



# THE THOMAS Report



**Serving the 181st Legislative District**

**FALL 2016**

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## Dear Neighbors,

My staff and I have been hard at work serving you in the district and at the state Capitol in Harrisburg.

My district staff has been organizing and leading neighborhood groups, East of Broad Communities That Care and West of Broad Communities That Care, to educate and empower residents. Recently, these groups have been focused on addressing violence, education and employment in the area.

In Harrisburg, I have been focused on a variety of issues that affect the quality of life in Philadelphia and around the state. As the Democratic chairman of the House Commerce Committee, I have evaluated and advocated for legislation that involves the banking and financial services industries. But I also have championed legislation to address the rising cost of higher education and improve the state's cybersecurity.

As always, if you would like to provide input on a legislative issue or need any assistance with state-related programs and/or services, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (215) 560-3261 or visit my office at 1415 N. Broad St., Suite 226A in Philadelphia. My staff and I are happy to help.

Sincerely,

W. Curtis Thomas  
State Representative  
181st Legislative District

## House adopts resolutions honoring two leaders from Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives recently adopted two condolence resolutions sponsored by Rep. W. Curtis Thomas, that honor the legacy of Willie L. Williams and Samuel Staten Sr.

Williams, who passed away in April, began his career in 1964 as a Fairmount Park guard but would go on to become the first African-American police commissioner of the Philadelphia and Los Angeles police departments.

As police commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department, Williams broke up open-air drug markets operating in the city, targeted residences that were being used to facilitate the drug trade and spoke out about the increased flood of illegal guns in the community.

Staten Sr., who also passed away in April, was a longtime leader of the Philadelphia Laborers union and renowned champion for local charities.

In 1970, after working as a construction laborer, Staten became a Local 332 field representative. In 1973, he was appointed assistant business manager, and in 1978 he was elected business manager, a position he held until 2008. He officially retired in 2010.

Staten, who is credited with raising millions of dollars for charity, was a mentor to many and an inspiration to leaders throughout Philadelphia.



*Members of the Philadelphia Delegation stand in support of Rep. Thomas as he shares remarks and expresses condolences for the loss of Willie L. Williams and Samuel Staten Sr.*

# Around the 181st District...



**1.** The Mayor's Office of Education cohosts a meeting with Rep. Thomas on the Community Schools Program. **2.** Rep. Thomas' Community Outreach representative and Dar Es Salaam. **3.** Rep. Thomas meets with Mr. Beckham of the East Poplar Community. **4.** Rep. Thomas hosts his 2nd Public Hearing on Violence at Jones Memorial Baptist Church. **5.** Rep. Thomas speaks at the weekly Communities That Care Meeting. **6. – 8.** Rep. Thomas and Superintendent Dr. William Hite visit Tanner Duckrey. **9.** Rep. Thomas visits Dobbins High School to discuss a pre-apprentice program. **10.** Mrs. Carol Smith assists a community organization. **11.** Rep. Thomas and his staffers attend the Grands As Parent luncheon. **12.** Rep. Thomas hosts a news conference dedicated to stemming a recent rash of gun violence. **13. & 14.** Rep. Thomas hosts a Public Hearing on Violence at the 12th & Cambria recreation center.

# Deadline for Property Tax/Rent Rebate Dec. 31

The deadline to apply to the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2015 is Dec. 31, 2016.

The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half of Social Security income and all Social Security cost-of-living increases are excluded, and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because they are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid each year. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2015 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

The application is available on the Department of Revenue's website at [www.revenue.pa.gov](http://www.revenue.pa.gov) or by visiting Rep. W. Curtis Thomas' office.

## Home heating assistance program



Local residents can apply for Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for this winter.

LIHEAP is a federally funded program that provides grants to eligible people and families to help cover the costs of heating bills. Assistance is available through cash

grants, which help with home heating bills, and crisis grants, which aid in emergency situations such as a broken furnace or lack of fuel.

Winter can be unpredictable, so all who could benefit are encouraged to apply early in the season. This program can help lower income families stay warm and also provide emergency funding in the event of a fuel shortage or a furnace issue.

Household income limits to qualify vary according to family size. Applications can be completed online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us). Rep. W. Curtis Thomas' constituent service staff can also assist in the filing process for this program, as well as other state programs.



*Rep. Thomas speaks out in the House chamber about issues facing the 181st Legislative District and Philadelphia.*

## Energy-saving tips for your home

With the days getting shorter and the nights getting colder, now is a good time for you to take the necessary steps to save electricity, natural gas and money this winter. By taking some of the following steps, you could potentially save 20 percent or more on your winter heating bills.



- Keep it sealed. A drafty house lets warm air escape and is much more costly to keep warm – especially during cooler weather. Use caulking around doors, windows and any openings for utility services. Locks on your windows can make them tighter and more resistant to drafts. Keep your fireplace damper closed when the fireplace is not in use.
- Upgrade your insulation. Insulating your home can significantly reduce your heating costs, while increasing the comfort of your home. Reducing air leaks – in floors, walls, ceilings, ducts, fireplaces, doors, windows and vents, and around plumbing – could cut 10 percent from an average household's monthly energy bill.
- Check ducts for air leaks. Look for joints that should be connected but have separated. Leaky ductwork can increase your utility bill significantly.
- Warm up your system. Service your heating system at the beginning of each heating season. A well-maintained system will last longer, operate more efficiently and save you money.
- Manage your thermostat. Keep thermostats set at a constant, comfortable level. You can save about 2 percent on your heating bill for every degree you lower your thermostat.
- Be prepared for cooler weather. Remove screens and air conditioners from windows and install storm windows.
- Shorter days and longer nights. Don't forget to adjust outdoor lighting timers as the nights grow longer. Take the time to replace older incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs.

# Learn to avoid telemarketing scams

Every day across the United States, fraudulent telephone scams are at work. Losses are estimated at \$40 billion a year and rising. Callers often target older Americans who have accumulated savings for retirement. How can you avoid being a victim of these scams?

- Ask for printed material through the mail that includes the company's name, address, phone and charity registration number or business registration number.
- Contact the Attorney General's Office to verify the information sent to you.
- Never send cash through the mail or give it to someone at your door.
- Never reveal your credit card number or bank account information over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Tell the person that you do not wish to be called again, and record the party calling and the date on a list by the phone. If he or she calls back, or if you have any doubts about the legitimacy of the call, contact the state Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Consumer Protection at 1-800-441-2555.
- Put your phone number on the state's Do-Not-Call list, 1-888-777-3406.

# Meet the Staff!

*If you need assistance with any state service, call or stop by Rep. Thomas' district office and his staff will be happy*



*to lend a hand. Pictured from left to right are **Susan Stanton**, legislative/administrative assistant; **Carol Smith**, legislative/constituent service assistant; **Sharon Stocker**, legislative/special events assistant; **Charlotte Greer-Brown**, legislative/community outreach assistant for west side of the district; and **Tanya Fowler**, legislative/community outreach assistant for the east side of the district.*



*Pictured to the right is **Dr. Mary Palmer**, executive/legislative assistant to Rep. Thomas.*

## My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Obtaining and completing state forms
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies

