

SENATOR MIKE WAUGH



Reports

TO YORK COUNTY

Fall/Winter 2009



A MESSAGE FROM SENATOR WAUGH

Hello Friends!

As I am sure you are well aware, the 2009-2010 state budget was at the forefront of legislative matters for much of this year. Thank you to all who communicated with me throughout the process and since the budget's passage on October 9th.

I heard from many of you concerned with proposed spending levels, possible tax increases, and in the end, the amount of time it took to negotiate a final budget. Please know that I shared these concerns, and so I would like to take some time to explain some of my thoughts on this year's budget.

First, there were three fundamental principles I set from the beginning for the final budget to gain my approval:

- Reduced spending
- No broad-based tax increases, such as the income or sales tax
- Sustainability for this year and next

Ultimately, we achieved these goals. Spending was reduced to a level below the prior year for the first time in seven years, and the final plan was \$1.1 billion less than the Governor's original budget proposal. While spending was cut in an unprecedented fashion, the poor performance of the economy required some additional revenues to be identified. Limited revenue streams were increased by non-broad-based tax changes, such as a 25-cent per pack cigarette tax, a new \$1.60 tax on "little cigars," and a 60-day tax amnesty program. The Capital Stock and Franchise Tax, a business assets tax, will be frozen at the 2008 level for three years beginning retroactively to January 1, 2009. The originally planned phase-out of this tax will resume in 2012. These changes, combined with fund transfers from specific funds to the General Fund, will provide for sustainability throughout this year and as we move into next year.

While I heard from many of you, views differed considerably on spending, taxes, and the timeframe. Some folks wanted all programs cut except for the one they had interest in; some wanted taxes increased, although many did not; and some felt we should have held out longer, while others believed a vote on the budget was long overdue. Throughout my years in the legislature I have never experienced such a long, deeply involved and engaging budget process, and I understand the frustrations and challenges many of you faced because of it. However, even though the timing of this budget did not meet its goal, I believe the substance did.

I expect we will utilize what we learned this year in an effort to execute future budgets more expeditiously to meet constitutional requirements. As we do, I look forward to hearing from all of you, and again, I thank you for communicating with me throughout this year's budget process.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Waugh".

Budget-Related Legislation

Aside from the primary spending bill, the final budget includes several pieces of legislation, which all must garner support in order to reach closure on the process. The 2009-2010 budget-related bills include the following:

- **House Bill 1416** – The General Fund appropriations bill details, line-by-line, the amount of money from the General Fund to be appropriated to each state-funded program.
- **House Bill 1531** – The Tax Reform Code bill provides for tax changes such as the cigarette tax increase, alterations to current business taxes, and the creation of a tax amnesty program for fiscal year 2009-2010.
- **House Bill 1614** – Known as the Fiscal Code bill, this piece of legislation

outlines fund transfers and other budget implementation language, including the development of an Independent Fiscal Office.*

To explore these and other pieces of legislation, go to: www.legis.state.pa.us and use the "Find Legislation" box in the upper right hand corner.

**The Senate originally passed Senate Bill 1, which would establish a Legislative Fiscal Office (LFO), a non-partisan agency with expertise in financial matters. The LFO would have access to the same agency and department financial information as the Governor's Budget Office, which will better provide for an open budget process. Many factors came into play during this year's budget negotiations, but for months the Governor was not forthcoming with revenue*

Interested in Certain Budget Line Items?

Check out the "Hot Topics" box on my website at www.senatorwaugh.com for links to documents outlining budget line items, as well as the estimated funding for each of Pennsylvania's school districts, including those in York County.

estimates and other state financial details, limiting the legislature's ability to thoroughly develop a balanced budget proposal in a timely fashion. In turn, language was amended into House Bill 1614 to establish such a non-partisan Independent Fiscal Office outside of the Governor's jurisdiction.

Stimulus Oversight Commission

Since the creation of Pennsylvania's Stimulus Oversight Commission in March of this year, I have served as the Senate Republican Caucus designee. The Commission is comprised of one representative from each of the four state legislative caucuses, a representative from each Congressional caucus, and designees for U.S. Senators Robert Casey and Arlen Specter, among others.

Considering the large sum of money that has been allocated to the Commonwealth under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Stimulus Oversight Commission was created and charged with providing oversight of Pennsylvania's approximate \$16 billion share of stimulus dollars.

As a member, it is my objective to ensure the proper use of these funds because while they have the potential

to assist the Commonwealth, as was the goal of the ARRA, the stimulus dollars will only prove beneficial if they are utilized in a fiscally responsible manner.

