

State Representative
MIKE STURLA

www.pahouse.com/Sturla

REPORT *to the 96th*

Working Hard for Lancaster

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Governor Wolf Exercises Line-item Veto for Lackluster Budget Rejects Education Cuts and Funding Gimmicks of Years' Past

Work on the 2015-16 state budget lingers following the news that Governor Tom Wolf line-item vetoed the GOP's education cuts and would not continue out-of-balance spending practices used by the previous administration.

While the governor would not accept the status quo, he did authorize the flow of funding to schools, counties and human services. This will ensure that schools can continue to keep their doors open and our most vulnerable citizens will receive the services they desperately need as the impasse continues.

The budget sent to the governor is not sustainable. It includes a \$2.3 billion structural deficit that would continue to grow if the spending plan would have been signed into law. These GOP gimmicks would ultimately result in additional credit downgrades and fiscal instability in the state. It is not the path Pennsylvania can afford to continue to follow without serious consequences to our economic viability. There is a compromise budget agreement ready for consideration



that has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Senate Republicans and Democrats passed that budget and sent it to the House. House Republicans failed to bring that compromise up for a vote which ultimately forced a subpar budget to the governor's desk. Thankfully, Governor Wolf exercised his constitutional right to line-item veto the inadequate portions of the spending plan. We need to focus our efforts on the compromise agreement and get a full budget done that allows Pennsylvania to pay its bills, educate our children in a fair and equitable manner and ensures our most vulnerable residents have access to the programs they need.

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology Receives State Funding for New Campus

I am thrilled to report that Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology will receive \$26 million in capital funding for the construction of the new Greiner Campus. The investment will allow Stevens to expand educational opportunities to additional students in the fields of machinery, metal fabrication and HVAC. Stevens is renowned for its ability to prepare its graduates for the workforce and those graduates are prepared to accept jobs with excellent wages upon completing their program of study. They are helping to address and sustain the critical workforce needs of the Commonwealth and fostering an environment where our most talented workers stay in Pennsylvania.



Scan this QR code to
view an aerial view of the
new Greiner Campus.

4th Annual Backpack Event a Hit!

A total of 1,141 backpacks were donated at my Back to School Backpack Giveaway event in August. That's 1,141 Lancaster schoolchildren who were prepared for the school year with the supplies they need. A special thank you to those who donated supplies and time to the event.



SAVE THE DATE

My staff and I are already preparing for this year's event which will be held on Saturday, Aug. 20, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Lancaster Recreation Center, 525 Fairview Ave.

If you would like to participate or donate to the event to help students' needs, please contact Mena Rodriguez in my office at 717-295-3157.



Working to Resolve Municipal Pension Problems

Because of its fractured local governments, Pennsylvania is home to more than half of the municipal pension systems in the United States. This inefficiency and other concerns have led to a \$7 billion unfunded liability statewide. I met with Auditor General Eugene DePasquale to discuss Pennsylvania's municipal pension problem. Chaired by DePasquale, the Municipal Pension Task Force released recommendations including increasing transparency and accountability for all pension plans; and helping with the recovery of underfunded pension plans. Go to www.pahouse.com/Sturla to review the report in its entirety.



Improvements to CHIP Coverage

As a proud supporter of Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program, I am happy to announce that Governor Wolf updated the program to ensure that it includes all minimum essential benefits as outlined under the Affordable Care Act. These benefits include a prohibition on annual and lifetime limitations for specific services classified as essential health benefits. Before the minimum essential coverage requirements for CHIP plans, there were limits for dental and orthodontic care, durable medical equipment, and glasses.



CHIP provides free, low-cost or at-cost health insurance coverage to uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for nor enrolled in Medical Assistance. There is no income limit for CHIP. If you cannot get health insurance for your child for any reason and do not qualify for Medical Assistance, your child qualifies for CHIP. Visit www.chipcoverspakids.com for additional information about the program or call my office at 717-295-3157.

Open Enrollment Period for Health Insurance

If you need health insurance, the Health Insurance Marketplace's open enrollment period is under way. You can sign up or make changes to existing policies through Jan. 31. Visit www.healthcare.gov for additional information. Southeast Lancaster Health Services is also available to help you navigate insurance needs. Call 717-299-6371 to speak with an enrollment specialist.

Free Background Checks for Those Who Volunteer with Kids

If you volunteer and have routine and direct interaction with kids as part of a program, service or activity for children, please know that changes have taken effect to waive the two fees associated with the background checks that are now required by law.

As of July 25, 2015, the child abuse background clearance fees from the PA Department of Human Services (originally \$10) and the state police criminal background check (also originally \$10) are now waived for volunteers only. The cost is \$8 for employees. More information is available at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov.

