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FALL 2017

The 2017/18 Budget

As a regular reader of my newsletters, thank you. I know you have come to expect my outreach to you in this format as one of highlights and good community information; things that help to make your life in Southwest Pennsylvania a little better and brighter.

This time, I am hoping you will accept some thoughts – as your representative and as the Democratic chairman of the House Appropriations Committee – about this year's work to deliver the 2017/18 budget.

The frustration of not finishing the entire budget menu before our summer break has forced some odd and problematic revenue proposals since June 30, when the spending portion of the budget received overwhelming bipartisan support. I've called the most recent "out there" idea as one that robs Peter to pay Paul. Unfortunately, creditors have agreed as they have lowered PA's bond rating.

The bottom line is the House Majority proposal does not fix the annual budget revenue problems; they just call them something else or attempt to change their definitions. But I believe they would hurt taxpayers more than other honest and straightforward ideas that would generate annual, recurring revenue. Their proposal also would critically injure the clean water, transportation, and education programs that have been working exactly as prescribed.

During my tenure as your representative, I have always sought bipartisan solutions to complicated problems. Rest assured that my fellow Democrats are working with Republicans and they are working with us to finish the 2017/18 budget and associated bills. We just have to get a significant group of men and women to join our rational thought initiative.

Thank you for reading and for your continued support.

Now, on to the good news!

Lost Property... FOUND

Pennsylvania's unclaimed property program is working statewide. In the 25th District? It's working big time!

My office has helped constituents find 1313 properties valued at a combined \$513,766.84! That's a lot of happy people!

You could be next to locate forgotten stocks, uncashed checks, abandoned bank accounts, or life insurance policies. If you have not checked within the last year, please do, as the data base is frequently updated.

We can help!

Call my Monroeville office, 412-856-8284, or return the form on the back of this newsletter to find out if the state is holding unclaimed money that belongs to you.



Honored to join district office staffers, Kevin Keller and Kim Steele for the 5k Purple Stride Walk for Pancreatic Cancer.

Great news for our beloved pets!

If you are like me, you think of your pets as a member of your family. If you are like me, you also think those who abuse animals should be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

I'm happy to share that we have added muscle to state law as it deals with animal abusers.

Libre's Law went into effect in late August. It's named after a Boston terrier pup who was left for dead last summer, but nursed back to health. The new measure increases the penalties for committing such heinous crimes against our furry friends.

Thanks to the story of this courageous pup, people who are convicted of abusing, neglecting or depriving animals must surrender them.

It is now a felony to torture a pet, and anyone who severely abuses a horse or tethers a dog outside in extreme weather will face more than a slap on the wrist. The new law also offers civil immunity for veterinarians and humane society police officers who report suspected animal cruelty.



Is your dog licensed?

One of the best ways to ensure the return of a lost dog is to make sure they are licensed.

State law requires your pet to be licensed. Doing so means less stress if your dog becomes lost.

Visit the Allegheny County treasurer's office or its website (www.alleghenycounty.us/treasurers-office/dog-license.aspx) to fill out the simple paperwork and get your dog licensed. While there, you could have your dog microchipped, which would also help to keep your pet safe.

Don't drink and drive!

Your safety is important to me. It's also important to your family and your community.



We now have an updated DUI law (effective Aug. 25 by Act 33 of 2016) and this means ignition interlock is now mandatory for first-time DUI offenders with a blood alcohol content of .10 or higher and for individuals who refuse chemical testing. The changes to PA's DUI law also created the Ignition Interlock Limited License.

For a 160-pound man, getting to .10 means the consumption of about four drinks in one hour. A 140-pound woman would have to drink 3 beers or glasses of wine to reach that benchmark and be fitted with an ignition interlock.

Be safe! Don't drink and drive.

Lyme disease is a statewide problem

Ticks are everywhere in Pennsylvania. That's not a bad thing, unless they are carrying Lyme disease.

A 2015 Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection study confirmed that the blacklegged insect, commonly called a deer tick, is in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania.

The deer tick carries the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, and you don't want to be infected with this because it can cause fever, fatigue and headaches. Left untreated, you can come down with serious complications involving your heart, joints, and nervous system.

Pennsylvania has reported the highest number of Lyme disease cases over the last few years.

The state Department of Health has produced a Lyme disease information sheet, which you can download from www.health.pa.gov.

