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22ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2025

FIGHTING FOR ALLENTOWN AND SALISBURY. DELIVERING FOR PENNSYLVANIA.

DEAR FRIENDS,

When you sent me to Harrisburg, you asked for a government that works for you – not special interests, not political insiders, but the working families who build and sustain our communities. I'm proud to report that under the Democratic majority in the Pennsylvania House, we've been delivering real results.

In just the past year, we've passed historic legislation to make life fairer, safer, and more affordable for Pennsylvanians. We've added more municipal and state police officers. We've taken steps to finally raise the minimum wage, invest in public education, and return tax dollars to working families. We've advanced long-overdue relief for our most senior retirees and expanded access to retirement savings for more than two million workers.

We're tackling big challenges: lowering the cost of housing and investing in infrastructure and clean energy. I've also been hard at work advancing legislation that reflects the needs of our community here in Allentown and Salisbury – from supporting law enforcement with better tools to helping redevelop vacant properties into vibrant, livable spaces.

There's more to do, but I believe we're showing what's possible when leaders focus on progress over politics. As always, I'm honored to serve and fight for a better future for you and your family.

In solidarity,

Rep. Josh Siegel

State Representative, 22nd Legislative District





HELPING COMMUNITIES

INVESTING IN PUBLIC SAFETY AND SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT

Under the leadership of the Democratic Majority and the Shapiro-Davis Administration, Pennsylvania is making unprecedented investments to ensure our communities are safe and our law enforcement agencies are fully supported.

In Lehigh County, that means funding for 47 new police officers as part of our effort to strengthen public safety with the resources and personnel departments need. This funding will put 1,500 more officers on our streets – 692 additional municipal law enforcement officers and 800 new Pennsylvania State Troopers – to protect our commonwealth's residents.

These investments reflect a clear commitment: ensuring every community has well-trained officers and the tools needed to protect and serve.

QUALITY EDUCATION

FIXING WHAT'S BROKEN: DELIVERING FAIR, CONSTITUTIONAL SCHOOL FUNDING

In 2023, Pennsylvania's public education system was ruled unconstitutional, with the courts recognizing a massive \$4.5 billion adequacy gap between what students need and what many schools receive. While there is more work to be done, I'm proud to report that we are finally moving in the right direction.

Under the leadership of House Democrats, we secured a historic \$1.11 billion increase in K–12 education funding—the largest in state history—focusing on underfunded schools through a newly adopted adequacy formula and a revised basic education funding formula.

Here is the breakdown for the school districts in the 22nd District:

LOCAL IMPACT: ALLENTOWN & SALISBURY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Allentown School District

- Received over \$252.8 million in state funding under the 2024–25 budget, an increase of \$90 million since Governor Shapiro took office.
- Secured \$20 million via the new adequacy formula, alongside targeted grants:
 - \$2.5 million for HVAC upgrades at William Allen High School.
 - \$522,205 for establishing the district's Family and Community Resource Center.

Salisbury Township School District

- In the 2024–25 budget, Salisbury also saw a \$506,000 increase in funding.
- Secured an additional \$459,899 for school maintenance and updates.

We have a lot more to do to ensure that we close the funding gap so every student receives a high-quality public education that will enable them to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Targeted Investments to Support All Students

We're also investing in what students and schools need most, including:

- \$100 million annually for student mental health services, plus \$20 million more for county-based mental health programs.
- Increased funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) to prepare students for high-demand jobs.
- More support for teacher recruitment and retention, including expanded student teacher stipends and professional development opportunities.

CYBER CHARTER REFORM

To ensure taxpayer dollars are used responsibly, the General Assembly is working to reform cyber charter school funding by:

- Establishing a statewide base tuition rate of \$8,000 per student per year, and
- Basing special education payments on actual student needs rather than inflated flat rates.

This effort is about restoring trust and accountability in Pennsylvania's education system—and ensuring that every child, regardless of ZIP code, has access to a quality public education.



HELPING FAMILIES

PUTTING MONEY BACK IN THE POCKETS OF WORKING FAMILIES

Too many hardworking Pennsylvanians are doing everything right—working full-time jobs and raising families—yet still struggling to make ends meet. That’s why I voted for H.B. 820, a bill that creates a state-level Earned Income Tax Credit to put real money back into the hands of those who need it most.

This credit would benefit nearly one million Pennsylvanians, giving families anywhere from \$200 to \$2,000, depending on income and household size, on top of their federal Earned Income Tax Credit. If you qualify federally, you’ll automatically qualify for this state benefit.

This is about economic fairness. It’s about making sure people can afford to keep working, provide for their families, and invest back into our local economy—lessening the strain on social safety nets while restoring dignity for working people.

