



State Representative

Eddie Day Pashinski

121st Legislative District

SPRING 2022

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Dear Neighbor,

I hope that this newsletter finds you and your family safe, healthy, and energized as we head into Spring and hopefully experience an exciting and productive year ahead. Since my last mailing, your state legislature and government have been working to move Pennsylvania through the pandemic and toward a more normal future. In the past year, we've made historic investments in our public schools, expanded access to prescription drugs for seniors, invested in our frontline workers impacted most by the pandemic, allocated serious money into high-speed broadband and more.

SPECIFICALLY, I'M PROUD TO HAVE SUPPORTED:

- **A 2021-22 budget that increased state funding for ALL our local school districts** – with no tax increases.
- **Expanding access to the PACENET prescription program** by raising the income limits from \$27,500 to \$33,500 for a single person and from \$35,500 to \$41,500 for a married couple.
- **Approving \$225 million to help nurses and health care workers** and get more professionals on the job.
- **Establishing the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority** to help bring high-speed internet to students, businesses, and homes across Pennsylvania.

In addition to these and other legislative achievements, I'm proud to report that I've been able to help secure millions of dollars worth of state grants and investments for our district and region for public safety, workforce development, local infrastructure and more. As you continue to read going forward, you will learn more about these grants, find out what's happening in the Capitol, learn how you can help save our democracy by searching for the truth, and much more!

A very special note, before reviewing my newsletter. I'd like to express a very special thank you to all our frontline doctors, nurses, health care providers, police, fire and EMS crews who have spent over 2 years in unimaginable conditions working to save lives and protect all. I'd also like to thank our grocery store workers, educators, truck drivers, bus drivers, farmers, fruit and vegetable pickers, food processors, cleaning crews, and so many others who are providing the goods and services we need every day. There is no doubt that the COVID pandemic has demonstrated that each of us play a role making all of our lives better through the work we all do every day.

Stay strong, stay safe, do the right thing by getting your COVID shots and searching for the truth to protect one another and to protect our most precious democracy!

Sincerely,



I joined public education advocates for a Capitol news conference where Education Voters of Pennsylvania revealed flagrant waste and egregious lack of oversight in Pennsylvania's nine largest cyber charter schools – including more than \$35 million of your tax dollars spent on advertising during the previous two school years with no state audits or oversight.



I recognized the efforts of Wilkes University President Dr. Greg Cant and his wife Angela Cant in the House chamber last fall for their outstanding service to Wilkes University and our community. I'm grateful to Speaker Bryan Cutler (FAR LEFT) for the opportunity to recognize them in Harrisburg for all they do for Wilkes University.

State Grants Awarded to Improve Life in Luzerne County

It has been my pleasure to work with state, county, and local officials to acquire investment dollars to help all those who work to make our lives better. One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is helping others whenever and wherever I can. The true joy is helping local organizations, groups and governments receive grant funding necessary to improve the quality of life throughout our district and region. For the 2020-21 timeframe, the following investment dollars have been granted for my district. Millions of dollars in these grants include:

