



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**PETER G. SCHWEYER**

22ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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## *Spirit of compromise*

***At long last, Democrats and Republicans from both the House and Senate have chosen to put down their natural partisanship and work with Tom Gov. Wolf to make significant and positive policy changes that will help Pennsylvania move forward.***

## 2016-17 State Budget

We passed a bipartisan spending plan that included a number of significant compromises from both Democrats and Republicans. The new state budget, passed on time, avoids another historic impasse that put many of our schools and human services in financial peril.

While this financial plan does not include everything that I could hope for, it significantly addresses one of my top priorities — increased funding for our schools. Of the \$220 million in new funding for public basic and special education, the Allentown School District will receive about \$6 million. This is a tremendous investment in our children's future.

The budget also includes additional dollars for higher education and pre-K education. It restores funding for many of the cuts that our social service providers have

experienced (think of things like rape crisis centers and domestic violence organizations). Additional dollars are being allocated to combat our opioid and heroin crisis (more on that later). All of this was accomplished without increasing sales or income taxes in a broad-based manner.

### **Pension Reform**

A few weeks before the budget was due, the House passed a bipartisan pension reform bill. It would maintain benefits for current public employees and retirees, while changing the pension structure for future state and school employees. By shifting some financial risk away from taxpayers and reducing future pension costs, this legislation would help ensure fiscal stability for the state for years to come, all while protecting retirement security for current employees and those who are already retired.



### **Medical Marijuana**

After years of information gathering, testimonials from patients and doctors, and active negotiations among legislators, Pennsylvania became the 24th state to legalize the use of medical marijuana. See the article titled "Medical marijuana now legal in Pa." inside for a longer discussion on this groundbreaking legislation.



# Priorities for the fall session

Although 2016 has proven to be more productive for the state legislature than 2015, there is much work left to be done.

## MY PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- Combating the scourge of veteran suicide. I authored **H.B. 1960**, which would create a dedicated source of funding to support programs and organizations that help combat suicide by veterans.
- Helping to make college more affordable. I introduced **H.B. 1886**, which would provide in-state college tuition for all graduates of Pennsylvania high schools.
- Seeking a real increase in the minimum wage. I've co-sponsored **H.B. 250**, which would increase our minimum wage to \$10.10/hour. This proposal has been endorsed by Gov. Tom Wolf.
- Finding creative ways to address public health concerns. I've authored **H.B. 2162** that would expand the existing State Neighborhood Assistance Program to include public health needs as an eligible use of dollars.

It is a true honor and privilege to serve you as your state representative. If I can be of assistance to you for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

## Working to combat drug addiction

It is well known that opioid abuse and heroin use are surging across Pennsylvania, and the Lehigh Valley is not immune to this trend. Your state government is well aware of this crisis and is working extremely hard to help stem the tide of this killer epidemic.

This May, I took part in a roundtable discussion to explore the extent of addiction and treatment services in the Lehigh Valley. Hosted by St. Luke's University Health Network and joined by state Reps. Mike Schlossberg and Dan McNeill, and Secretary Gary Tennis of the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, I heard many professionals and family members share their opinions and recommendations.

One individual who stands out began his addiction at 14 after a skiing accident. After 13 attempts at rehabilitation, he remains in long-term recovery. He spoke candidly about his opioid addiction. Another individual spoke of her son's death due to overdose when treatment options failed. This was powerful and heartfelt testimony, to say the least.

In the new state budget, we included \$15 million in new money for opioid and heroin addiction services. Treatment Trends located in Center City Allentown will receive some of these dollars to treat those suffering from this addiction.

Additionally, Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine signed a standing order for the anti-overdose drug naloxone, making it available to all Pennsylvanians. State troopers are now equipped with naloxone, should they arrive on the scene of a drug overdose, and public schools are supplied with the drug at no cost. Additionally, Pennsylvania has developed a prescription drug monitoring program to detect and prevent prescription fraud and abuse.

Gov. Tom Wolf met with state lawmakers, local officials, law enforcement, emergency responders and health care professionals to discuss strategies to combat the epidemic of opioid addiction and overdose. A bipartisan task force was formed to study the opioid crisis in the commonwealth

and to ultimately recommend legislation that will support and strengthen the fight against opioid addiction.

