



State Representative

Eddie Day Pashinski

121st Legislative District

Fall 2020

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Dear Neighbor,

In the five months since my last print newsletter, our community, our state and indeed our world have seemingly been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Early in the pandemic, Pennsylvania courageously initiated critical steps to flatten the curve, saving thousands of Pennsylvanian's lives. When you compare us to New York and New Jersey, you can clearly see that these actions were necessary and successful in saving lives. Please review the numbers below:

- New York has had 167 deaths per 100,000 people = approx. 32,400 dead
- New Jersey has had 178 deaths per 100,000 people = approx. 15,800 dead
- Pennsylvania has had 57 deaths per 100,000 people = approx. 7,300 dead

That means compared to our neighbors, Pennsylvania has had about 1/3 of the deaths, when accounting for population. Sadly, Pennsylvania continues to monitor and implement new targeted mitigation efforts to prevent the resurgence of the virus. Mitigation decisions are based on saving Pennsylvanian's lives and the latest information indicating the number of positive cases, hospital capabilities, and deaths will control our future decisions.

The mitigation efforts included in the new orders from Gov. Tom Wolf and Dr. Rachel Levine include a return to strongly encouraging telework whenever possible, limits on indoor gatherings to no more than 25, and



bars and restaurants must operate with restricted capacity and only serve alcohol with a meal.

For complete information about COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, including what to do if you think you have COVID-19, the latest best practices, where to find assistance, unemployment compensation and more, please visit www.pa.gov/guides/responding-to-covid-19/.

A special thank you to all of our front-line doctors, nurses, health care providers, police, fire and EMS crews who are fighting this war to save lives and protect all, while putting their own lives on the line. They, along with our grocery store workers, truck drivers, bus drivers, farmers, fruit and vegetable pickers, food processors, cleaning crews, producers and so many others are providing the goods and services we need every day. There is no doubt that this pandemic has demonstrated that each of us makes one another's life better through the work we do every day.

Remember, you can save a fellow American by wearing a mask when you are in public! Please wear your mask.

Sincerely,



Discussing My Delayed Payment Plan for Community College at Luzerne County Community College

In February, I hosted members of the House Democratic Policy Committee for a hearing on community college affordability, and my Delayed Payment Plan (H.B. 2287) for a burden-free path to pay for tuition. If implemented, the program would allow participating students at any of Pennsylvania's 14 state community colleges to complete their degree or certificate program in a high-need employment area and land a steady job before having to repay their tuition, interest-free, for up to 10 years.

We first heard from a community college panel that included Endy Santos, an impressive young student from Luzerne County Community College; Thomas Leary, the president of LCCC; and Elizabeth Bolden, the president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges. Endy illustrated just why we need innovative solutions like the Delayed Payment Plan when he discussed having to work three part-time jobs to afford tuition, textbooks and transportation for classes. Without these financial burdens, Endy said he would be able to be more active in the community – and our local economy. President Leary and President Bolden did a great job presenting the critical data highlighting the importance and success

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that community colleges provide to their students, communities and our commonwealth.

A second panel focused on workforce needs and included Christine Jensen, administrator, PA CareerLink Luzerne County, and Trina Moss, director of Operations and Programs, Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board. They did a superb job of highlighting dozens of careers that are in demand in our area and will be into the next decade – many of which don't require a four-year degree. Our community colleges including LCCC are already positioned to help Pennsylvanians become qualified for

many of these careers, and the Delayed Payment Plan could help remove a major barrier for those who want to get a family-sustaining job but can't afford the cost of becoming qualified.

Thank you to everyone who took time to share their expertise and experiences on the topics. Bringing policymakers, educators and workforce development experts together on the issues will help create a burden-free pathway for our community college students — and a better future for Pennsylvania.

Read testimony, and view our hearing materials online to learn more at www.pahouse.com/PolicyCommittee/HearingMaterials/.

Centre County Ag Tour Highlights Importance of Rural Broadband, Technological Advances in Farming

Before the statewide lockdown in March, my staff and I, along with Rep. Danilo Burgos, took a tour of innovative and insightful locations making an impact in rural Centre County.