- \$2.5 million RACP grant to the Greater Wilkes-Barre Industrial Fund HUD Inc. for the Gateway Center II project.
 - \$500,000 RACP grant to Project Elevate to provide a sustainable workforce development system to be located at the Train Station Complex off Wilkes-Barre Boulevard in Wilkes-Barre.
 - \$470,000 Flood Mitigation Program grant for the Ashley Borough Flood Protection Project.
 - \$2 million in RACP funding for Kings College toward rehabilitating the Times Leader Building.
 - \$2.79 million, low-interest state loan for the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority for significant upgrades for stormwater management.
 - \$800,000 to Wilkes-Barre City to complete the downtown streetscape project to improve pedestrian safety by replacing relic pavers installed in the wake of the 1972 flood.
 - \$50,000 to Hanover Township to convert a portion of Fellows Avenue into a trail and fitness area.
 - \$375,000 from the Office of Victims' Services for the Luzerne County chief executive to continue a cross-system, collaborative response to reduce violence against women (VAW) crimes in the county.
 - \$95,835 in Opioid Misuse Prevention Funds for Luzerne County commissioners to hire a full-time certified Spanish interpreter for the County Drug Treatment Court participants.
 - \$47,000 in Children's Advisory Center funds to help the Luzerne County Child Advocacy Center (LCCAC) maintain the full-time position of the current executive director.
 - \$350,000 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre City on behalf of Luzerne County Transportation Authority, to construct a centralized transit facility in the city.
 - \$50,000 LSA grant to Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority on behalf of Allied Services, to renovate an existing building located in the City of Wilkes-Barre.
 - \$135,878 LSA grant to Hanover Township on behalf of Lower South Valley COG, to construct a shared municipal fueling station.
 - \$254,958 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre City on behalf of Sherman Street Properties LLC, for infrastructure upgrades to its building at 221 N. Sherman St.
 - \$100,000 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre City on behalf of SHINE Luzerne County, to continue operations of a SHINE program for an additional year in targeted areas.
 - \$25,000 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre City on behalf of the YMCA of Wilkes-Barre, to purchase and install equipment which will allow virtual programming.
 - \$85,052 LSA grant to Ashley Borough for channel improvements to a section of Sugarnotch Run from Frederick Street to Sively Street.
 - \$322,881 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre City for interior and exterior renovations to the existing City Hall building.
 - \$47,626 LSA grant to Laurel Run Borough to purchase a 2014 Case 580N backhoe/loader to reduce annual expenses for renting equipment.
 - \$73,439 LSA grant to Wilkes-Barre Township to replace the roof membrane at the township's municipal building.
 - \$120,000 LSA grant to Fairview Township to replace two road culverts under Dale Drive over the Big Wapwallopen Creek.
- Don't forget: My district office is here to help if you or your organization are interested in applying for state funding.***

Pennsylvania Elections are Free, Fair, Safe, and Secure – Let's Keep Them That Way

In 2020 and 2021, we saw unimaginable attacks on our democracy, both physically and institutionally. Those in power who didn't like the outcome of an election decided to promote conspiracies and lies in order to undermine its legitimacy – and with it our entire democratic system. These lies have stoked the flames of division in this country to the point that we saw a horrific assault on our great nation's highest ideal on January 6 – our democracy, and an assault on our nation's most magnificent symbol, our beautiful U.S. Capitol Building.

This violent insurrection occurred despite dozens of court cases, hearings, audits, and investigations into the election in Pennsylvania and across the country demonstrating that there was no systemic voter fraud in the 2020 election. Even worse, these lies were and continue to be promoted by many who have sworn an oath to uphold and defend the constitution. That sacred oath is a contract of trust with our constituents, and they expect honest representation by sharing information that is factual, truthful, and most meaningful.

Yet, some of those same people want to make it even harder for people to make their voices heard and participate in our democracy by taking away safe and secure mail-in voting! Why would any elected official want to make things harder? Mail-in ballots are a perfect example of something that is necessary for voters because of life's challenges like illness, emergencies, family obligations, work requirements and even more challenges caused by the pandemic. It's worked for our military for decades and it will work for those who are sick, away from home, called on emergencies and much more as well. By the way, military mail-in ballots have been used most successfully since the Civil War. If we could make that system work, we can certainly do the same for those of us living here in America.

Instead of taking away this important tool for voters, we should be strengthening the system and addressing what was missing in 2020: a better timeframe for county boards of elections to receive requests, distribute ballots, and prepare to count them for quicker results on election night.

To help, I've joined my fellow House Democrats in supporting legislation that helps our election administrators and strengthens our voting system even further. That legislation includes my H.B. 982 which would provide for

Continued on page 4.

Pennsylvania Needs a National Infrastructure Bank (NIB)

January's Fern Hollow Bridge collapse in Pittsburgh was a striking reminder of the importance of maintaining and updating our state's roads and bridges. Thank God that no one was fatally injured, but this could have been much worse had it occurred at a different time of day or under different circumstances. Throughout Pennsylvania, motorists every day drive across bridges in need of repair or replacement, designated with the same poor rating as the Fern Hollow Bridge.