As state health officials like to say, "Tick bites are completely preventable." I'm hoping this information helps you realize this so you continue to safely enjoy the outdoors.



New driver's licenses, photo IDs feature updated security and design

Proof of identity is a vital part of living in this world. Thankfully, PennDOT has updated the design of our driver's licenses and enhanced their security features; same goes for identification cards. The changes will help protect against counterfeiting, fraud and identity theft.

You are not required to replace your current license or ID to accommodate the changes until your scheduled renewal date.

Some of the enhanced features of the new cards/licenses include:

- No more magnetic strip on the back of the card;
- A larger primary portrait and smaller "ghost" portrait;
- 1D and 2D barcodes, which contain data visible on the front of the card;
- Laser perforation – the Keystone outline with "PA" is embedded into the card stock and can be observed by holding the card up to any light source; and
- Lamination – Each card is laminated with an optically variable pattern with the state motto, "Virtue, Liberty, Independence;" Keystone outline; and "1787," the year PA ratified the U.S. Constitution.

For more information, contact my office or visit www.penndot.gov

Helping Every Student Succeed in PA

The Every Student Succeeds Act, sometimes called "ESSA," is the new federal law that gives states more flexibility to set education policy in areas such as academic assessments, accountability, and school improvement.

One of the highlights of Pennsylvania's proposed state plan was a 20-percent reduction in the amount of time students in grades 3 through 8 spend on statewide testing.

After engaging with stakeholders around the state and gathering public comment, the PA Department of Education submitted the proposed plan for federal review. PDE's homepage, www.education.pa.gov, has a big ESSA button that you can click to get all sorts of information and resources about the federal law, and learn more about PA's state plan.



Speaking of automobiles ...

Ever lose that little license plate sticker after you register your vehicle with PennDOT? Rest easy, you no

longer have to worry about this annoying detail.

PennDOT has stopped issuing stickers following a vehicle registration or renewal. Your registration is now part of your electronic driver profile.

Property tax or rent rebate program deadline extended!

Your hard-earned money goes toward a lot of property tax and rent. Why not get some of that back? You now have more time to apply for this refund.

The deadline for filing with the 2016 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended to Dec. 31.

This program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates can boost your return to \$975.

Get property tax/rent rebate claim forms (PA-1000) and related info at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling

toll-free, 888-222-9190. Forms and assistance are also available from Department of Revenue district offices, the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging, senior centers and my office. We are ready to help you understand the program, complete the application, and get some money back.

Please don't assume you are not eligible. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 a year for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may also file rebate claims on behalf of claimants who lived at least one day at the residence and meet all other eligibility criteria.



Medical Marijuana Update:

Acting Secretary of
Health and Physician

General Dr. Rachel Levine has announced two major items relating to physicians and the medical marijuana program:

PHYSICIAN REGISTRATION

The Department of Health has opened an online registration process for physicians interested in participating in Pennsylvania's Medical Marijuana Program. The Practitioner Registry is available at www.health.pa.gov.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PHYSICIANS

The Department of Health has also approved the first two providers to offer the four-hour training course required for practitioners: The Answer Page Inc. (www.theanswerpage.com) and Extra Step Assurance LLC (www.cannabisexpertise.com).

In June, the Pennsylvania Department of Health announced the issuance of 12 permits for medical marijuana growers/processors in the state. The permittees now have less than six months to become operational and

begin growing medical marijuana. Entities receiving permits were notified by mail.

In the Southwest Region, AGRimed Industries of PA PurePenn received a permit.

Scores for all grower/processor applicants are available on the Department of Health website at www.health.pa.gov.

The Office of Medical Marijuana received 457 total applications: 177 for growers/processors and 280 for dispensaries.

The Medical Marijuana Program, signed into law April 17, 2016, has kept the Department of Health very busy. Since then, Health has:

- Completed the Safe Harbor temporary guidelines and Safe Harbor Letter application process, as well as approved 271 applications;
- Completed temporary regulations for growers/processors, dispensaries, laboratories and physicians which have been published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin;

■ Released phase one permit applications for grower/processors and dispensaries;

■ Developed the Medical Marijuana Physician Workgroup;

■ Drafted temporary regulations for practitioners to participate in the program; and

■ Selected the woman-owned company MJ Freeway to implement a seed-to-sale electronic tracking system.

The Medical Marijuana Program is expected to be fully implemented in 2018 and will offer product to patients who are Pennsylvania residents and under a physician's care for the treatment of a serious medical condition as defined by Act 16.