Be sure to visit my website or www.recovery.pa.gov for more specific details regarding the Commission and how stimulus dollars are being spent in York County.

ACORN Funding

Videotapes depicting improper behavior by Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) workers prompted me to call upon Stimulus Oversight Commission Chairman Ron Naples to determine whether or not any of Pennsylvania's stimulus dollars have been given to ACORN or its affiliated organizations. In response, Commissioner Naples declared that "no ARRA funds have flowed through the Commonwealth's agencies or departments to ACORN, nor are there any applications pending."

Similarly, I supported a call by my colleague Senator Jane Clare Orie in requesting Pennsylvania Auditor General Jack Wagner investigate the use of any state grant dollars by ACORN. It is my hope that these efforts will bring scrutiny to this and other organizations to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not being spent in support of improper or illegal activities.

Legislative Update

Since the beginning of the 2009-2010 legislative session, numerous pieces of legislation have been introduced and many have been passed. Below are a few bills of which I am the prime sponsor that may be of interest.

LEGISLATION I HAVE INTRODUCED:

Senate Bill 195 – Amends the Industrialized Housing Act to authorize the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to regulate and provide standards for modular buildings used for industrial and commercial purposes, as currently provided for manufactured residential housing; SB 195 was signed into law as Act 13 on July 6, 2009.

Senate Bill 605 – Amends the Pennsylvania Crimes Code to include bank robbery in the definition of "robbery" and to establish it as a second degree felony, regardless of whether or not a weapon was used during the act; SB 605 is currently before the House Appropriations

Committee, to which it was referred on August 6, 2009.

Senate Bill 674 – Allows school districts to establish a program in order to award high school diplomas to honorably discharged Vietnam veterans who were unable to graduate due to their military service; SB 674 is currently before the House Education Committee, to which it was referred on April 30, 2009.

Senate Bill 883 – Establishes the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Alert System, which would utilize PennDOT's electronic highway message boards to alert motorists of a perpetrator who has assaulted, wounded, or killed a law enforcement officer and has fled by vehicle. This will allow motorists to assist police in the apprehension of such individuals; SB 883 is currently before the Senate Appropriations Committee, to which it was referred on June 23, 2009.



York County resident and PKD survivor, Valen Cover, has been a champion and a voice for many PKD patients in PA and around the country.

Senate Resolution 138 – Designates September 2009 as Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD) Awareness Month in Pennsylvania; adopted in the Senate on June 30, 2009.

Senate Resolution 206 – Designates November 2009 as Hydrocephalus Awareness Month in Pennsylvania; adopted in the Senate on October 9, 2009.

LIHEAP Applications Being Accepted

Pennsylvania's **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program** (LIHEAP) has begun accepting applications from eligible individuals and families.

LIHEAP is a two-fold federally-funded program administered by the PA Department of Public Welfare (DPW) that provides assistance to low-income households for heating costs. The first part of LIHEAP is a cash grant program, and beginning January 4th, DPW will open the second part, a crisis grants program, which provides funding to resolve heating emergencies, such as furnace failures or unexpected fuel shortages.

Applicants for both programs must meet income and family size requirements. The income limit for a single-person household is \$16,245 and \$21,855 for a two-person household. For every additional person in the household, \$5,610 is added to the income limit. For example, for a three-person household the limit is \$27,465 and \$33,075 for a four-person household and so forth.

Applications are available online at www.compass.state.pa.us or at county assistance offices, local utility companies, and community service agencies, such as Area Agencies on Aging.

Get the 511 On Traffic

PennDOT has launched a new website, www.511pa.com, where travelers and commuters can access current traffic conditions throughout the state before hitting the road. For those of you without Internet access, simply dial 511 on your phone to get the same information.



Along with York County Commissioner Steve Chronister, State Senator Lloyd Smucker, and York County Commissioner Doug Hoke, I participated in the "Save Our Plant" Rally in support of keeping Harley-Davidson in York, PA.

Senate Accomplishments



HEALTH UPDATE

H1N1 Flu Website

In response to the increased concern surrounding the H1N1 virus – also known as swine flu – Pennsylvania's Department of Health launched a website for residents to access important information that can help reduce one's risk of becoming ill. The site, H1N1inPA.com, features an explanation of the H1N1 virus, information about the vaccine, how to care for sick family members, and links to other resources.

What is PKD?

