



State Representative Harry A.
READSHAW
 36TH DISTRICT **report**



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‘AROUND THE DISTRICT’

SECURITY CAMERAS CUTTING CRIME IN SOUTH SIDE

Recent reports show that security cameras are having a major impact in cutting crime, especially in Pittsburgh’s South Side, where they are credited with reducing crime by more than 30 percent.

According to Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala, the cameras – which offer high-resolution, detailed photos – are useful on multiple fronts. In addition to deterring crime, they offer real-time data that can help police respond quickly to the exact location of an incident. The video footage can also help investigators determine whether a crime has been committed. And, of course, the cameras are helping prosecutors obtain convictions by providing irrefutable video evidence that can stand up in court.

There are about 450 security cameras throughout the county, and the number is expected to increase.



I recently met with Baldwin Mayor David Depretis (center) and Baldwin Police Officer Keith Hagan to discuss the borough’s new surveillance program.

Fighting crime with doorbell cameras

The Borough of Baldwin recently launched a security camera project involving a completely different kind of surveillance camera. In April, I met with Baldwin Mayor David Depretis and Baldwin Police Officer Keith Hagan, who explained the details of Project B-Safe – a crime-fighting initiative using home doorbell cameras.

The device replaces a homeowner’s existing doorbell with a high-definition camera, which begins recording when it detects motion outside the door. The camera can capture activity such as passing cars.

Hagan said he received a grant through D.A. Zappala that enabled him to offer the device to residents at a reduced cost. Within eight hours, 50 residents had signed up, and another 120 joined a waiting list.

While the program is just in its beginning phase, I believe it holds promise for cutting crime statewide.

BANNING E-CIGARETTES

Brentwood Borough recently took some positive steps toward discouraging an emerging trend that’s particularly dangerous to young people – the use of electronic cigarettes. In late May, the borough adopted an ordinance prohibiting use of most e-cigarettes in the town’s public places and work spaces.

The ordinance also prohibits the sale of e-cigarettes to anyone under 18 and prevents minors from going into businesses where e-cigarettes are used.

IMPROVEMENTS COMING TO EAST CARSON STREET

Pedestrian safety is the major impetus behind a project to overhaul Pittsburgh’s East Carson Street. The state has identified the street as the area’s most dangerous for pedestrians.



PennDOT’s work, estimated to cost \$17.5 million, will include:

- paving East Carson in the South Side from Smithfield Street to 33rd Street,
- installing new traffic lights,
- installing street lighting at intersections,
- adding pavement markings,
- adding painted crosswalks that are larger and more visible, and
- constructing curb “bump-outs” that will shorten the distance in crosswalks and extend sidewalks.

The work is scheduled to begin in September and continue through 2019.

STATE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS DROPPED

Figures from the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics signal some good news: the state's unemployment rate dropped over the past several months, going from 4.8 percent in March to 4.7 percent in April to 4.5 percent in May. Although that's still higher than the national rate, it's a reassuring trend.

In other encouraging news, the total number of estimated jobs in the state – referred to as nonfarm jobs – remains strong, with most sectors adding positions. Certain sectors showed especially strong growth, with mining and logging jobs showing a 9-percent increase over the past 12 months. Other areas – including construction work, education and health services, and professional and business services – also showed steady increases.

Here are some other recent labor-related statistics:

- The Keystone Research Center found that 90 percent of working people who would benefit from raising Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$15 are adults, with two in three workers being 25 or older and two in five being 40 or older. Additionally, nearly two in five children live with at least one parent who would get a raise.
- According to a U.S. Census Bureau survey, Pennsylvania's workforce consists of 2.9 million women, which is more than 43 percent of the state's civilian workforce. Women account for 74.2 percent of the workforce in education and healthcare-related industries; 53.8 percent of the recreation and accommodations industries; 51.1 percent of information and finance; and 16.6 percent of the agriculture, construction and transportation industries combined.
- The U.S. Department of Labor found that the number of jobs requiring a license has grown from 5 percent of all occupations in the 1950s to over 25 percent of the American workforce today. Iowa has the highest share of licensed workers at 33 percent and South Carolina has the lowest at 12 percent, while PA has 20 percent.
- A recent Georgetown University report concluded that the gender wage gap is responsible for women earning \$1 million less than men over the course of their lifetimes. Overall, women must earn at least one more degree to have the same earnings as a man.

While it's encouraging to hear good news about jobs, it's clear that we still have work to do. I support raising the minimum wage because the statistics tell me that this would squarely benefit Pennsylvania's working families. I'm a strong supporter of Equal Pay for Equal Work; it's clear that we need to do more to ensure that women receive the same pay as their male counterparts.

THE COMMONWEALTH'S PROFILE IS CHANGING

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released its 2017 population estimates, which put the commonwealth's total population at 12.8 million.