In fact, altogether, combining state- and locally owned bridges, PennDOT figures show that nearly 4,200 of Pennsylvania's roughly 32,000 spans are rated in poor condition — about 1 in every 8 bridges. The cost of addressing all these bridges exceeds our allotment of \$1.6 billion for bridges from last year's bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. For perspective, the cost of addressing structural issues of Pittsburgh's bridges alone would be upward of \$458 million, according to some estimates!

That's why we need a National Infrastructure Bank (NIB) to fix Pennsylvania's 1 in 8 bridges rated in poor condition as soon as possible. This project is funded by private dollars, not your tax dollars – and would meet ALL our nation's infrastructure needs. Used by Presidents Washington, Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and others, a NIB would make \$5 trillion available to transform our country while creating 25 million family-sustaining jobs. Learn more details at www.nibcoalition.com and follow at www.facebook.com/CNIBPA for updates.

To help spur action, I've joined state Reps. Ed Neilson, Mary Jo Daley and Joe Ciresi in introducing our H.R. 113, urging Congress to establish this National Infrastructure Bank. The NIB must be a national plan and that is why H.R. 3339 must be passed by our U.S. Congress. Unfortunately, it hasn't been voted on yet. Please call your congressman today.

For safety's sake, we can't wait decades to repair and rebuild our nation's infrastructure – and we don't have to with a NIB. If it was good enough for Washington, Lincoln, and FDR, then a NIB should be good enough for us NOW. As they say, pay me now or pay me much, much more later.

Policy Hearing: Driving Down Prescription Costs

Last summer, I co-hosted a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on Driving Down Prescription Drug Costs in Pennsylvania with state Reps. Emily Kinkead and Elizabeth Fiedler. It's clear the system is out of control and increasingly unaffordable; consequently, it is unsustainable. It was my hope that the expert testimony would lead to qualified solutions to provide an affordable, quality health care system for all our citizens.

As I said at the hearing, affordability and accessibility – along with quality – are the three most important words always used when it comes to health care and prescription drugs in America. Each is dependent on the other. You can have the highest quality of drugs, but if they are not affordable then they're not accessible, and if people can't use them, then what difference does the quality make?

While I certainly understand that drug companies invest large amounts of dollars into research – so does the federal government with the people's money. Simply put, the way drugs are priced in the United States makes little sense. Just look at something as common but nonetheless critical as insulin to treat diabetes. According to a RAND Health Care report, the average gross manufacturer price for a standard unit of insulin in 2018

was more than 10 times the price in a sample of 32 foreign countries, costing \$98.70 in the U.S. versus \$8.81 in the 32 other countries studied.

In fact, in a Congressional study comparing 11 countries and the U.S. on 79 common prescription drugs, on average, U.S. drug prices were 3.7 times higher than the combined average of the other 11 countries in the study – the United Kingdom (UK), Japan, Ontario Province in Canada, Australia, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland. This means, if a drug costs \$10 per prescription in another country, the same prescription costs \$37 here. If it was \$20 in another country, that prescription would be \$74 in the U.S., which is a huge difference.

If all these other countries can offer the same drugs at far lower prices, then there's no reason we can't lower the cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. One such solution discussed at our hearing is the creation of a prescription drug advisory board to set limits on what pharmacies, providers, patients, health plans and wholesalers pay for some medications. I support this plan and am a co-sponsor to Rep. Dan Frankel's H.B. 1722 to establish this advisory board in Pennsylvania.

Another innovative way to cut the costs of generic prescription drugs is to reduce the role of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) who have created a complex system of pricing and rebates within their health insurance plans that artificially drive up the out-of-pocket cost of countless commonly used drugs. At the hearing we heard from one very innovative pharmacist, Kyle McCormick, who opened Blueberry Pharmacy outside of Pittsburgh where they don't take insurance. Using this membership model, the pharmacy is currently helping about 1,000 patients save a combined \$150,000 in direct costs per year compared to what they otherwise would have paid through insurance or coupon services.

These and other solutions discussed are ideas that we must seriously consider encouraging and implementing to address this crisis driving up our health care costs. Because all Pennsylvanians – and all Americans – deserve prescription drugs that are affordable and therefore accessible. Again, please remember, if it's not affordable, then it's not accessible, and therefore quality does not matter. This is not only sad, it's inhumane and it's an unacceptable scenario in the United States of America.

