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State Representative

# TIM BRIGGS

## 149th Legislative District

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# 2016-17 State Budget a Done Deal

I am happy to report that the 2016-17 state budget passed without a protracted impasse like last year. While this budget is far from perfect, it does make necessary investments to move our state forward.

This was another difficult year financially; however, with a divided government where we have a Democratic governor and large Republican majorities controlling the House and Senate, being able to come together to produce a commonsense budget that includes important new investments in education, funding for human services, and a significant public health and safety initiative to combat our heroin/opioid epidemic is encouraging.

As it relates to education funding, we have taken another huge step toward restoring the devastating cuts made by the previous administration.

The spending plan passed on June 30 included an extra \$200 million for basic education, \$30 million more for Pre-K and Head Start, and a \$20 million increase for Special Education. It also included a 2.5 percent increase in higher education.

This budget represents a significant step forward in our effort to provide all kids in the state access to a quality education and to lower the financial burden on homeowners by reducing the pressure of

ever-rising property taxes.

It also represents an important step forward for Pennsylvanians in need, and those battling heroin and opioid addictions. I was proud to see Republicans and Democrats stand together to pledge funding to fight addiction and provide more people with access to treatment.

The spending plan is supported by a revenue package passed in the House and Senate in early July that includes revenue-generating options such as liquor modernization, expanded gaming, taxes on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, and new tax rules that treat books, movies and music downloaded online the same as those purchased in stores.

Again, this is certainly not a perfect budget. We need to do more for families, elderly residents, workers and schoolchildren, and we need to address our structural deficit. We need to ensure Pennsylvania has the resources it needs in the future to protect the environment, maintain public health and safety, and offer a hand up to people struggling to get on their feet.

But I was proud to stand with members on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers to vote in favor of this budget because it puts Pennsylvania on the right path moving forward.



# Pennsylvania's Battle with Heroin and Opioid Addiction

Pennsylvania is dealing with a major epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heroin and opioid overdoses are the leading causes of accidental deaths, killing more Pennsylvanians than those involved in deadly crashes. This epidemic crosses all social, geographic and political lines.

A study by the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association provides a harsh reality: seven Pennsylvanians die every day due to heroin or prescription opioid overdose with younger people being particularly affected. In 2014, nearly 2,500 Pennsylvanians died from a drug overdose.

Pennsylvania has taken several important steps to combat the heroin and opioid crisis. Pennsylvania Physician General Rachel Levine signed a standing order for naloxone, making access to this crucial anti-overdose drug available to all Pennsylvanians. State troopers are equipped with naloxone for when they arrive first on the scene of a drug overdose. This life-saving drug is also available free in public high schools. Pennsylvania has also developed a prescription drug monitoring program to help detect and prevent prescription fraud and abuse.

Gov. Tom Wolf has been hosting roundtable discussions with state lawmakers, local officials, law enforcement, emergency responders and health care professionals to discuss ways to work together to combat the opioid abuse and heroin use epidemic.



**In June, he also announced that he intends to call a special session of the General Assembly later this year that will focus on combating the opioid crisis facing our communities. As a member of the PA Heroin Opioid Prevention and Education (PA-HOPE) caucus, I will be attending several rural, urban and suburban hearings on the issue, and look forward to working on all possible solutions.**

I applaud Gov. Wolf for his leadership on this issue and I look forward to joining my colleagues – Democrat and Republican – in continuing working on a way to address this crisis head-on. Pennsylvanians are counting on us to make it happen.

## Raising the Wage for all Workers Must be a Priority

In March, Gov. Tom Wolf issued an executive order to increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage to \$10.15 per hour for some state workers under his jurisdiction. The Governor's order applies to employees of Commonwealth agencies under the jurisdiction of the Governor and employees who directly perform services or construction for the Commonwealth, or are employed by a lessor of property to the Commonwealth. The greatest impact is expected to be on seasonal state workers.

This executive order sends a clear signal that it is time to give the more than 1.2 million other Pennsylvanians earning the minimum wage a needed pay raise.

The current minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour hasn't changed in nearly a decade but the cost of everything has gone up. Given that the Republican-controlled legislature has been unwilling to act on this issue, the Governor's action is a significant and welcome step for those of us who have been fighting for Pennsylvania's low-wage workers for many, many years.

Increasing the minimum wage would increase revenue for Pennsylvania, in the forms of more personal income tax revenue and more sales tax revenue due to increased spending.

Increasing the minimum wage is one of the quickest and most effective ways to kick-start Pennsylvania's economy. It would also bring economic fairness and security to hundreds of thousands of working adults and their families.

## Local Bridge Projects

As you may have seen, PennDOT is working to rehabilitate two bridges in Upper and Lower Merion – the Keebler Road Bridge over Crow Creek in King of Prussia and the Remington Road Bridge over Indian Creek in Wynnewood. Both of these bridges were originally constructed over 50 years ago and carry approximately 15,000 cars per day. The improvement of these bridges is part of a \$2.4 million PennDOT project to rehab five township-owned, structurally deficient bridges in Montgomery County.