STANDING UP FOR RETIRED PUBLIC SERVANTS

For the first time in over two decades, we are finally delivering long-overdue relief to some of Pennsylvania’s most dedicated public servants. I proudly voted for legislation providing a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to nearly 60,000 retired teachers and state workers who retired before July 2001.

Many of these retirees—now in their 80s or older—have seen their fixed pensions eroded by 23 years of inflation without any adjustment. This bill gives them the raise they have earned, with increases tied to their retirement date—starting at 15% and rising to 24.5% for those who retired before 1982.

After a lifetime of service, these Pennsylvanians deserve dignity and stability in retirement. This legislation is a critical step toward honoring that commitment.

FIGHTING FOR OUR SENIORS: PENSION RELIEF, FASTER REBATES & RETIREMENT SAVING

I’m proud to have voted for legislation that delivers long-overdue support to some of Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable residents—our retirees and seniors living on fixed incomes.

We have improved the Property Tax/Rent Rebate (PTRR) program by raising the income limit to \$64,000 and increasing it each year using a cost-of-living index so more seniors can receive desperately needed property tax relief. I also voted for a bill that allows rebates to be issued earlier in the year, as soon as a claim is approved, so people don’t have to wait until July 1 to get the money they rely on for rent, utilities, and everyday expenses.

Additionally, I voted for the Keystone Saves program, a low-cost retirement savings initiative that will help over 2 million workers save for their retirement.

Together, these changes are about dignity, security, and keeping our promises to those who have given so much to our communities.



GOOD JOBS

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR WORKING PENNSYLVANIANS

It’s long past time to raise Pennsylvania’s minimum wage. Every neighboring state already has, and our workers are being shortchanged. I voted for a bill that would raise the minimum wage through a county-specific schedule starting in 2026, ensuring that every worker earns at least \$12 per hour by 2028, with automatic cost-of-living increases beginning in 2029.

The bill also raises the tipped minimum wage to 60% of the local minimum, helping service workers earn a more stable income.

This is about basic fairness and economic justice—making sure that hard work is met with real wages that can support a family, while also ensuring that local businesses and communities benefit from a stronger economy.



MY LEGISLATION

It has been a productive more than two years since I first took the oath of office and was sworn in to serve my community, both at home and in Harrisburg. I have worked hard not only to improve the quality of life for those living in Allentown but also to enhance their life outcomes, ensuring that they are safe and feel secure in their community and throughout the Commonwealth.

I am writing to share some of these successes and the steps we have taken toward achieving these goals:

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READERS (ALPRS)

One of the most effective tools available to law enforcement is the Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR). These systems capture computer-readable images of license plates and vehicles, allowing officers to compare plate numbers against those of stolen cars or wanted individuals in a crime database. Across the country, law enforcement is using ALPRs to locate missing children, combat gun violence, and address organized theft.

Currently, PennDOT only allows ALPRs to be used on non-PennDOT structures and only if approval is obtained from the structure's owner. This severely limits the ability of local law enforcement to make public safety decisions in the best interest of the communities they serve. A process is needed to permit the safe and responsible use of this technology on state roads, both on stand-alone and existing PennDOT infrastructure.

I have proposed legislation, currently in the Transportation Committee, that would direct PennDOT to establish a permitting process for ALPR technology. Local law enforcement agencies would apply for permits to install ALPR systems in the right-of-way on state-owned roads. Crucially, permits would only be granted to local law enforcement agencies and would require that ALPR systems be used exclusively for public safety purposes.

We must remove this barrier to law enforcement to empower our police departments to better protect our communities.

BUY AMERICA, BUY UNION GRANT PROGRAM

Since 2000, the United States has lost more than a quarter of all domestic manufacturing jobs—a decline of nearly 5 million—many of which were union positions. Union members typically earn higher wages and have better access to benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans. This loss of union manufacturing jobs has hollowed out communities, including many across Pennsylvania, and has deprived Americans of family-sustaining employment opportunities.

To address this, I introduced legislation to create the Buy America, Buy Union Grant Program within the Department of Community and Economic Development. This program would provide grants to reimburse local government entities for a portion of the procurement costs for American- and union-made vehicles.

This grant program helps invest in and incentivize American manufacturing, keeps jobs in the U.S., and retains money in our communities. It is currently awaiting a vote during the legislative session.

EXPANDING SOLAR ENERGY THROUGH E-COMMERCE GROWTH

The rise of e-commerce has brought significant changes to the logistics industry and to many parts of the Lehigh Valley. For instance, 44 million square feet of industrial and warehouse space has been approved in Lehigh and Northampton counties alone over the last nine years.

