mentored youth hunters may pursue.

Then, this past September, the Board of Game Commissioners gave full approval to the measure.

The Mentored Youth Hunting Program was established in 2006 as a way to give youth younger than 12 an opportunity to experience hunting in a tightly controlled setting under the close supervision of an adult mentor. The program has been successful and safe, and the list of species that can be pursued by mentored youth hunters has been expanded over the years.

In casting their votes, the commissioners pointed out that sporting organizations and other interested groups have continued to encourage the Game Commission to expand mentored youth hunting opportunities and, particularly, to add rabbits and mourning doves to the list approved for mentored youth.

Please note that mentored youth hunters still will need a migratory game bird license to hunt and harvest mourning doves.

Requiring the license will help count them for the Harvest Information Program, a cooperative state and federal



program designed to improve the information collected regarding the harvest of migratory game birds. The license costs \$3.70 for residents and a mentored youth permit costs \$2.70.

2016 Trout Opener on the way

Though it's still winter, the 2016 Trout Opener will be here before you know it. This year, the statewide opening for trout season will be Saturday, April 16. Though trout stocking schedules are not yet available, Rep. Gergely's office will have them once they are released. For updates as April 16 approaches, please sign up for emails at www.pahouse.com/Gergely/EmailSignUp.



Fighting to preserve seniors' Property Tax/Rent Rebates

Last year, the House of Representatives passed legislation that would help senior citizens maintain eligibility in Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program.

House Bill 406 would double the death benefit exemption to \$10,000 when calculating income eligibility for the program and would improve the incomes of seniors living on fixed incomes and being harmed by escalating property taxes.

Without this change, any death benefit above the current \$5,000 cap is counted toward the survivor's income.

The bill would increase the cap for the first time since 1971, when an adult funeral cost about \$980. Funeral costs today average more than \$6,500, which does not include the burial site or monument.

H.B. 406 is currently awaiting further action in the Senate.

The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded.

The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates for certain qualifying homeowners can boost rebates to \$975. The Revenue Department automatically calculates the supplemental rebates for qualifying homeowners.

The deadline to apply for a Property Tax/Rent Rebate is June 30, 2016. New booklets are now available at Rep. Gergely's offices. For help with your application or more information, please contact either the White Oak office at (412) 664-0035 or the Munhall office at (412) 476-3046.

Honoring Professor Burrell Brown

Last summer, Rep. Gergely sponsored a resolution to honor the life and achievements of the late professor, attorney, and lifelong Clairton resident Burrell A. Brown. Brown was a labor lawyer, professor at California University of Pennsylvania and a longtime counsel to the Pennsylvania NAACP.

Brown was a well-respected union leader and was affiliated with other numerous civic and professional organizations. He was a founding member and past president of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Bar Association and the Pittsburgh Chapter of Black MBA's. Though he will be missed, the contributions he made will not be forgotten.



Annual bus trip to Harrisburg another success



Each year, Rep. Gergely sponsors a trip for residents of the 35th Legislative District to come to Harrisburg, tour the beautiful state Capitol, and learn about the legislative process. This year's trip featured a great turnout and those who attended got to meet with Gov. Tom Wolf. Above are some photos from the trip.

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**Rep. Gergely's offices are here
to help you with ...**

- PennDOT issues, including motor vehicle and driver's license inquiries
- Property Tax/Rent Rebates
- Applying for PACE/PACENET prescription drug benefits
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Information about financial aid for higher education
- Birth and death certificates
- Disability plates and placards
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations honoring local accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- State Capitol tours
- Problems or questions with any state-related matter