



State Representative
**Eddie Day
Pashinski**
121st Legislative District



Summer 2018

Capitol Office: 203 Irvis Office Building • P.O. Box 202121 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-2121 • (717) 783-0686
District Office: 152 S. Pennsylvania Ave. • Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702 • (570) 825-5934

Email: RepPashinski@pahouse.net • Website: www.pahouse.com/Pashinski

@RepPashinski • [Facebook.com/RepPashinski](https://www.facebook.com/RepPashinski)

Wilkes-Barre Township rebuilds from damaging tornado

Around 10 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, June 14, our area was hit by an EF-2 tornado, with damaging winds between 111 and 135 miles per hour. The tornado touched down right around the intersection of Highland Park Blvd. and Mundy St. and moved southeast for about three-quarters of a mile toward the Arena Hub Plaza before dissipating. Thank God there were no fatalities and only six minor injuries.

The structural damage was extensive. Twenty-three businesses were damaged, with 11 being destroyed and nine sustaining major damage. I've never seen anything like what I saw at the Arena Hub Plaza. Vehicles were tossed like rag dolls and shingles were impaled deep in concrete pillars.

I was on the ground with Wilkes-Barre Township Mayor Carl Kuren the next morning as we toured the damage and spoke with officials from a multitude of emergency agencies, including local first responders, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In the afternoon, Gov. Tom Wolf and PEMA Director Rick Flinn arrived and we toured the damage while updating the governor on the situation.

Regardless of the damage to businesses and vehicles, there was minimal damage to human life. That's a miracle when you consider the devastation this tornado created in such a short period of time. In spite of this, however, I saw our sense of community emerge in a tremendous way.

First responders rushed to the scene Wednesday night having no idea what they would find. Utility workers were already out in the earliest of hours Thursday morning to work on downed wires and ensure no potential problems with gas or propane leaks. And all of these people were on hand throughout the day Thursday and into Friday. They remained through the weekend as well. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

We had businesses and restaurants continually stopping by on Thursday to drop off food and water for emergency personnel. So much, in fact, that food had to be turned away

because we had too much and didn't want it to go to waste. This is what being part of a community is about. We can't avoid natural disasters, however we can – and we are – coming together, picking up the pieces and working toward rebuilding what we've lost.

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to Gov. Wolf, Sen. Bob Casey, Congressman Matt Cartwright, state Sen. John Yudichak and the countless state and local officials I spoke with during the important first few hours following the storm.

This was an all-hands-on-deck situation and everyone I spoke with offered full support for whatever we needed, including 17 local municipalities who sent emergency personnel to help.

There's an old saying that the Wyoming Valley is the valley with a heart. That has never been more obvious than seeing how our community responded to this natural disaster. I couldn't be prouder to represent this area and call it home.



Eddie Day Pashinski

Workplace Freedom Act needed to strengthen our unions

Make no mistake – the recent Supreme Court ruling in Janus v. AFSCME is a direct attack on unions and America's middle class. This ruling will substantially weaken unions by allowing non-union members to avoid paying dues toward collective bargaining, yet still reap all the benefits that collective bargaining brings. This is the classic free-rider problem aimed directly at undermining unions and all American workers.

I grew up the son of a union coal miner and I've been a union member throughout all of my adult career, including holding leadership positions. I understand unions and how they benefit all workers. Unions helped create the middle class through collective bargaining and have successfully bargained for a national minimum wage, paid sick leave, the eight-hour work day, paid overtime, child labor laws, safe working conditions and countless other benefits all workers enjoy to this day.

One needs to simply look back at photos of children under the age of 12 working in coal mines and women jam-packed into rooms full of sewing equipment or read about the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire to understand why unions are necessary and beneficial to all workers. When a collective bargaining agreement is achieved, non-union workers benefit as well. In order to acquire the most qualified workers, non-union shops must raise their pay and benefits to compete with unions.