We kicked it off with a tour of Valley Wide Dairy Farm, where we learned about its mechanical milking operation and how the recent expansion of broadband to their farm has positively impacted their lives. Afterward, Russ Burkholder showed us his high-tech Burkholder's Market, including a parking lot covered with a solar array, providing customers protection from the weather and 70% of the store's power! Next, we headed to a county 9-1-1 tower that is being utilized by Centre WISP, a company providing broadband access to rural parts of the county. Finally, we ended the day with a fantastic presentation by the The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau about its Happy Valley Adventures initiative.

One thing that was clear throughout the day was the importance of technology and access to reliable broadband for our farmers and rural communities. It is only because of recent upgrades that Valley Wide Dairy Farm has been able to use its impressively efficient and humane robotic milking system – reducing overhead and increasing efficiency. Those broadband capabilities also allow the farm to access the internet for its business and are necessary to allow every Pennsylvanian access to telemedicine and harness the power of the internet.

The pandemic has made internet access even more essential to functioning in today's world. Our children need it to be able to learn safely at home when it's unsafe to go to school. Businesses need it to conduct commerce remotely with people across the country and world. Health care providers and their patients need it to

be able to reliably access life-sustaining care without risking exposure or having to arrange transportation. Our seniors need broadband to safely connect with family members when it's too dangerous for them to visit in person. Every Pennsylvanian deserves access to this critical tool. To help make that possible, Pennsylvania has taken several recent steps, including:

- The state has appropriated \$625 million in county block grants that can be used to offset direct county response/planning, including broadband internet.

- The House passed H.B. 2438, legislation that would help to expand broadband infrastructure in rural parts of the commonwealth.

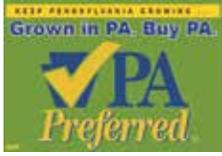
- The Pennsylvania Senate has advanced H.B. 2438 out of committee, as well as S.B. 835, the Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Pilot Program Act, which would allow expansion of broadband using existing infrastructure.

We completed our Centre County Ag Tour with two Penn State student-powered initiatives: The Student Farm at Penn State and the Lion's Pantry.

It's hard to believe that in the richest country in the world, we as a state have so many children in need of food, including students at campuses across our commonwealth. It is incredible to see and hear about the collaboration happening at the farm to educate, serve, connect, and of course, feed the Penn State community – including helping to support the Lion's Pantry food bank with fresh produce. I applaud the students at the Lion's Pantry, and the faculty and staff who are actively working to make sure that none of their classmates or community members have to worry about where they will get their next meal.



Introducing Legislation to Help Stretch SNAP Dollars, Help PA Farmers & Producers



In May, I was proud to introduce H.B. 2553, legislation that would establish a SNAP

Healthy Bucks Incentive Program to provide a bonus reimbursement for SNAP participants when they purchase healthy foods or targeted Pennsylvania products.

The program would provide a benefit reimbursement of 50 cents to a SNAP

participant for every \$1 of SNAP benefits used to purchase targeted food items – with a cap dependent on household size. SNAP items eligible for this bonus would include qualifying fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen or dried), Pennsylvania Dairy products, or qualifying purchases with the Pennsylvania Preferred® logo.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on our local, regional and national food systems – hurting both consumers

and producers. The SNAP Healthy Bucks Incentive Program would be a critical lifeline for our farmers and those facing food insecurity by stretching critical SNAP dollars and increasing demand for products grown and produced here in Pennsylvania.

Imagine what a difference this program could make for our families and our farmers by creating a surge in demand for healthy and Pennsylvania produced foods!

Remember to Vote in the November 3 General Election!

Make your voice heard on November 3, 2020; be sure to vote! As a result of a recent law, it's now even more safe and convenient to vote. These changes are now in effect:

- Pennsylvania voters are no longer able to vote straight-ticket using one button; instead, they select a candidate for every race.
- Every county in the state is using voting machines that produce a paper trail.
- All registered voters may vote by mail without needing to provide an excuse.

That last point is very important to remember – all Pennsylvania voters can now vote by mail without needing to provide an excuse. This safe and convenient option ensures that your vote is counted without having to worry about your safety, the weather or schedule on Election Day.

October 19, 2020 – Last day to REGISTER and be able to vote in the November 3, 2020 election

October 27, 2020 – Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot

November 3, 2020 – Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots (must be received by 8 P.M.)