Lastly, the governor and the House speaker announced that we will hold a special session on opioid addiction in the fall to seek additional means to combat this crisis.



Rep. Schweyer with Reps. McNeill and Schlossberg and PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Gary Tennis in Allentown for a roundtable discussion on addiction and treatment services in the Lehigh Valley.



Rep. Schweyer listens to a man give testimony on his drug addiction and going through treatment.



# Medical marijuana bill passes

This spring, Pennsylvania became the 24th state to legalize marijuana for medical purposes. I had the unique privilege to serve as one of five House Democrats on a bipartisan task force of 10 legislators that crafted the language that ultimately was signed into law.



Senate Bill 3, now Act 16 of 2016, establishes an independent, 12-member State Board of Medical Cannabis Licensing to oversee growers, processors and dispensaries. The growing of the cannabis plant must be done in secure, indoor facilities and the dispensaries will be overseen by medical professionals. Lastly, all patients will be required to receive a Medical Marijuana ID card from the state Department of Health.

Doctors will now be able to recommend medical cannabis as a treatment for a variety of symptoms associated with cancer, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, severe chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, HIV/AIDS and other ailments. The medical marijuana will be able to be taken by pill, oil, vapor or liquid form. Patients cannot legally obtain marijuana to smoke, nor can they grow it on their own.

With all of that said, I believe that one of the most important relationships is the one that exists between a person and his or her doctor. It is my firm belief that a patient, in consultation with his or her physician and family, is the one who should ultimately choose the best course of treatment for his or her ailments and that politicians should not be part of that equation.

Hopefully, neither you nor a loved one will ever be in a position to have to make the decision to utilize medical marijuana. But if you are suffering from cancer or Parkinson's, at least Harrisburg politicians will no longer be in the way of you and your medical treatment.



# Expanded wine sales, improved convenience on tap

Recently, Gov. Tom Wolf signed legislation into law that modernizes the sale of wine and spirits in Pennsylvania. The most notable changes allow for the sale of wine in restaurants and grocery stores, and expanding the hours of operation for the Pennsylvania Fine Wine and Spirits stores to include more weekend hours. This certainly will make it more convenient for consumers. I supported this legislation, but not before carefully considering its impact on jobs, small businesses and the fiscal health of the state budget.



Act 39 of 2016 also gives the Liquor Control Board more flexibility to set competitive prices by allowing it to offer discounts. It will also permit licensed producers to ship wine directly to consumers' homes.

All in all, this was a solid compromise that will enhance consumer convenience and protect jobs and the state's bottom line.

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## Apply now to receive your Property Tax/Rent Rebate

The deadline to file a 2015 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program application is Dec. 31 and my office is here to help!

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates can boost rebates up to \$975.

My office can help with the applications. **Please don't assume you are not eligible!** Half of Social Security income is discounted, and claimants are not disqualified from rebates solely because of Social Security cost-of-living adjustments.

To find out if you qualify or if you need assistance with filling out your application, please call or visit my office.

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## Assisting our veterans

The brave men and women who have served or who are serving in our military deserve full access to state and federal benefits.

To that end, I would like to invite all veterans to meet with a caseworker from the American Legion in my office. Meetings take place between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of every other month. To make an appointment, please call my office at 610-791-6270.

## Check to see if you have unclaimed money or assets

True story: a few years ago, I learned that I was owed money from a lost stock certificate I had received while working for a large retail chain. After completing some official paperwork with the Pennsylvania Treasurer's Office, I received a check for \$95. It is always great when one receives some found money like that!

You may be eligible to collect money owed to you through a program run by the state Treasurer's Office, and my staff and I can help you find out what you are owed. If you are owed money from a closed bank account, lost stocks or bonds, or family heirloom, my staff and I can help you file a claim.

## We can help plan your trip to the state Capitol

If your group or organization would like to plan a trip to Harrisburg and tour the state Capitol, we are ready to help.