The e-commerce industry has brought jobs to communities across Pennsylvania and provides us with an opportunity to leverage all this space to address a challenge that many Pennsylvanians face: rising energy costs.

Warehouses and distribution centers offer ample real estate to advance solar energy, increase Pennsylvania's share of electricity generated by renewable sources, create high-paying jobs, and lower utility bills for consumers.

To advance these goals, I introduced legislation that would propose the following:

1. Require that all new warehouses and distribution centers be constructed so that they are solar-ready; and
2. Provide a tax credit for existing warehouses and distribution centers to make any retrofits necessary to be solar-ready.

Importantly, energy costs would be lowered greatly through this legislation:

- E-commerce platforms remove the need for expensive physical storefronts and in-person sales operations, which translates to lower prices for consumers.
- Online platforms can automate various aspects of the sales process, resulting in greater efficiency and lower operational costs.
- Online marketplaces foster competition among solar providers, enabling customers to easily compare prices and secure the most favorable deals, driving down the overall cost of solar installations.

WORKING TO PROVIDE BETTER HOUSING OPTIONS IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT OF SHOPPING MALLS

Shopping malls were once a staple of American culture. However, with consumers increasingly turning to online shopping and the closure of stores due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many shopping malls and plazas have been left vacant, becoming eyesores for the surrounding community. Municipalities have proposed revitalizing these malls into mixed-use development communities, but developers often view such projects as costly and are hesitant to take on such large-scale endeavors.

My legislation would provide incentives for municipalities and developers to collaborate on redeveloping existing shopping malls into mixed-use communities by accomplishing the following:

- Create the Economic Development and Mixed-Use Advisory Committee within the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to establish best practices for shopping mall redevelopment.
- Establish special tax provisions for local taxing authorities to incentivize the redevelopment of shopping malls into mixed-use projects.
- Allow local taxing authorities to provide tax exemptions for shopping mall redevelopment projects.

Municipalities deserve a fair opportunity to redevelop outdated properties. Pennsylvania has a pressing need for quality and affordable housing, and this bill provides options to help address these challenges.

MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING IN AREAS ZONED FOR OFFICE SPACE

Many buildings zoned for office space are sitting empty or are being drastically underutilized. This is often because the area is designated for office or commercial use, and businesses no longer require as much space due to teleworking. Allowing these buildings to become multi-use dwellings would free up underused space and make it productive. Many of these spaces already have parking, accessibility features, and other infrastructure that can be easily adapted for residential use.

This legislation would revise zoning laws to permit multi-family housing and mixed-use development in urban areas currently zoned for office, retail, or parking, where water and sewer systems already exist. Inspired by a recently enacted Montana bill, this approach demonstrates how thinking outside the box can provide solutions to alleviate the housing crisis. It is a straightforward way to encourage developers to redevelop existing buildings into multi-use dwellings and increase the housing stock in Pennsylvania.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE ACT

Our democracy is under siege. Extreme partisanship and inflammatory political rhetoric have led to increases in threats, harassment, and violence toward public officials at all levels of government.

In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming rise in political violence, including the tragic shooting of Congressman Steve Scalise, the January 6th insurrection, the vandalism and attack on State Representative Alec Ryncavage's office, the shooting and assassination of Minnesota public officials, and a recent arson attack on the Governor's Mansion in Pennsylvania. These acts of extremism have no place in our society, and we must act to protect those who serve the public. The January 6th insurrection was a turning point in our country's history, as we witnessed, on live television, a deadly mob attack and vandalize our Capitol with the intention of committing violence against members of Congress. The failure to hold accountable and adequately punish acts of terrorism against our government and its officials risks normalizing and encouraging future violence.

It is more important now than ever that, as a society, we universally condemn acts of violence and intimidation directed at our democracy and act with moral clarity regarding the severity of the punishment with which such acts must be met.

Violence against public officials directly undermines the rule of law and disrupts the functioning of our government. To address this, I introduced legislation that would allow courts to impose life sentences without the possibility of parole for those who attack, plot, or carry out attacks on public officials in our Commonwealth.

I look forward to continuing my work for all of you in Allentown and Salisbury.





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FOLLOW ME ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

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MY DISTRICT OFFICE CAN ASSIST WITH THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications, problems or questions.
- Birth certificates.
- Unemployment applications; problems or questions regarding unemployment compensation.
- Issues involving motor vehicle registrations, renewals and driver's licenses.
- SNAP benefits and other issues involving the Department of Human Services.
- Any other state-related problem or question!

If you need help with any state or government-related service, please feel free to contact my office at **(484) 656-7744** for assistance.