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REPORT

to the 96th

Working Hard for Lancaster

March 2014

Dear Neighbor,

Recently, the governor introduced his fourth budget proposal, and to say the least, I'm again disappointed. After three years, the result of the governor's slash-and-burn budgeting has been higher taxes for Pennsylvania's working families, diminishing educational opportunity for our children and a weakening of our state's economic competitiveness. In fact, the governor's agenda has left our state near the bottom in job growth and job creation.

I continue to vehemently oppose his shortsighted cuts to education, his unwillingness to expand Medicaid, and his wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars to defend the unconstitutional laws he has supported.

I believe in Pennsylvania's potential: that when we invest in public education, expand health care to the uninsured, and promote policies that improve the quality of life for working families, everyone benefits. Policy is driven by priorities, and I believe the governor's policies have not accurately represented Pennsylvanians' priorities.

There is some good news. Having urged action on transportation for years, I voted for a law that will inject billions of dollars in upgrading our transportation infrastructure. Also, a commission I served on to investigate special education funding completed its work and issued a report that I am hopeful will move us in the direction of more fairly and adequately funding special education services in our schools.

You can read through this newsletter for more information on these and other topics. As always, please feel free to visit my website and send me a message regarding these or any other state matters. Also you can follow me on Twitter @RepMikeSturla or "like" me on Facebook.

Sincerely,

Mike Sturla

Transportation Investment

In November 2013, the General Assembly passed a key piece of legislation that will invest billions of dollars in Pennsylvania's ailing road and bridge infrastructure. For years the commonwealth has had the unfortunate distinction of having the nation's worst roadways and highest number of deficient bridges. It hurt public safety and harmed the economy.

The comprehensive plan, Act 89 of 2013, will invest over \$2 billion to repair, rebuild and preserve transportation infrastructure, as well as dedicate funds to improving public transit around the state.

In Lancaster, the new funding will support the resurfacing of heavily traveled and impaired roads, the installation of new traffic signals at busy intersections and the improvements to streetscapes for pedestrians, among other projects. Improvements will be made over time, and will ease traffic flow and improve safety in the district, and benefit residents as well as those who work in Lancaster.

The plan will also fuel the state and local economies by putting residents back to work on transportation projects and increase demand for construction supplies. Some experts estimate as many as 50,000 jobs will be created. It will also draw new businesses and industries to Pennsylvania because they are anxious to operate in states with first-rate highways, railroads and mass transit.

The weight-restricted bridges and roadway congestion around the region that were once a detriment to Pennsylvania's businesses and first responders will gradually be relieved, and have the overall impact of improving the quality of life in Lancaster and around the state.



PA Transit Truth 1: Some people think public transit is only used in urban areas, but that is far from the truth. Residents in all 67 Pennsylvania counties use public shared rides to get to work, school and medical appointments. In fact, there are over 8 million shared ride and human service trips by residents in 61 rural and small urban systems annually. In addition, fixed route services are provided throughout the state by 35 transit systems outside of Allegheny County and the Philadelphia region.

PA Transit Truth 2: Some people don't think that public transit cuts down on traffic congestion, but one bus with 60 passengers takes up 270 square feet of roadway, while 60 individual cars requires 7,240 square feet.

Source: *Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association*

Corbett's 2014-2015 Budget Relies on Unsustainable, One-Time Funding Transfers

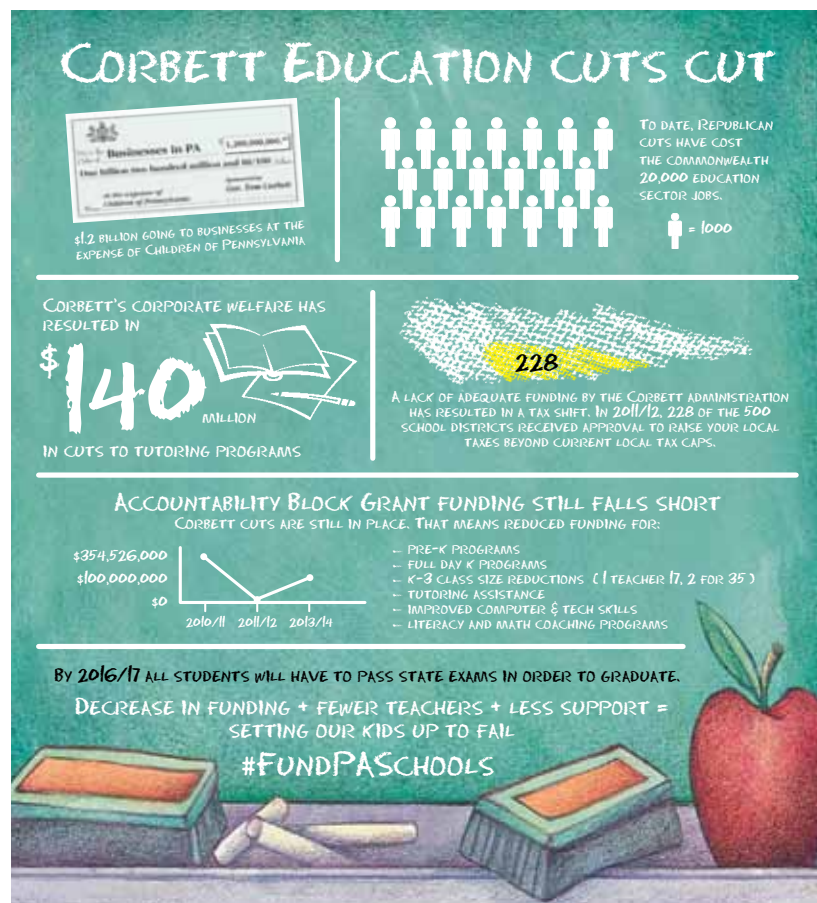
The governor presented his fourth budget to a joint session of the state legislature in early February. He increased overall spending in his plan, but much of the spending relies on one-time transfers from other funds, delayed payments and increased future debt. His plan is unsustainable and leaves Pennsylvania in worse fiscal condition next year.