Your local dispensary, operated by The Healing Center, will be located at 130 Mall Circle Drive in Monroeville.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PA'S MEDICAL MARIJUANA PROGRAM?

Email RA-DHMedMarijuana@pa.gov. Information is also available on the Department of Health's website: www.health.pa.gov.

Need your birth certificate? We can help, but it will take some time. Processing birth certificate requests from the Vital Records Department at the Department of Health is taking about 6-8 weeks. Still, contact my office to see how my staff can help you in this area.

My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, duplicate titles and license applications
- Reduced registration and license renewals
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Birth and death certificate applications
- Pennsylvania income tax questions
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, etc.
- Disability plates and placards
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Help with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, welfare)
- PACE and PACENET applications for senior citizens
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate questions or help
- Information regarding unclaimed property

Any issues with state government!

Around the Capitol and the 25th District



A great time was had by all at the East McKeesport Open Streets Day!



Enjoyed the North Versailles Fire Parade!



Appeared on This Week in PA with Dennis Owens.



Had a blast catching some of the action at the annual Plum Area Soccer Kick-Off Classic. 20 years and still going strong!



Enjoyed visiting with the Garden City Swim Club, hosts of the 48th annual Monroeville Invitational Swim Meet. Congratulations to all the participants!



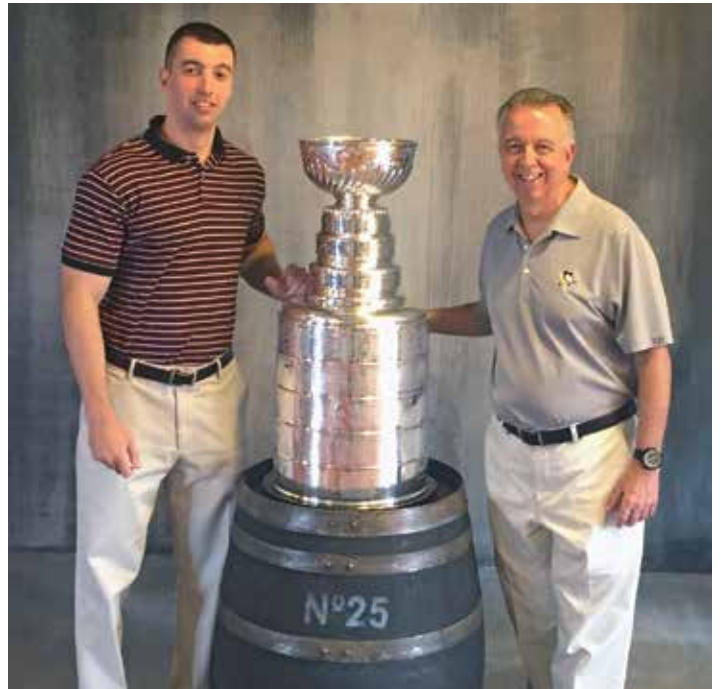
Had a wonderful time at the St. Vincent DePaul picnic.



Speaking in support of Rep. Bill Kortz's resolution to honor the 230th Anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States!



Honored to be named a Pre-K 4 PA Champion! High quality Pre-K & other early childhood development programs are one of the most important investments we can make. Funding these programs ensured a successful future for Pennsylvania residents of all ages.



Thrilled the Penguins won the Stanley Cup this year and just as thrilled my son and I had the opportunity to see the Stanley Cup in person.



STATE REP. JOSEPH F. MARKOSEK

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- Property Tax/Rent Rebate
Program Deadline Extended
- Medical Marijuana Update

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Cut out and return the form below to my Constituent Service Office
to find out if the state is holding unclaimed money that you own!



UNCLAIMED FINANCIAL PROPERTY...

IS THE STATE HOLDING MONEY THAT BELONGS TO YOU?

The state is in custody of over \$2.3 billion worth of
unclaimed property accumulated from forgotten
stocks, uncashed checks, abandoned bank accounts,
life insurance policies, etc. We can see if you may be
eligible for any of this unclaimed property.

**Please fill out the information below. If I find any
unclaimed money for you, I will be in touch!**



Name(s): _____

Current address: _____

Phone: _____

Maiden name: _____

**Representative Joe Markosek,
4232 Northern Pike, Suite 303, Monroeville, Pa. 15146 – 412-856-8284**



State Representative
**JOSEPH F.
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