



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



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## PROTECTING VICTIMS OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

As a strong advocate in the fight against child sex trafficking, I introduced legislation that would exempt child victims of sex trafficking from prosecution for the crimes committed against them.

A related Senate bill was moving forward, so I amended my bill into S.B. 554 when it arrived in the House. As amended, the bill would automatically refer children who are suspected victims of sex trafficking to Children and Youth Services agencies. Children forced to have sex are not criminals, they are victims who have been failed by the system.

Senate Bill 554 also would require the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services to develop and implement protocols to provide safe and stable housing, education and counseling to these young victims. The bill is currently being considered by the House.

This legislation would give children the support and services they need to leave sex trafficking behind – and it would also train law enforcement officers on how to approach these children and get them the help they need.

Out of the 199 cases of sexual exploitation reported in 2017 in Pennsylvania, 54 involved minors, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline.



Advocating for action on sex trafficking at a Capitol news conference.

## ON-TIME BUDGET FOCUSES ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

For the first time in several years, the 2018-19 state budget passed in a timely and bipartisan manner without raising any taxes. The \$32.7 billion budget allocates additional money for basic education funding, special and early education, and career and technical education, along with establishing more money for apprenticeship training.

With a \$100 million increase in basic education funding, an additional \$15 million for special education and \$25 million for early education, we are investing in our children and their learning.

Furthermore, \$40 million will be used for PA SMART, which incorporates computer science, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math or STEM, and workforce development.

The investments we are making today will pay dividends in the future, as our young people will be prepared to go to college or enter the workforce as educated, skilled and capable workers ready to support families while living and working in Pennsylvania.

## MISTER ROGERS HONORED IN RESOLUTION, TRAIL



The sweater of Fred Rogers.

Earlier this year I introduced a resolution (H.R. 724) that was adopted unanimously in the House of Representatives. I paid tribute to Fred Rogers, the loveable and entertaining host of the television show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, who appeared in many homes every weekday afternoon for decades. The resolution commemorated the 50th anniversary of the founding and creation of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

A movie about Rogers, starring Tom Hanks, is set to start filming this fall in Pittsburgh. In conjunction with this milestone anniversary, the Mister Rogers Trail was created by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Visit Pittsburgh and the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, along with input from Fred Rogers Productions and the McFeely-Rogers Foundation.

The three-day trail includes locations in Latrobe, Ligonier and Pittsburgh. In between there are stops at Rogers' resting place and WQED Studios in Pittsburgh, where the show was filmed and produced.

The trail has visits at museums, memorials, and Rogers' home and church. It's a wonderful way to keep Mister Rogers' achievements and memory alive.

## Bill honoring 1st Sgt. Alexander Kelly one step closer to becoming reality

A bill I introduced that designates the naming of a bridge after an African-American Civil War soldier awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor unanimously passed the House in June.

House Bill 2420, which was requested by American Legion Post 57 and Saltsburg Borough officials, would honor Alexander Kelly, an American hero who enlisted and rose to the rank of first sergeant in the Sixth U.S. Colored Troops.

If voted into law, a portion of Pennsylvania Route 286 would be named the 1st Sgt. Alexander Kelly Memorial Bridge. It is located on what is also known as Washington Street, over the Kiskiminetas River between Saltsburg Borough in Indiana County and in Loyalhanna Township in Westmoreland County.

Kelly was born on April 7, 1840 in Saltsburg and serves as an important historical figure within the 55th Legislative District, as well as throughout the commonwealth and country.

Kelly was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery in seizing the battle flag and rallying the troops during a time of confusion. After the war, Kelly served as a watchman for the Pittsburgh Police. He died on June 19, 1907, and is buried in St. Peters Cemetery in Pittsburgh.



Speaking in the House chamber in honor of 1st Sgt. Alexander Kelly.

## Investing in the 55th Legislative District

Bringing money back home to our communities is important to me. It's vital to see local taxpayer dollars being returned to the region. Funding goes to a variety of projects, including education and repairing roadways.

Here are some of the awards provided in our area this year:

- **The Latrobe School District** received \$8,100 to expand its program providing breakfast for students through the state's School Breakfast Initiative.
- **The Derry Township Municipal Authority** received \$1 million to connect a trail from the Keystone State Park in Derry Township to the New Alexandria Borough Municipal Park through PennDOT's Surface Transportation Block Grant program.
- **Westmoreland County Community College** was awarded \$625,000 for the replacement of the heating, ventilation and air conditioning rooftop units and electronic control systems at two of its facilities. The grant is from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- **The Dr. Robert Ketterer Charter School** will get \$57,850 from a Food Service Equipment Grant to purchase a walk-in freezer.
- **Westmoreland County** will share a \$252,000 state grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to improve and increase employment economic opportunities through a Strategic Innovation grant.
- **Westmoreland County** will also receive a \$200,000 state grant toward revitalizing the area. The Keystone Communities Program grant is awarded to the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Westmoreland in partnership with the Westmoreland County Land Bank to be used to acquire, demolish and or to rehab blighted properties.
- **Twenty-three fire and ambulance companies in Armstrong, Indiana and Westmoreland counties** will benefit from sharing \$300,882 in state grants from the Pennsylvania Fire Company and Emergency Medical Service Grant program. The recipients can use the funds toward repairing, building or renovating facilities; purchasing new equipment and training and certification of staff; or the funds may go to repay debt related to equipment purchases or facility building and maintenance.