November 3, 2020 – GENERAL ELECTION DAY: Polls are open from 7 A.M. to 8 P.M.

To register, apply for an absentee or mail ballot or for more information, please visit VOTESPA.com.



New Legislation: Strengthening Penalties for Voter Fraud

In July, I introduced H.B. 2757, legislation that would deter voter fraud in Pennsylvania elections by enhancing the maximum penalty for breaking Pennsylvania election law. There is nothing more sacred to our democracy than the right of each American citizen to vote for their representatives in government.

Perhaps just as important is the confidence our citizens place in our voting systems that determine who will represent all of us. That is why it is imperative that we institute policies that secure each citizen's right to vote – while safeguarding against fraud and those who wish to undermine our elections.

Specifically, my legislation would double all maximum available penalties associated with voter fraud under the Pennsylvania Election Code to deter would-be lawbreakers. For example, the maximum penalties for unlawful possession or counterfeiting of ballots would go from a maximum fine of \$5,000 to \$10,000, and change the maximum term of imprisonment from two years to four.

In Pennsylvania, many of our penalties are less severe and haven't been updated in decades. By increasing the maximum possible consequence, we will send a strong message to Pennsylvanians that while voter fraud may be rare, its consequences will be severe.

It's important to remember that while no excuse mail-in voting may be new to most Pennsylvanians, it has been used by the U.S. Military since Republicans implemented it during the Civil War. Five states now primarily conduct their elections by mail – Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington – while another 28 states allow anyone to do so if they choose. None of these states have reported major instances of voter fraud. According to *The New York Times* Editorial Board, Oregon has sent out more than 100 million mail-in ballots since 2000 and has documented only about a dozen cases of proven fraud. That's 0.0000001%. Individuals and organizations, including many Democrats, the Republican National Committee and Lara Trump all agree voting by mail is safe and secure.

This legislation is an extra precaution to demonstrate that we value every voter's right to vote and that every single vote must be counted. This is simply an extra safeguard to maintain the integrity of our elections.

Take The Census to Help Fund Our Roads, Schools, Health Care and More!

The Census is still going on with a goal to count every person in the United States! It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail — all without having to meet a census taker. If we aren't counted accurately, we will not get our fair share of federal funding and

resources over the next 10 years!
Visit www.2020Census.gov or call 844-330-2020 to take yours today!

When you respond to the 2020 Census, you make sure your community gets the funding you need. Federal and state dollars for local

and state needs like schools, roads, infrastructure improvement, and more are all determined by population. THE GREATER THE POPULATION COUNTED, THE GREATER THE SHARE OF FEDERAL DOLLARS DELIVERED TO OUR COMMUNITIES. That's why we count everybody!

Programs Available to Assist With Rent, Mortgages and Property Taxes

Please contact my office if you need assistance with these or any other state-related programs, by calling (570) 825-5934.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Application Deadline Extended to End of Year

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the deadline for older adults and Pennsylvania residents with disabilities to apply for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2019 was extended from June 30 to December 31, 2020.

Rebates are distributed as claims are received and processed. As a reminder, applicants are required to submit their bank account information on their

application forms to receive their rebates through direct deposit.

It is free to apply for a rebate, and applicants may obtain Property Tax/Rent Rebate claim forms (PA-1000) and related information on the Department of Revenue website, www.revenue.pa.gov/.

Claimants who have already applied for rebates may check their Property Tax/

Rent Rebate Status online or call, toll free, **1-888-PATAXES**.

Visit the department's Online Customer Service Center to find helpful tips and answers to commonly asked questions about the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program or contact my office for assistance with your application by calling **(570) 825-5934**.

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency: CARES Pandemic Mortgage Assistance Program

\$25 million in federal CARES Act funds for mortgage assistance are available to Pennsylvania homeowners who were affected by the coronavirus-related economic slowdown.

Who Can Apply: Homeowners who became unemployed after March 1, 2020 or had their annual household income reduced by 30% due to COVID-19. Lenders may apply on behalf of homeowners whose monthly mortgage payments are 30 days or more past due because of COVID-19 losses.

Use: Mortgage relief.

Funds: Homeowners can receive up to \$1,000 a month for a maximum of six months.