With that in mind, and in light of the unprecedented attack on unions over the past 20 years, I'm proud to co-sponsor the Workplace Freedom Act to help support unions and the workers who wish to join one. Support for unions is at the highest it's been since 2003, with 61 percent of Americans saying they approve of unions and what they fight for. That's why Pennsylvania needs the Workplace Freedom Act, legislation that would allow workers to form a union if a simple majority of workers express support. It would do away with the bureaucratic red tape workers must go through now if they wish to unionize.

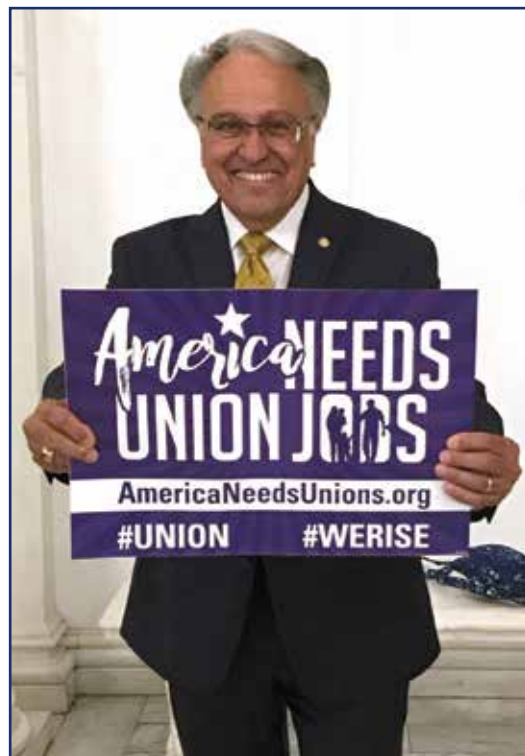
This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Rep. Tom Mehauffie, a Republican, and Rep. Maureen Madden, a Democrat, showing that this isn't a left vs. right issue. It's simply an issue of fighting for Pennsylvania's working men and women, something we should all support regardless of political party.

We must remember that unions are the best line of defense to protect and empower working people. We come together in different ways to advocate for our interests, be it school organizations, community groups, religious organizations or fraternal organizations. Why shouldn't we encourage people to come together and advocate for themselves where they spend a great deal of time each and every working day?

At a time when it seems our nation is more divided than any time in recent memory, unions tie us together as people. Unions represent all of what America has to offer with no regard to gender, race, religion or creed. Laborers Local 158, Sheet Metal Workers Local 44 and every other union in Wilkes-Barre share common goals with unions in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Altoona, Erie and Williamsport and across America.

Unions aim to give a voice to all working Pennsylvanians, so why should we make that process difficult and cumbersome? I'm asking you to stand with our local firefighters, police officers, teachers, nurses, steelworkers, electricians, ironworkers, laborers, truck drivers and everyone who belongs to or wants to belong to a union and support the Workplace Freedom Act.

Now is not the time to forget what unions have given us. Now is the time to make it easier to empower our workers to stand up, speak out and be treated fairly in the workplace.



I joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers and union supporters for a meeting on how to support Pennsylvania's workers in the wake of the Janus decision.

Grandparents raising grandchildren legislation on verge of passage

Earlier this year, a package of legislation aimed at helping grandparents raising grandchildren passed the House. This package of legislation is made up of two bills and one resolution that would give additional legal rights to grandparents, create a one-stop-shop for information and resources and instruct the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study of what else the legislature can do to help grandparents raising grandchildren.

The first bill, House Bill 1539, is my legislation that would grant temporary guardianship to grandparents when the parents of the grandchildren are unable or unwilling to care for them. This bill would specifically be triggered in cases of substance abuse issues. This temporary guardianship would give grandparents the right to make vital basic decisions for their grandchildren, such as the ability to take a child to the doctor or enroll the child in school.

The second bill, House Bill 2133, was introduced by Rep. Kathy Watson, the chairwoman of the House Children and Youth Committee. This bill would establish the Kinship Caregiver Navigator Program – an informational resource for grandparents, both as a website and a toll-free hotline. The website would offer information on support and services available, and a specially trained navigator would be able to provide support and guidance to a kinship caregiver, and serve as a mediator to establish relationships between kinship caregivers and relevant federal, state and local agency staff.