Full hearing video and testimony is available at www.pahouse.com/policy.

Pennsylvania Elections *(Continued from page 3)*

early processing of mail-in ballots based on a county's size. We are committed to doing everything we can to fight for our democracy and fulfill our oaths to the people of Pennsylvania by honoring and upholding, supporting, and defending our constitution.

You can do your part by participating in our democracy and holding ALL our elected officials accountable. We all need to play a role in our future and that starts with your voice and your vote.

Please make sure you are registered to vote, study the issues and the candidates, base your vote on facts, truth and love for our

democracy. It's your sacred duty, it's your power, it's the basis of our democracy – Of, By, And For, the People. And your words mean little or nothing if you don't vote.



Pictures from Around the District & Commonwealth



Helping cut the ribbon with A & M Floral Express co-owners Anna and Mark Wadas at the opening of their new location at 119 Carey Ave. in Wilkes-Barre and to celebrate their 25th anniversary since opening in 1997!



I was honored to be able to present a House of Representatives Citation to Luzerne Foundation Executive Director Charles Barber upon his retirement from the foundation. He was accompanied by his lovely wife, Denise. His guidance, direction, and leadership skills have elevated the Luzerne Foundation to one of the most noted in the entire commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



I was excited and honored to visit with educators and students at Building Blocks Learning Center in Wilkes-Barre in November to see firsthand their quality care and instruction.



I was happy to join state Rep. Maureen Madden (FAR LEFT) and U.S. Congressman Matt Cartwright (BACK), as we were welcomed by Ashley Walsh to tour Pocono Organics in Monroe County last August!



It was a blast to participate again in the Pennsylvania Farm Show Celebrity Feed Scurry this year against fellow legislators and officials! 24 competitors had to drive a team of draft horses pulling a feed scurry through an obstacle course, with stations for loading and unloading straw bales along the way. We were able to capture 6th place!



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Look inside for information about:

- Grants for our district
- Important democracy updates
- How we can address our infrastructure needs
- ... And much more!

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Help with Water Bills and Service Available

Are you or someone you know at risk of losing water service at their home? Help is available for Pennsylvanians who need help with water bills or who may lose water service.

The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) is a new, temporary assistance program created by the American Rescue Plan Act. LIHWAP can help households that are in emergency situations maintain essential water access. Crisis situations include:

- Past-due water bills;
- Termination of water service; or,
- Threat of termination of water service in the next 60 days.

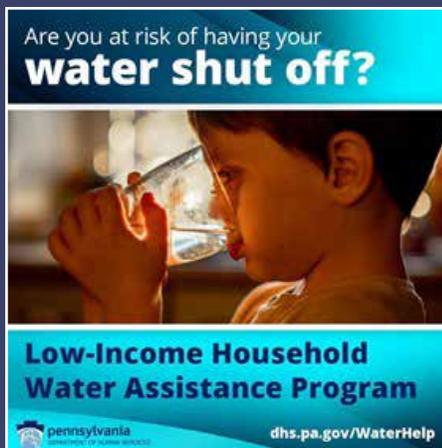
To qualify, applicants must meet income requirements and have a crisis with water service.

Apply now:

www.compass.pa.state.us

Learn more:

www.dhs.pa.gov/waterhelp



Are you at risk of having your
water shut off?

Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program

dhs.pa.gov/WaterHelp

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program open for Applications



PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM

for residents who are permanently disabled, 50+ and widowed, or 65+

What we need from you:

EVERYONE
 All earned income tax forms (1099 SS, W2s, etc.)

HOMEOWNERS
 Copies of all paid tax bills

RENTERS
 Signed form from the landlord

\$35,000
 Maximum Household Income*

*See Requirements
 \$15,000 maximum for renters
 ON SOCIAL SECURITY: Half of Social Security is excluded for eligibility.

Pennsylvanians can now apply for rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2021. The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians ages 65 or older; widows and widowers ages 50 or older; and people with disabilities ages 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded.

Apply online at www.mypath.pa.gov or contact my office by calling 570-825-5934 for assistance.