Application Deadline:

September 30. Mortgage relief applications must be submitted

directly to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

More Information: Visit <https://www.phfa.org/pacares/mortgage.aspx>.

For assistance with either the rent or mortgage program, the agency's toll-free call center at 1-855-U-Are-Home (827-3466) will be available weekdays from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. to assist the public and help with questions about the programs. **Callers should listen for the prompt mentioning CARES assistance for renters and homeowners.**

Universal Property Tax Relief Legislation Update: H.B. 2119 is still in the Finance Committee where it has not moved. I'm continuing to work hard to help move this bill and provide meaningful relief in some way.

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency: CARES Rent Relief Program

\$150 million in federal CARES Act funds for rent assistance are now available to Pennsylvania renters and homeowners who were affected by the coronavirus-related economic slowdown for rent and mortgage relief.

Who Can Apply: Renters with income up to the area median income experiencing 30% or more of a reduction in annual household income resulting from reduced work hours and wages related to the pandemic. Also, landlords who have lost rental income because a renter has experienced job loss or a reduction in income.

Use: Rent relief. Funds will be provided directly to the landlord/property owner.

Funds: Renters may receive up to \$750 a month for a maximum of six months of assistance for the period between March 1 and November 30, 2020.

Application Deadline: September 30. Luzerne County rental assistance applications must be submitted to the Commission on Economic Opportunity, whose information is available at www.ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org.

More Information: Visit www.phfa.org/pacares/rent.aspx.

Photos From Around The District!

Little Lokie No. 9 Returns Home to Ashley. The Wanamie No. 9 lokie, built in Wilkes-Barre and used in local coal colleries, arrived in June at the Anthracite Miners' Memorial Park in Ashley! Truly the little engines that could, these little lokies could pull up to 25 cars at a time, literally moving billions of pounds of coal from 1948-1968. A huge thank you to the Ashley Historic and Preservation Society and Ashley Borough for executing this impressive feat!



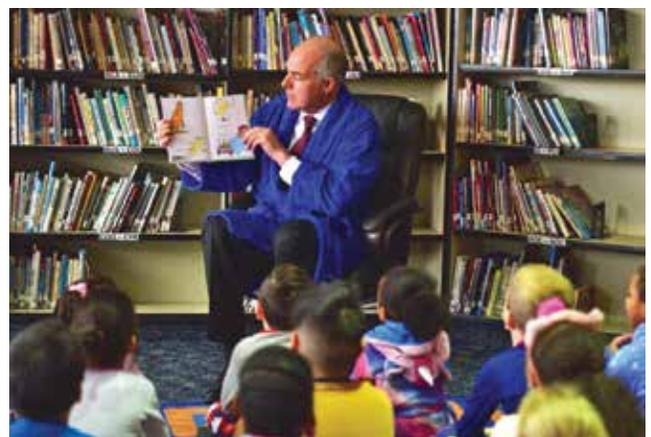
It's always a pleasure to see PA's Future Farmers of America Leadership. The FFA students have been dedicated, brilliant and professional in every aspect of my experience with them as we promote the agriculture industry in Pennsylvania.



Promoting PA milk with Russ Burkholder, owner of Burkholders Market in Centre County during our ag tour.



It's always delightful to participate in Read Across America Day – and a pleasure to see U.S. Sen. Bob Casey doing the same. Many thanks to the wonderful students, faculty and staff at David Kistler Elementary School, Starry Nights Learning Center and Heights Murray Elementary School for welcoming me into their classrooms this year!





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Look inside for information about:

- Important 2020 General Election Dates
- My New Legislation Related to Elections & SNAP
- Rent and Mortgage Relief and Other Available Assistance
- ... And Much More!

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Rep. Dan Williams and I greet each other safely using an elbow bump instead of a handshake during a committee hearing in Harrisburg.



We had two fantastic Legislative Fellows in our office this year, Sean Welsh (left) and Kayla Shellenhamer (right). Their work was exemplary and their dedication and energy regarding government was inspiring!



A post-tour picture from Valley Wide Dairy Farm in Centre County. From left to right: Andy Bates (Centre Co. Farm Bureau), Destiny Zeiders (Ag Committee Exec. Director), Bethany Coursen (Dairy Farmer), me, and Centre County Commissioners Mark Higgins and Mike Pipe.