Other states have shown robust recovery from the last decade's recession, many with budget surpluses. However, even after his devastating cuts to education and human services and increased reliance on property taxes, Gov. Corbett's policies have resulted in poor job creation, mass layoffs and a \$1.2 billion deficit.

In an attempt to reverse his legacy on education, the governor proposed a block grant program for schools, but it ties the hands of educators on how it can be spent. Additionally, the \$240 million going to the grant program pales in comparison to the billion-dollar recurring cut that has been the hallmark of Gov. Corbett's budgets for the past three years.

Further, business tax cuts have had no apparent impact on easing unemployment in the commonwealth, but the governor continues to champion them in this year's budget. Gov. Corbett claims the cuts are important for the state's competitiveness, but they thus far have failed to produce jobs or jumpstart our economy and have forced cuts to programs Pennsylvanians depend on.

Overall Gov. Corbett's budget is disappointing. It relies on the same failed policies of the past three budgets; fails to invest enough in the programs the governor has cut in the past; depends on one-time, unsustainable funding gimmicks; would leave Pennsylvania in worse fiscal condition in the future; and continues the policies that have taken us from 7th in the US in job creation to our current standing of 48th.



Special Education Commission Report Offers Recommendations

Nearly 270,000 Pennsylvania children – one out of every 6.5 students – receive special education services in public schools. While the cost for providing services has steadily grown over the years, funding for special education has been stagnant since 2009. Many school districts around the state struggle to deliver the services they are mandated by law to provide.

The shortfall is partly due to an antiquated state funding formula, which assumes that a blanket 16 percent of students – the statewide average – require special education programs regardless of the actual number. In reality, the percentage of special education students served in school districts across the state

ranges from 8 percent to 26 percent.

In December the Special Education Funding Commission, which consisted of lawmakers including Rep. Sturla, and officials from the governor's administration, released a report with recommendations to address the chronic underfunding of special education, including instituting a new formula to distribute funds. One of the bright spots in the governor's proposed budget includes an extra \$20 million for special education and the commission's funding formula would be utilized.

This is only a small step in providing adequate funding, but it is a start. By adequately investing in special education, students are aided in

meeting academic standards, as well as transitioning into higher education, employment, independent living and community participation. The recommendations in the commission's report provide a blueprint on ways to address the challenge of more equitably funding special education.

The Special Education Funding Commission was a bipartisan effort focused on benefiting Pennsylvania students. Often inequitable, and in many cases insufficient funding for special education is just a symptom of a larger ailment in securing adequate funding for all education in the commonwealth. It is imperative that Pennsylvania invest in all students regardless of their special needs or their ZIP code.

Sturla Backs Legislation to Help Pennsylvania's Working Families

Minimum Wage

Pennsylvania last increased the minimum wage in 2006, and although there is reluctance by the Republican-controlled legislature to take action on this, many states around the nation are proposing measures aimed at increasing the minimum wage in order to help working families pay their bills. Rep. Sturla has co-sponsored H.B. 1896, which would increase the state minimum wage to \$9 per hour 60 days after enactment; and to \$10.10 per hour one year later.

While corporate profits have soared, working families have seen their share of the financial pie decline. An increase in the wage to \$10.10 would boost a full-time worker's salary by nearly \$6,000 a year. It would put a single mother of two, who works 40 hours a week above the federal poverty guideline, which is \$19,530 for a family of three. In fact, women account for two-thirds of minimum wage earners.

By putting more money in the pockets of low-wage workers, more money gets returned to local economies around the state. It would also help reduce these families' reliance on government assistance programs.

According to one study, over \$7 billion per year is spent providing public assistance to the employees of fast-food restaurants alone. In Pennsylvania, about 42 percent of all non-managerial workers in the fast-food industry need food stamps, Medicaid and other forms of public assistance to get by, which costs taxpayers \$204 million every year.