The data, which track both statewide and municipal growth from 2010 to 2017, show that the state's population increased by 102,680 – an increase of 0.8 percent. The data also show substantial continued growth in the state's southcentral and southeastern regions, and in pockets surrounding Pittsburgh and University Park.

The Census Bureau also released the results of its American Community Survey covering the years 2012-2016. The data show some encouraging news when it comes to education: Of all counties, Allegheny had the highest increase in its share of population with a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the prior survey period of 2007-2011. With nearly 40 percent of its population holding college or higher-level degrees, Allegheny County ranks highest in the area for educational attainment and fourth in the state, behind Chester, Montgomery and Centre counties.

Other census data show that Pennsylvanians are getting older, with nearly one-third of the state's population 55 or older. Visit www.aging.pa.gov to find programs, services and news relating to seniors.

Pennsylvania is also becoming more diverse, with the state's Hispanic and Asian populations increasing from 2010 by 30.7 percent and 28.9 percent, respectively. You can read more from the Census Bureau's detailed population estimates by visiting www.census.gov.



Deadline extended for Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program!

I want to relay some great news about a popular program: The deadline to file for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2017 under the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been extended to December 31! The program is a great way for eligible residents to recoup some of the living expenses that take the biggest bite out of a household budget.

To find out whether you qualify, visit www.revenue.pa.gov and click on the "tax information" tab at the top right.

Meeting the Metros



I recently had the pleasure of welcoming the women's Metro Basketball team to the Capitol, along with state Rep. Bill Kortz. The team, their coaches and parents, and Baldwin-Whitehall School District Superintendent Randy Lutz received a tour.

Rallying for motorcycle safety, education



I had the honor of speaking at an A.B.A.T.E. rally in the Capitol Rotunda on June 1. The group – whose name stands for “Alliance of Bikers Aimed Toward Education” – is dedicated to protecting motorcyclists’ rights through political change, charitable works and public education. Many veterans are members.

Workforce grants, ‘Qualified Opportunity Zones’ will benefit area residents

I wanted to let you know about some recent workforce development grants and other programs that promise to enhance employment prospects and other resources for area residents:

- Strategic Innovation grants. The workforce development board Partner4Work was awarded two Strategic Innovation grants totaling more than \$440,000 to provide low-income students and workers with pathways to employment.
- Business Education Partnership grant. An \$85,700 business education partnership grant will provide Pittsburgh students greater access to real-world learning programs, a pipeline to entry-level jobs at area businesses and a career track in the medical field.
- Qualified Opportunity Zones. Four tracts in the City of Pittsburgh and one in Mt. Oliver have been approved as Qualified Opportunity Zones under a federal program that provides tax incentives to private investors for investing in low-income communities. Investments generated by the program will create jobs and provide better housing opportunities for the hardworking residents of these communities.

I support H.B. 1082 – also known as “Jake’s Law.” The bill would extend workplace protections under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act to the state’s public employees. Currently, those standards apply only to private-sector and federal workers.

My bill on continuing education credits moves forward



I want to update you on my bill involving continuing education credits, which recently passed the House. Most workers who are licensed under the state’s Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs are subject to a continuing education requirement. House Bill 1343 would permit workers to carry over excess CE credits they earn to their next license renewal period – but to one biennial renewal term only.

As Democratic chairman of the House Professional Licensure Committee, I

believe that amending the current law to permit carryover of credits would lend needed flexibility to the continuing education process. Enabling license holders to choose classes without fear of paying for unused credits would give them the freedom to choose courses based on content, not on the number of credits provided.

The bill passed the House and is currently with the Senate Appropriations Committee.

As Democratic chairman of the House Professional Licensure Committee, I believe my bill would add flexibility to continuing education requirements.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: VETERANS BILLS

I want to tell you about several bills I'm sponsoring that would improve the lives of veterans and military families.

House Bill 302. This bill would help former military medics who are transitioning to civilian work by requiring the state Department of Health to consider their military education, training and experience for purposes of fulfilling requirements for professional credentials related to EMTs. The bill is currently with the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

House Bill 697. This bill would amend the state constitution to exempt the surviving spouse of any member of the U.S. Armed Forces killed in action from paying property taxes on the surviving spouse's primary residence. Because the bill involves amending the state constitution, it would have to pass both chambers of the General Assembly in two consecutive sessions and then a public referendum vote. The House VAEP committee unanimously approved the bill, which is awaiting consideration by the full House.

House Bill 980. This bill would exclude veterans' federal disability compensation or pension from being considered when calculating income for purposes of state assistance programs or rebates. The bill would also extend the exclusion to an unmarried surviving spouse. This bill passed the House and is in the process of being considered by the Senate.