Basic Education Funding Commission Releases Recommendations

As a member of the Basic Education Funding Commission, I am proud to share with you that the 15-member commission issued a report and recommendations for tackling the disparity in funding Pennsylvania's schools.

The commission used a representative sample of school districts across Pennsylvania to determine their costs for various factors to be used as a guide in developing the new formula. Factors including student needs that often are not met in the community; median household income, tax capacity that recognizes a school district's ability to generate local tax-related revenue compared to the statewide median; student counts; English language learners; and poverty are part of the formula. Another crucial factor included goes beyond accounting for the

percentage of poor students to adjust for the level and concentration of poverty in a district and recognizes that students living in an area where poverty is concentrated have additional educational needs.

Pennsylvania did not become the most inequitable state for funding education overnight and the formula will not correct the situation overnight either. With continued education funding increases over several years, this formula has the potential to help us meet Pennsylvania's constitutional requirement for providing a thorough and efficient education for all children.



Smart Borrowing for College Students

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) recently rolled out Phase 2 of www.MySmartBorrowing.org. This first-of-its-kind tool helps to educate borrowers on matching their anticipated career's income with anticipated college debt costs. The tool also provides information on building a monthly budget, matching income to expenses, to help borrowers determine if they can afford the college of their choice. It's a great tool to help students have a better understanding of their financial outlook after college.



5 Tips to Encourage Smart Borrowing from PHEAA

1. Research job availability in the student's chosen field before selecting a major.
2. Research the expected salary in that career, find an affordable school and borrow realistically.
3. Carefully consider all types of financial aid.
4. Learn about the many loan options available before borrowing.
5. Inconsistent or untimely loan repayment could affect borrower's future.



Need Help in Spanish?

Call my office at 717-295-3157 and ask for Mena Rodriguez, email her at mrodriguez@pahouse.net, or stop by the office at 150 E. King St. in Lancaster.

Ayuda disponible en Espanol

Tengo la fortuna de tener personal bilingüe listo para ayudarle con cualquier problema relacionado con el estado. Puede llamar a la oficina al 717-295-3157 o pasar por la oficina localizada en el 150 E. King St., Lancaster. También puede contactar Mena Rodriguez al mrodriguez@pahouse.net.

Prepare for Winter!

Help with Home Energy Costs

The cooler weather is moving in and some may be worried how they'll keep up with heating bills this winter. Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is accepting applications. The program offers heating assistance in the form of cash grants and crisis grants for heating emergencies.

Household Size	2015 Income Limit
1	\$17,655
2	\$23,895
3	\$30,135
4	\$36,375
5	\$42,615
6	\$48,855
7	\$55,095
8	\$61,335
9	\$67,575

If you fall into the guidelines in the chart, please contact my office at 717-295-3157 or call LIHEAP directly at 1-866-857-7095. Those eligible can also apply at www.compass.state.pa.us.



Winter Roadway Safety

PennDOT will be working hard this winter to ensure safe road conditions for drivers, but they also want you to prepare for safe travels.

To prepare for winter driving, especially if long-distance travel is planned, motorists should carry an emergency kit including items such as non-perishable food, water, first-aid supplies, warm clothes, a blanket, cell phone charger and a small snow shovel. However, motorists should tailor their kits to any specific needs that they or their families may have. Consider adding such items as baby supplies, extra medication, pet supplies or even children's games.

If motorists encounter snow or ice-covered roads, they should slow down, increase their following distance and avoid distractions. Last winter, there were 552 crashes resulting in four fatalities and 279 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways where aggressive-driving behaviors such as speeding or making careless lane changes were factors in the crash.

Additional safety tips are available at www.penndot.gov/winter. You can check road conditions before venturing out by visiting www.511pa.com. You can also follow PennDOT on Twitter @PennDOTNews or like them on Facebook.



Help for Veterans and Their Families

There are many state and federal programs available to veterans and their families and often people aren't aware of how much help is out there. I am happy to announce that a certified Department Service Officer is available in my office on the second Wednesday of each month to provide assistance with veterans' benefits, scholarships, health benefits, survivor benefits, and more. Call my office at 717-295-3157 to schedule an appointment to meet with him at my Lancaster office located at 150 E. King St.

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I met with Dr. Damaris Rau, the School District of Lancaster's new Superintendent. Like former Superintendent Pedro Rivera (now Pa. Sec. of Education), I meet with Superintendent Rau on a regular basis to discuss educational issues that impact the School District of Lancaster.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Issues with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Retrieval of unclaimed property
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Inquiries about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Issues with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Questions about the state lottery
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups

Call 717-295-3157 for assistance with these or any other state-government related matters.