The final piece of legislation is House Resolution 390, which I introduced. This resolution would direct the Joint State Government Commission to study the trend



I joined U.S. Sen. Bob Casey for a roundtable discussion on grandparents raising grandchildren earlier this year outside Harrisburg.

of grandfamilies in Pennsylvania and report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly. H.R. 390 passed the House and since it's a resolution, does not need to be passed by the Senate. It's been sent to the Joint State Government Commission and they've already started working on it.

H.B. 1539 and H.B. 2133 are both awaiting final consideration in the Senate. I'll be lobbying senators in the fall to pass both these bills and send them to Gov. Tom Wolf for his signature. I'm confident we can get over the finish line and give a helping hand up to grandparents raising grandchildren throughout the state.

Policy hearing explores tax fairness in PA

I recently hosted a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on the issue of tax fairness in Pennsylvania and our options to raise additional revenue. The hearing focused on issues such as property tax relief, a Marcellus Shale tax, potential increases in the sales tax or the Personal Income Tax and reductions to the Corporate Net Income tax combined with closing the Delaware loophole.

We heard from the Keystone Research Center, proponents of House Bill 76 and the Luzerne County Intermediate Unit. Property taxes were, of course, a big topic, and we discussed how House Bill 76 wouldn't fully fund education to the proper level. It also would expand the sales tax base to items that currently aren't taxed, such as daycare and assisted living. Both of those items are already difficult for Pennsylvania families to afford and adding a 7 percent sales tax won't help.

I fully understand the need for property tax relief, which is why I co-sponsored Gov. Tom Wolf's property tax relief

plan. His plan would have provided over \$1,000 in relief to the average homeowner while eliminating entirely the school property tax for 270,000 seniors. I also voted for House Bill 504, which passed the House 109-86 and would have provided nearly \$5 billion in property tax relief. Unfortunately, neither plan made it to Gov. Wolf's desk for his signature.

I have also long supported a Marcellus Shale severance tax. Pennsylvania has lost out on billions of dollars by being the only state in the nation without a severance tax. The funding could have gone to improving schools, fixing roads or reducing property taxes. The point of the hearing was to explore these options and the pros and cons of each. We have the option to bring property tax relief, while we continue to find new sources of revenue to provide elimination. The key word on this topic is balance, and I'll continue working to balance the taxes Pennsylvanians pay without overburdening any segment of our population.



Budget brings increased funding to local schools

EDUCATION FUNDING INCREASES FOR THE 121ST DISTRICT

- Crestwood School District: \$46,112 basic education increase, \$10,641 special education increase
- Hanover School District: \$130,878 basic education increase, \$33,120 special education increase
- Wilkes-Barre School District: \$1,146,842 basic education increase, \$99,177 special education increase

This year, the General Assembly overwhelmingly agreed to a bipartisan deal that will benefit all Pennsylvanians when the state budget was finished several days before the June 30 deadline.

As usual, education funding was a top priority in this year's budget. Pennsylvanians want quality schools for their children and peace of mind knowing their children will be safe while they learn. You can view the increased education funding for each school district in our area in the box above.

To increase safety in our schools, \$70 million was earmarked to improve safety and security on school campuses. Of that total, \$60 million is new funding for school and community safety measures and \$10 million is earmarked for school safety grants. Previously, those grants were funded at \$1.5 million, so this represents a significant increase. School districts must apply for this funding, but they'll have the option of how to use it once they receive it. Be it police officers, metal detectors or school psychologists, school districts know best what they need and this funding will allow them to keep their students and faculty safe.

The budget also increased funding for higher education. The four state-related universities, the 14 state-system universities and Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges all received an increase. Higher education and career training are essential to setting people up for future success, and I hope this increased funding will result in a halt to rising tuition costs that can be a barrier for Pennsylvania's families.