House Bill 984. The Military Family Relief Assistance Program is funded by a tax check-off that permits taxpayers



to donate all or part of their tax refund to the program. This bill would extend the check-off, which is expiring, through January 2023. The bill passed the House and is awaiting consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

I'm encouraged by legislative action that has moved each of these bills forward and will continue to update you on their progress.

THANKS TO ALL THE VETERANS!



Proud to host National Guard members at the Capitol



As a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, I was honored to recognize and thank members of the National Guard during annual Guard Day at the Capitol this May.

BUDGET TACKLES SCHOOL SAFETY HEAD ON

I voted for the new state budget – which passed the legislature and was signed by the governor June 22 – because it makes school safety a central priority. The budget confronts this most compelling need head-on by funding a comprehensive Safe Schools Initiative.



The funding is tied to a plan that received solid bipartisan support last month with the passage of Senate Bill 1142. Now Act 44 of 2018, it establishes a School Security and Safety Fund – a comprehensive grant program of \$60 million that will fund more than 20 different school safety initiatives, from adding metal detectors, cameras and school resource officers; to hiring police officers and additional school psychologists; and instituting violence-prevention programs.

School districts and community groups will be eligible to apply for funding. To ensure that funding is tailored to the needs of each district, a committee within the state Commission on Crime and Delinquency will be tasked with assessing the needs of each district that applies.

To ensure that all districts receive funding, the legislation limits annual funding to any one school district to 10 percent of the total available funds. And every eligible district that applies is guaranteed a minimum grant of \$25,000.

Safe2Say Program

In addition to funding a wide range of safety initiatives, the new law creates an essential reporting mechanism: the Safe2Say Program. The anonymous tip line will allow students, teachers and others in the community to report threatening behavior or activity anonymously, without fear of retaliation. More and more states are embracing these anonymous tip lines, which are proving to be a valuable resource.

Beyond security, the \$32.7 billion budget makes traditional educational needs a priority, increasing funding by \$100 million for basic education, \$25 million for early education and \$15 million for special education. The budget also provides additional funding to combat the opioid addiction crisis. Importantly, the budget – delivered on time – accomplishes its goals without adding any new tax burden on residents. I'm encouraged that this strong, bipartisan effort will keep us moving in the right direction.

New law will give some citizens a clean slate

A new law will offer some Pennsylvania residents a fresh start in life. The "Clean Slate Act," allows citizens convicted of first-degree misdemeanors to petition the court to have their records sealed after 10 years of being conviction-free, as long as they have served out their sentence and paid all court-ordered financial debts.

In addition, the law automatically seals records of second- or third-degree misdemeanors that involved less than a two-year prison sentence if the person convicted of them remains free from convictions for 10 years.

Finally, the law seals criminal history records related to charges that did not result in convictions.

The legislation does not apply to serious crimes such as murder, sexual offenses, kidnapping, child endangerment or firearms offenses, among others.

In the near future, I believe we will see proposed legislation authorizing courts to require repeat DUI offenders to wear an alcohol monitoring device. Some counties have already implemented successful programs using these devices, which have resulted in lower recidivism rates. I plan to support this legislation, which promises to bring greater safety to the commonwealth's roads.



Honored by citation from Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology

I was recently honored to receive the Community Service Citation from the Pennsylvania Academy of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery. The academy advised that it selected me in recognition of my "dedication to maintaining quality health care and continued advocacy for patient safety."

Academy members are themselves dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of care. The qualities they embody – dedication to patient care, adherence to best practices and standards of the profession and an ongoing commitment to continuing education – are the essence of professionalism. If my work as Democratic chairman of the House Professional Licensure Committee helps the academy promote these standards, I'm truly humbled.

The academy presents the citation annually to a community member who has provided "outstanding service to community in support of quality health care." Past recipients have included the late U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter and former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge.

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BUSTER: Sniffing out some new bills on the horizon



It looks like my cousins Moe and Bow are ready for a ride, and they say they're willing to "ruff" it. I hope they realize that the roof and bed of a pickup truck aren't safe places for a canine wanting to take a spin. Personally, I prefer the front seat – with air conditioning.

When it comes to hot vehicles, there's a bill on the

horizon that would protect us from being confined in them. Because we can't sweat like people, we have no way to cool down, which can lead to deadly consequences. Keep an eye out for this law down the line!

We recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of "Libre's Law," – Act 10 of 2017. Our friend Libre's excellent lobbying skills – with a little help from his human coworkers – helped secure some excellent protections for our canine community when it comes to outdoor tethering. But we've noticed a few ways in which the law can be improved to protect us even better.

At the moment the law doesn't

have a clear provision to ensure that dogs kept outdoors are properly protected from extreme weather. We're just as vulnerable to the elements as our human counterparts, and some of us who are chained or tethered during severe storms or other natural disasters have no ability to seek shelter.

Please look for new laws on the horizon that would better protect us by offering some concrete guidelines on shelters, and tell your human companions to speak up for them!