One of the many reasons I was such a strong supporter of Act 89, Pennsylvania's comprehensive transportation plan, was because it took an innovative and efficient approach to repairing so many of our state's structurally deficient bridges.

Similarly designed bridges such as these are now able to be bundled together and repaired using the same specifications and contractor. This significantly increases the efficiency of bridge repairs by eliminating redundant design processes and drastically reducing costs. Traffic in Upper Merion is expected to be detoured through August and, in Lower Merion, through October. If you have any questions or comments regarding these projects, please feel free to contact my office.



## State Grants Benefiting Our Communities

Over the past few months, I was proud to push for approval of several state grants that go toward improving our infrastructure while also alleviating the financial burden on our local communities:

### Upper Merion Township - \$85,000

Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program – This program provides funding to projects that involve development, rehabilitation and improvements to public parks, recreation areas greenways, trails and river conservation. Upper Merion was awarded this grant to assist with rehabilitating the community pond located on the grounds of the township administration building. With the restoration of this pond, I'm looking forward to more Trout Fishing Rodeos!

### Lower Merion Township - \$503,947

Green Light-Go Program – These funds will go toward installing three adaptive traffic signals at the intersections of Lancaster Avenue and Old Wynnewood Road, Penn Road and Wynnewood Road, and Wynnewood Road and Williams Road. Funds will also be used to upgrade existing loop detectors with video detection systems at 45 intersections throughout the township. The Green Light-Go program is a terrific partnership between the state and municipalities. The grant was made possible by the Act 89 transportation plan that I strongly supported, and these funds will go a long way toward improving traffic flow as well as public safety.

As your representative in Harrisburg, I am always working to get state tax dollars reinvested in our local communities, and I was pleased to support these projects.

## Medical Marijuana Now Legal in Pennsylvania

With the signing of Senate Bill 3 by Gov. Tom Wolf in April, Pennsylvania became the 24th state in



the country to legalize medical marijuana. Once the regulations are in place, doctors will be able to prescribe certain forms of cannabis to people who meet the proper requirements and suffer from one of the approved medical conditions. Under the new law, medical marijuana cannot be smoked, but can be prescribed in pill, oil, topical or liquid form.

Marijuana has been shown to be effective in alleviating the symptoms of numerous medical conditions, such as some forms of chronic pain or nausea resulting from cancer treatments, and is seen by many as a way to move away from the dependence on opioids to treat some of these conditions.

I was proud to support the bill when it came up for a vote in the House, and it now falls to the Department of Health to develop the regulations and infrastructure for the program, a process the governor said could take approximately 18 to 24 months. After he signed the bill, I attended a meeting with Gov. Wolf and Sen. Daylin Leach to discuss how implementation of the law would move forward as expeditiously as possible.

## Updating and Modernizing Our Liquor Laws

In June, I supported a landmark piece of legislation that would modernize and expand retail sales of wine and liquor in Pennsylvania and take other steps to increase consumer convenience. The law allows wine to be sold in more places, such as grocery stores that already sell beer, and gives the Liquor Control Board more flexibility on pricing as well as opening up store hours across the state to make shopping more convenient for consumers. The law also allows direct shipping of wine to consumers at their homes.

I have consistently advocated for “modernization” of our state liquor laws, and I believe this is a step in the right direction. The law provides additional convenience that consumers are looking for, is expected to generate up to \$150 million a year in new revenue for the state, and preserves nearly 5,000 well-paying jobs.

In May, I was pleased to participate in the ribbon cutting of the new, modernized Fine Wine & Good Spirits store that opened



at 125 W. DeKalb Pike in King of Prussia. This new location is certainly an upgrade from the previous store on South Gulph Road. With more than 12,000 square feet, the King of Prussia store features nearly 1,800 wines and 1,150 spirits, as well as 1,660 Premium Collection luxury items, and will be one of the top-producing stores in the Commonwealth.

## NEWLY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION

### Study of Later Start Times for High School Students

In May, I introduced legislation (House Bill 2105) that would direct the Pennsylvania Department of Education to conduct a study on the effects of implementing a later start time for secondary schools in the state. The study would be required to consider the recent recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics that states adolescents who do not get enough sleep are more likely to suffer from physical and mental health problems, are at an increased risk of being involved in an automobile accident, and are more likely to decline in academic performance.

Of course, most high schoolers would welcome a later start to the school day, but I believe a later time might be important, not because it's what teenagers want, but because it is most likely what is good for them. The study would focus on high schoolers because studies have shown that a person's biological sleep cycles begin to shift up two hours at the start of puberty, making it harder for teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m.

My legislation would not implement this change, though; it would simply direct the Department of Education to study the issue and any consequences that may come from a change, to ensure that it would be in the best interests of our students.

### Voter Pre-registration at 16

I also introduced a bill recently (House Bill 2263) that would allow people to pre-register to vote at age 16. Voter participation remains the single greatest challenge to ensuring our democracy. Approximately 50 million eligible Americans do not participate in our elections simply because they are not registered to vote.