Starting Aug. 1, Capitol Guided Tours is accepting reservations for tours for spring 2017. While in Harrisburg, your group can also visit The State Museum, which will be open for 10 Mondays and Tuesdays during the spring.

Please stop by my office, and we will be happy to assist you.

## Get assistance with health care-related programs

Medicare open enrollment will begin on Oct. 15 and will end on Dec. 7. During this open enrollment period, you can enroll in Medicare or change your existing Medicare plan.

Every Monday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 17 through Dec. 7, an APPRISE volunteer counselor will visit my district office at 1912 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Allentown, to help those interested in Medicare.

The APPRISE counselor can help you with Medicare enrollment, Part A and Part B, prescription drug plans, Medicare Advantage plans and other health insurance options.

You must have an appointment to meet with the counselor. To schedule a time, please contact my office at 610-791-6270.

## Senior Fair a success

This May, I, along with Reps. Mike Schlossberg and Steve Samuelson, hosted our second annual Senior Fair. Events like these are wonderful opportunities for constituents to learn, in one convenient location, about the vast array of community services available to them. In addition to the informational programs provided by various participating agencies, many attendees took advantage of health and wellness screenings and participated in lectures.

This year's turnout was fantastic and allowed us to meet with some of our wonderful constituents. If you were not able to join us this year, don't worry. We will be hosting another senior fair in spring 2017.



Rep. Schwyer meets with a constituent during his Senior Fair.



Reps. Schlossberg, Samuelson and Schwyer address the crowd at their senior fair.



# Welcoming El Sistema Lehigh Valley to the state Capitol

In June, Rep. Mike Schlossberg and I welcomed a wonderful and talented group of student musicians and faculty from El Sistema Lehigh Valley to the state Capitol. The Fellowship of Strings also performed a concert for visitors and employees in the East Wing Rotunda.

El Sistema Lehigh Valley is a great program of the Allentown Symphony Association and provides an opportunity for students to develop life skills as musicians.



Reps. Schweyer and Schlossberg welcome Sheridan Elementary to the state Capitol in June.



Students from Lehigh Parkway Elementary visit Rep. Schweyer at the state Capitol in May.



Rep. Schweyer has some fun with students from Dodd Elementary School who put their technology skills on display at the state Capitol.

## Help Allentown students start the school year off right

As students in the Allentown School District head back to school, many will lack the basic supplies needed to be successful. My district office once again is accepting donations of school items that we will distribute to kids in need.

### PLEASE JOIN ME IN DONATING THE FOLLOWING:

One-subject spiral notebooks  
Pocket folders  
Copy paper  
Pens/Pencils (*black, blue, red*)  
Markers

Crayons/color pencils  
Tissue boxes  
Hand sanitizer  
Rubber bands  
Paper clips



Book bags  
Glue sticks  
Scissors



You can drop off items year-round weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at 1912 S. 4th St., Allentown.



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## Get All the Latest Updates

Connect with Rep. Schweyer on social media!

You'll get the latest updates on community news,  
local events and legislative updates.

 @RepSchweyer

 [www.facebook.com/RepSchweyer](http://www.facebook.com/RepSchweyer)

WEBSITE: [www.pahouse.com/Schweyer](http://www.pahouse.com/Schweyer)



## Important 2016 Election Dates

- Oct. 11** Last day to register to vote
- Nov. 1** Last day to apply for an absentee ballot
- Nov. 4** Last day for county election offices to receive absentee ballots
- Nov. 8** Election Day, polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

## Save the Date!

### *Join me for my Tele-Town Hall*

**7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sept. 7**

You will get a call at 7 p.m. — just answer it and take part! You can ask questions or just listen to the discussion. You also can participate in interactive polls with your phone.

Want to get your questions in early? Just email [townhall@pahouse.net](mailto:townhall@pahouse.net) and call my district office to make sure you get on the list.

### *Free Child Car Seat Safety Check*

**10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Oct. 7**

Visit the parking lot between the Neighborhood Center & St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 417 N. 7<sup>th</sup> St., Allentown, 18102

Technicians from the Allentown Health Bureau will ensure that your child's car seat is installed correctly.

***No appointment necessary — just stop by!***