As the opioid and heroin epidemic continues to grip Pennsylvania, this budget also included increased funding to help provide home visitation services to families affected by drug use. People tend to get caught up with issues related to the drug user, but often forget that many times the user is damaging parents, spouses and children too.

I'm proud to help support Gov. Tom Wolf as he fights the opioid epidemic. Over the past four years, we've secured more than \$100 million to fight this plague. I'll continue to do everything we can to get those addicted the help they need to resume living a quality life while punishing those who bring this scourge into our neighborhoods.

No budget is perfect, however. Unfortunately, a bipartisan group of legislators is still being blocked by Republican leadership in passing a Marcellus Shale tax. I've supported a fair, balanced severance tax since I was first elected to office. Let me be clear – according to our state constitution, this gas belongs to the citizens of Pennsylvania and they deserve to be fairly compensated for its removal. We'll continue to fight to make the gas drillers pay their fair share for removing our natural resources from the ground below us.

Early childhood grants awarded to Wilkes-Barre area



This summer, multiple agencies in the Wilkes-Barre area were awarded grants for the 2018-19 Pre-K Counts program and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program.

The Pre-K Counts grants help provide high-quality pre-kindergarten services to at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds at no cost to families. Children living in families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible to apply. The recipients in our area include:

- Kings College
- Building Blocks Learning Center
- Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18
- Luzerne County Head Start
- Child Development Council of Northeastern PA

The Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program grant was awarded to Luzerne County Head Start to allow them to increase the number of children they serve or to expand the length of the Head Start day or year for children. This program provides state funding to Head Start programs to serve 3- and 4-year-olds living in families at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. It provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services.

There are few things more valuable to a child than early education opportunities. Besides the obvious benefit of learning at a young age, early education teaches social skills, cooperation, teamwork, confidence, self-esteem and sets the stage for an appreciation of lifelong learning. I'm incredibly appreciative to Gov. Tom Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Education for awarding these competitive grants that will benefit Wilkes-Barre, the surrounding communities and all the children they serve.

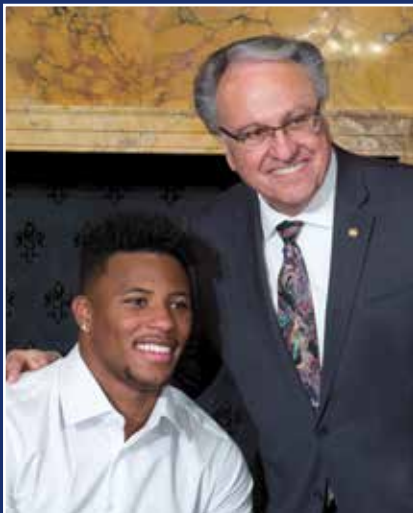
Photos from around the district and Harrisburg



In June, I joined fellow co-chairmen of the Pennsylvania Legislative Sportsmen Caucus to present a \$1,500 check to Hunters Sharing the Harvest. This organization takes surplus venison from hunters and connects the meat with food banks around the state to help some of our neediest citizens.



It was great to speak with students from Northeast Sight Services at the Capitol to discuss how they can lobby legislators for increased awareness and funding for those suffering from vision loss.



It was an honor to meet Saquon Barkley on Saquon Barkley Day at the Capitol this spring!



I had the pleasure of joining the Wyoming Valley Art League for their annual dinner in May.



I joined my fellow NEPA legislators in welcoming the winners of the NEPA Scholarship Pageant Association to the House chamber in May.



State Sen. John Yudichak hiked the entire Delaware and Lehigh Trail as part of a Super Bowl pledge to raise awareness of the areas on the trail that need completed. I joined him to walk the part of the trail near Laurel Run.



State Representative
Eddie Day Pashinski

P.O. Box 202121
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2121

Look inside for information:

- Recapping tornado in W-B Township
- Supporting unions in wake of Janus
- Budget brings increased funding to local schools
- Grandparents raising grandchildren bill nearing passage

lpo.kaf.0818

Surveying tornado damage in Wilkes-Barre Township