## Organizations receive environmental awards

I want to congratulate the Loyalhanna Watershed Association and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Water Resource Center on receiving the 2018 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence.

Both recipients are among 23 awardees chosen from across the commonwealth that created or participated in the development of a project that promotes environmental stewardship. The accolade was awarded through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Eligible applicants included any individual, business, school, government agency or community organization in the state.

The Loyalhanna Watershed Association, which integrated Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programming at the Watershed Farm in Westmoreland County, has helped educate nearly 500 students in area school districts on the need to be good stewards of our water's resources. As part of their award-winning community outreach program, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Water Resource Center hosted a series of Municipal Stormwater Workshops in nine counties, including Armstrong, Indiana and Westmoreland.



It was a pleasure to welcome students from Saint Vincent College to the Capitol in April.

## Medical marijuana update



Pennsylvania's Medical Marijuana Program is up and running. Dispensaries and grower/processors who were approved in the first round of permitting applications have opened their doors and the state Department of Health will soon be issuing a second round of permits. More than 52,000 patients have registered to participate in the program.

The Medical Marijuana Advisory Board has added three conditions to the list of ailments which may be treated by medical marijuana. If you believe your condition may be treated with medical marijuana, the Department of Health website contains lots of useful information including how to apply for a patient card.

Additionally, on Aug. 1, it was announced that the dry-leaf form of medical marijuana will be phased in at dispensaries. The dry-leaf form of medical marijuana provides a cost-effective option for patients, in addition to other forms of medication already available at dispensaries, according to Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine.

For more information, visit [www.medicalmarijuana.pa.gov](http://www.medicalmarijuana.pa.gov).

## Real ID Update

As PennDOT prepares to begin offering federally compliant Real ID cards beginning in March, some state residents can apply for pre-verification to allow them to expedite the approval process.

To be eligible for pre-approval, you must have applied for a Pennsylvania driver's license or photo identification for the first time after 2003. To verify that your documentation is available, visit [www.dmv.pa.gov](http://www.dmv.pa.gov) and click on "Real ID" and then, "Pre-Verification."

Otherwise, once the Real ID rollout begins next year you will need to visit a PennDOT licensing center with the following if you chose to obtain a Real ID card: proof of your identity, proof of Social Security number, two proofs of current Pennsylvania residency and, if applicable, a proof of legal name change. Starting in September, all PennDOT license centers will be equipped to verify these documents for customers who plan to apply for a Real ID in 2019.

Please note that you do not have to get a Real ID; it's up to the individual to determine if he or she would like to get one. However, beginning in October 2020, the new cards (or a federal identification like a valid passport or military ID) will be required to board commercial flights or to enter federal buildings.

The new identification cards will cost around \$60 upon first issuance, and can be renewed every four years for the standard renewal fee of \$30.50. For more information, visit [www.pennidot.gov/REALID](http://www.pennidot.gov/REALID) or contact my office with questions or for assistance.



I was proud to welcome city of Latrobe officials to the Capitol when they were in town to receive the Governor's Award for Municipalities for their community collaboration efforts with revitalization.

## Putting People First in Response to the Heroin and Opioid Epidemic

Earlier this year, the governor declared a state of emergency on the heroin and opioid epidemic that has affected Pennsylvanians from every walk of life, regardless of income level, ethnicity or age. The extent of the crisis isn't confined to just people who fall victim to addiction or overdose, but to family members, neighbors, colleagues and friends who witness the devastation.

Every day, at least 10 Pennsylvanians die from a heroin or opioid overdose. The PA Department of Health has found that more Pennsylvanians die from opioid overdoses than from fatal vehicle accidents.

There's no doubt Pennsylvania has a heroin and opioid epidemic. As Democratic chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I am very motivated in this fight. The current budget includes funding designated to put people first in combatting the opioid epidemic, including:

- An additional \$4.5 million to provide home visitation services to approximately 800 families affected by substance use disorder.
- A \$26.5 million federal funding grant to support existing efforts and expand access to treatment services.

The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs will continue to provide grants to entities across the state to implement and expand access to substance use disorder treatment, prevention and education programs.

If you or someone you know is battling a prescription drug or heroin addiction, please consider calling the state's 24/7 helpline, 1-800-662-HELP, for information about treatment resources. Your call will be completely confidential. You can also visit [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov) for more information about available treatment services.





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Students and staff from Seton Hill University visited the Capitol.

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 [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca)



## Investing in school safety

Ensuring the safety of our community's children and the security of our schools remain ever-important issues for me because of senseless school violence.

A new law establishes the School Security and Safety Program, a \$60 million grant funding program to provide assistance to school districts across the commonwealth as they assess safety procedures and work on areas of improvement in their schools.

As schools across the commonwealth construct effective safety strategies, this grant program provides flexibility for how schools will use their allotted grant money. The options are wide-ranging, including metal detectors, school counselors, entranceway security improvements, school resource officers and much more. Any school that applies for this grant program is guaranteed to receive a minimum of \$25,000 for safety efforts. I am committed to working with district officials in our area to assure our schools receive appropriate funding to keep our students, teachers and faculty members safe each and every day.



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