Polycystic Kidney Disease is a life-threatening genetic disease that affects 24,500 Pennsylvanians. "Polycystic" translates to "many cysts," and individuals affected by the disease often need kidney dialysis, if not a transplant, seeing as there is no known cure for PKD. For more information visit the PKD Foundation's website at www.pkdcure.org.

What is Hydrocephalus?

Hydrocephalus is a neurological condition commonly referred to as "water on the brain," but it is much more serious than this common term may indicate. The condition affects one to two babies out of every 1,000 born, and more than 375,000 older Americans with hydrocephalus are often misdiagnosed with such conditions as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease.

HEALTHNET PA – Senate Republicans introduced a package of legislation to improve health care access in Pennsylvania through a legislative package entitled HealthNET PA. Two of the proposals have successfully been approved and signed into law:

Act 2 of 2009 – Creates a Mini-COBRA Small Employer Group Health Plan to extend continuation of insurance policies to former employees and their dependents who were employed by an organization with 2 to 19 employees. While House Bill 1089 was ultimately the vehicle for implementing this proposal, many Senators championed this measure for Pennsylvania's small employers by unanimously passing both HB 1089 and similar legislation, Senate Bill 442.

Act 4 of 2009 – Extends health insurance to eligible adult dependents up to the age of 30. This is to assist in addressing the issue that nearly half of all uninsured Pennsylvanians are age 18 to 34.

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING – A growing concern throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, texting while driving is the topic of many pieces of legislation including:

Senate Bill 143 - Would make it illegal for motorists to text while driving. The Senate approved SB 143 in July, and it is awaiting action in the House Transportation Committee, which approved a separate bill to ban texting, House Bill 2070, on November 10th.

OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST –

Senate Bill 304 – Would make permanent the "Do Not Call" list, eliminating the need for Pennsylvania consumers to re-register for the "Do Not Call" registry every five years. The bill is currently before the House Consumer Affairs Committee.

Senate Bill 736 – Would allow public school students with severe allergies to carry epinephrine medication, such as EpiPen auto-injectors, upon approval by the student's physician and parents. The bill is currently before the House Appropriations Committee.

Act 37 of 2009 – I was the number two co-sponsor of Senator Lisa Baker's Senate Bill 243, which will modernize, standardize and improve Pennsylvania's Emergency Medical Services Law to ensure high levels of patient care and greater public safety.



In June, I opened my re-located satellite office in Hanover with the help of our summer intern Maggie Stauffer, student-shadow Dan McLaughlin, and Hanover staff member Barb Metzler.



Rabbi Jeffrey Astrachan from Temple Beth Israel in York has served several times as the guest chaplain in the Senate by providing the opening prayer for session. Please contact me if you would like to recommend someone to serve as a guest chaplain.

Senate Leaders Introduce Rules of Ethical Conduct

In an effort to further reform state government, I have signed on to support a bi-partisan set of Senate Rules of Ethical Conduct.

Together, Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati, Senate Republican Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, and Senate Democratic Leader Robert Mellow have proposed such rules to ensure Senate members, their staff, and the public have a clear understanding of what conduct is and is not allowed within the Senate.

A few of these Senate Rules of Ethical Conduct include:

- No Senate employee may conduct any campaign activity on Senate work time.

- No campaign activity may be conducted in a Senate office or with Senate resources.
- Senate mailing lists and email lists may only be used for legislative purposes and cannot be sold or given to any other entity, including political campaigns.

While these are not new concepts, the goal is to formally implement longstanding practices of the Senate.

Leaders intend to conduct a public hearing to receive input on the proposed rules before they are considered by the full Senate. Be sure to watch for updates on this developing issue on my website.

Chesapeake Bay Commission

A treasure of the Eastern Seaboard, the Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary – a body of water in which fresh and salt water mix – in the United States. But due to many years of direct and indirect pollution, this important resource is slowly deteriorating. As a member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, this continues to concern me, and efforts to clean up the Bay are important for the future of the entire watershed, which includes York County. Recently, the Chesapeake Bay Program launched several online tools that can help you learn more about the Bay and its watershed and the effects our daily lives have on the Bay. Visit the Program's website at www.chesapeakebay.net.

E-Newsletter

In an effort to provide up-to-date information to residents electronically, I have launched a monthly e-newsletter. If you are interested in receiving my "E-News Update" or would prefer to receive future newsletters such as this one via email, please contact my York district office or visit my website and use the "Sign up for email updates" button on the homepage. Be sure to indicate your interest in no longer receiving paper newsletters, if you so desire.

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