The central goal for pre-registration is to encourage voting among young people, a group that consistently has some of the lowest turnout rates in elections. Under my legislation, a person who is 16 can pre-register – for example, when they are at the DMV getting their driver's license or learner's permit – and the system will automatically register them so they can vote when they are 18.

During every school visit I participate in, the top question from students is why are they unable to vote and have to wait until they are 18. This legislation does not change that, but it does make it easier for them to enter the process.



While it is a citizen's responsibility to get out and vote, government should do its part by clearing bureaucratic hurdles to doing so. We need to make it easier to vote, not harder, and I believe this bill is a small step in that direction.

### PA Bio State Official of the Year

Earlier this year, I was proud to receive Pennsylvania Bio's State Official of the Year Award. PA Bio is a group of companies from the bio-tech industry working to promote the life sciences by creating a business and public policy environment that fosters growth and success in the bio-tech field.



### SUMMER FOOD DRIVE

My office is accepting donations for this year's Summer Food Drive! Demand for local food bank services is greater than ever and they are continually looking to replenish their supply of non-perishable foods. As I've said before – there is a need in our own community.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, significant numbers of local school students rely on lunch programs and this food drive can help alleviate that need.

This year's drop-off locations are listed below. I invite you to bring canned goods such as meats, fish, fruit, beans, vegetables, soup, and baby formula in plastic or metal cans to the location nearest you.

- **My District Office** – 554 Shoemaker Road, King of Prussia.
- **Upper Merion Township Building** – 175 W. Valley Forge Road, King of Prussia.
- **Bridgeport Borough Hall** – 63 W. 4th St., Bridgeport.
- **West Norriton Township Building** – 1630 W. Marshall St., Jeffersonville
- **Penn Wynne Library** – 130 Overbrook Parkway, Wynnewood

# 2016 'There Ought to be a Law' Essay Contest Winners and Finalists!

In June, I was proud to announce winners and finalists for my seventh annual "There Ought to Be a Law" fifth-grade essay contest. This year's topic was relatively open-ended, and I encouraged local students to submit an essay about a law that would make their school, community or state a better place.

Over 400 essays were submitted on an incredibly wide range of topics, and every student was very persuasive in their argument. In fact, the essays submitted this year were so good, I could not settle on just one winner, so there were two.

This year's winners are Jimmy Ring from Upper Merion Area Middle School and Ali Lasky from Penn Valley Elementary School. Jimmy submitted an essay that would require recess for all middle school students due to the positive effects that physical activity has on a child's learning. Ali's essay was also very persuasive, and advocated for a law that would give children the right to vote. She felt that a lot of the decisions legislators make have an effect on kids as well, so they should be given an opportunity to have their voices heard.



*I was glad to welcome Jimmy Ring and Ali Lasky to the House of Representatives chamber to congratulate them for winning my seventh annual "There Ought to be a Law" contest.*



Along with Jimmy and Ali, there were 13 finalists throughout the district:

## Upper Merion Area Middle School

Audrey McCollum  
Tim Daley  
Allison Eck  
Brianna Pinto  
Aurora Chiavaroli  
Joe Barr

## Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia

Eliana Wolff  
Yaakov Moshe Frager

## Gladwyne Elementary

Kate Lustgarten

## Penn Wynne Elementary

Hannah Gao  
Amy Huang

## Penn Valley Elementary

Vincent Redpath  
Anusha Vyas



*I awarded each finalist with a certificate and official citation from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. These are the finalists from Upper Merion (left) and Torah Academy (above).*

## Working for You!

My office assists thousands of constituents just like you with problems, questions and concerns about state-related issues. I could not do it without the help of a great staff who are always ready to serve you. At my district office, you can obtain a variety of informational booklets, brochures and other publications on state programs; receive help completing state forms; and get help solving a problem regarding a state law, program or service. Free notary service is also available at all my offices.

The primary office is located at 554 Shoemaker Road in King of Prussia, and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Problem solving and constituent service is a lot of what we do, but I am also just as committed to be available to discuss legislative issues and concerns about our state. I have been excited to host a number of community events including town halls, community roundtables and my Breakfast with Briggs meetings. This helps me to stay in touch with you and hear what's on your mind. I look forward to seeing you around the district!

**FREE NOTARY SERVICE!**



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**FREE!**

**Community Document Shredding Event**

**Saturday, Sept. 17**

**11 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Upper Merion Middle School  
 450 Keebler Road  
 King of Prussia, PA 19406

**ON SITE!**

*\*To ensure everyone has an opportunity to shred their documents, it's requested that attendees limit themselves to three boxes/bags of documents.*

**Breakfast with Briggs**

This spring, I was glad to continue the success of my "Breakfast with Briggs" constituent meetings. I try to host a few of these free constituent breakfasts throughout the year in different areas of the district, and they are a great way for me to speak directly to constituents, listen to your concerns and talk about current legislative issues, such as the state budget, the environment or any other topics you might like to discuss. These meetings are always free and open to all residents of the 149th District. The turnout is always great and I look forward to hosting more in the future.