Equal Pay

The average woman earns 84 cents for every dollar a man earns. Rep. Sturla is co-sponsoring H.B. 1890 that would update outdated pay equity laws and clarify legal standards for pay-equity lawsuits. The legislation would modify the conditions under which employers could pay different wages because of a factor other than sex. These factors would include specific, job-related attributes such as education, training and experience. It would also strengthen anti-retaliation protections for employees attempting to bring pay-equity actions against their employer and those who share information about their pay. The bill has over 40 co-sponsors from both parties.



Medicaid Expansion is Right for Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has hundreds of thousands of residents without health insurance who are forced to depend on their local emergency rooms for care. That drives costs up for all residents with insurance to cover what is called “uncompensated care.”

The commonwealth could cover 500,000 residents, reducing the number of uninsured by over 50 percent, if Gov. Corbett joined 26 other states in expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. An estimated 41,000 of the eligible residents live in south central Pennsylvania and more than 75 percent of those residents who would qualify for coverage have at least one full-time worker in their household or are working themselves.



Aside from health benefits, which include access to services like preventive care, screenings and doctor office visits, expanding Medicaid would create or support up to 40,000 jobs and inject \$22 billion in federal investment in the state’s economy over the next eight years. In fact, by not expanding Medicaid, the commonwealth loses up to \$10 million a day and expansion would be free to Pennsylvania through 2017, paid for 100 percent by the federal government; and after 2017 the federal government would continue to pay 90 percent.

However, rather than adopt the approach that both Republican and Democratic governors around the United States have, Gov. Corbett has been reluctant to cover the commonwealth. After delaying a decision for over two years, the governor announced an alternative plan, Healthy PA, in late 2013 that would place additional conditions on those newly eligible for Medicaid, implement costly premiums on the enrollee, cost more to manage and provide less comprehensive coverage. Most experts doubt the governor’s plan will garner federal approval, which will just delay health care for hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians even longer.

As chairman of the House Democratic Policy Committee, Rep. Sturla has held several public hearings on Medicaid expansion to gather the perspective of doctors, hospital administrators and health care advocates from every corner of Pennsylvania as well as national experts. The resounding message was overwhelming support for expanding Medicaid.

During his tenure, the governor has had a problematic record on health care, starting with his elimination of adultBasic health insurance for 41,000 working Pennsylvanians in 2011 and again when 89,000 children were removed from Medicaid in 2012. By opting to expand Medicaid, Gov. Corbett could improve the health of Pennsylvanians while improving the state’s economy.

Sturla Measure to Support Municipalities Included in New Law

Under a law enacted this legislative session, Pennsylvania bars and taverns are able to apply to offer small games of chance, like pull-tabs and daily drawings. When the bill passed, it included a provision from Rep. Sturla that would return 5 percent of the generated revenue to the municipality where the bar or tavern is located. The small games are expected to return \$250 million annually to the state’s General Fund and \$13 million to host municipalities.





Around the District

With generous contributions from local businesses and community groups, Rep. Sturla's annual Back-to-School Giveaway in August helped hundreds of Lancaster students return to the classroom prepared with the tools to learn. It was a fun day with activities, lunch, face-painting, a bicycle rodeo and useful information for parents and caregivers. **If you would like to donate or volunteer for this year's event, call Rep. Sturla's office at 295-3157.**



Rep. Sturla rallies the volunteer troops at his annual Conestoga River Clean Up. For years Sturla has partnered with the United Way's Day of Caring to gather litter from Lancaster's Conestoga River.



At the Capitol



Rep. Sturla speaks at a news conference calling on the governor to fully restore funding to education.

Check inside for info on:

- Top state issues
- Details on Rep. Sturla's legislative proposals
- Pictures from Lancaster and Harrisburg events

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TecCentro Opens in Lancaster

Rep. Sturla speaks at the official opening of the Spanish American Civic Association's Tec Centro, which he helped secure state funding for. The bilingual center aims to provide job training and language skills to about 300 students a year once it is fully operational.

Rep. Sturla's Office Can Help You With State Programs

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

Rep. Sturla's staff can help you apply for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, which benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older. The program expansion increased the income limit from \$15,000 to \$35,000 (which excludes half of Social Security income) for homeowners and raises the maximum rebate for both homeowners and renters from \$500 to \$650. The income limit for renters is \$15,000. Visit Rep. Sturla's office at 150 E. King St. for assistance with this or any other state program.

State Taxes

As a cost-savings measure, the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue will not be mailing PA-40 Personal Income Tax booklets this year and it also has discontinued the TeleFile system. However, filers with federal adjusted gross income of \$58,000 or less can file for free online at www.pafreefile.com. If you need tax forms, call Rep. Sturla's office at 295-3157 or stop by to pick them up.