



State Representative

# MARK LONGIETTI

**Capitol Office:**

127 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202007  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2007  
(717) 772-4035


**District Offices:**

2213 Shenango Valley Freeway  
Unit 2-E  
Hermitage, PA 16148  
(724) 981-4655

182 Main Street  
Greenville, PA 16125  
(724) 588-1005  
Tuesday & Thursday  
9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Email: [mlongietti@pahouse.net](mailto:mlongietti@pahouse.net)

Website: [www.pahouse.com/Longietti](http://www.pahouse.com/Longietti)

 [www.facebook.com/RepLongietti](https://www.facebook.com/RepLongietti)

## Budget process completed

In late June, a budget spending bill passed the legislature and became law. Although a revenue bill to help close a \$2.2 billion funding gap did not follow until late October, key funding continued to flow to avoid an interruption in governmental functions.

I supported the budget spending bill, as it included important investments in education, services for senior citizens, addressing the opioid and heroin crisis and reducing the waiting list for services to people with intellectual disabilities, while constraining spending in other areas.

I voted against the revenue bill because it relied heavily on borrowing \$1.5 billion instead of tapping sustainable revenue sources such as a reasonable severance tax on large natural gas drilling companies extracting resources from Pennsylvania.

Borrowing to cover operating expenses is not a sustainable strategy to balance budgets. At the same time, Pennsylvania remains the only significant natural gas drilling state without a severance tax on drillers, while other states, like neighboring Ohio and West Virginia, impose a severance tax that has not negatively affected production.

Specifically, the spending bill increases investments in early childhood education by \$30 million to extend high-quality pre-kindergarten to 3,360 children across Pennsylvania. In doing so, it takes a step in the right direction, although much more needs to be done to reach the almost 113,000 3- and 4-year-olds who currently lack access.

The budget also provides a modest \$100 million (1.7%) increase for K-12 education funding and a \$25 million (2.3%) increase for special education. Importantly, it avoids a \$50 million cut in student transportation that had been originally proposed, which would have hurt our rural schools and those that provide for busing. The budget also provides a 2 percent increase to state universities, as well as funding at previous year levels for state-related universities (Penn State, Pitt, Temple

and Lincoln), to preserve tuition breaks for in-state students.

The budget also addresses the needs of senior citizens and those with intellectual disabilities. Increased funding will allow 1,788 additional seniors to receive home and community-based services and avoid going into nursing homes. For individuals with intellectual disabilities, 1,000 people will be removed from the emergency waiting list and will now receive needed services.

Finally, an additional \$10 million is dedicated to addressing the opioid and heroin epidemic. This public health crisis has affected so many families across all economic and demographic categories. It is important that we provide hope through treatment strategies while interdicting those who illegally sell and distribute these dangerous drugs.



*This summer, I was recognized by Democratic Leader Frank Dermody for 11 years of perfect attendance during voting session. It's an achievement that I value because you sent me to Harrisburg to be your voice and I take my responsibility seriously.*

# Area school districts benefit from state grants



Two 21st Century Learning Centers grants that I supported will provide afterschool learning opportunities for students from Farrell and Sharon school districts and from Greenville, Hermitage, Reynolds, Sharpville, West Middlesex, Mercer and Commodore Perry school districts, as well as Keystone Education Center.

A program operated by the Sharon and Farrell school districts will receive just under \$1.5 million over three years, while a program organized by the United Way of Mercer County will receive \$1.15 million over three years and serve students in the remaining school districts and Keystone Education Center.

The Sharon/Farrell program will include a concentration on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) while the United Way program will target reading, math and science. Both programs will include tutorial instruction to help students meet challenging academic standards in core subjects.

Additionally, arts education, programs that support a healthy lifestyle and literacy education programs, including financial literacy, may be provided. The United Way program will serve middle school students, while the Farrell/Sharon program is not as age specific, giving the districts more flexibility in determining which students qualify for the extra programming.

Overall, the grant program is designed to reach students attending high-poverty and low-performing schools and help boost achievement. Educational opportunities must occur during non-school hours or during periods when school is not in session. A broad array of activities that complement the regular academic program and that offer literacy and other educational services to families may be provided. Certainly, these learning center grants will bring a big boost to our area school children.

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## New building dedicated for business

I was pleased to participate in the recent dedication of a new building designed to be the home of a future high-tech business in our community. The CHIP Building, on the LindenPointe Innovative Business Campus in Hermitage, is now available for sale or lease for single tenant or multi-tenant



occupancy. A \$1.8 million state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) grant, which I assisted in securing, along with some private capital, financed construction of this building. The City of Hermitage, Penn Northwest Development Corp., and Community Hope Investment Partners (CHIP), a group of local, private investors, helped plan the project. CHIP is responsible for marketing the building and has pledged to use proceeds from a sale or lease to finance a future building to attract additional businesses to our community.

The CHIP Building offers 12,700 square feet of flexible space, which means that it is suitable for a variety of businesses. It is also expandable to 20,000 square feet to accommodate future growth. Local economic development professionals encouraged the project, since many high-tech companies are looking for available, ready-made buildings and are not willing to wait for a build-to-suit project to be completed. The 115-acre LindenPointe Innovative Business Campus is an ideal location given its proximity to the interstate highway system and the access to its Training and Workforce Development Center and the eCenter@LindenPointe, also located on

the campus, as well as careful zoning and development covenants to protect property values. It is my hope that this project will soon translate into additional, good-paying jobs for our community.



*I was recently named a Pre-K Champion by Pre-K for PA, a nonpartisan coalition lobbying for increased attention and funding for early childhood education, for my work in making early education a priority. Because it pays dividends down the road, it's an investment we must make.*

## **\$320,000 grant for Greenville water treatment system**

The Greenville Borough Municipal Authority received a \$320,000 state grant to update the control system at the Greenville water treatment plant.

The grant will help fund a \$387,800 project to improve communication from the West End and East End tanks and the booster pump station to the water treatment plant to prevent costly overflows and the drainage of tanks.

The current system relies on telephone landlines to monitor water levels in the storage tanks and has experienced failures from various causes, including tree limbs falling on the lines. The new system will ensure more reliable communication from the main control building and will provide real-time data on system water levels.

These upgrades are way overdue. Controlling the proper water levels can reduce system failures and overflows. This upgrade is a solid step forward for Greenville's infrastructure and I was happy to help bring this grant to Greenville and its residents.

## **Longietti bill to update Estate Code signed into law**

There's a new law on the books to make it easier for surviving relatives to receive a decedent's final paycheck. The bill I introduced recently was signed by the governor after receiving unanimous House approval.

This provision hasn't been updated in 21 years, so this legislation was badly needed to help family members receive what is rightfully theirs in a timely manner. This money could help pay funeral costs or hospital bills, and any delay makes a difficult time even worse.

Previously, any payout of wages and accumulated sick and vacation days over \$5,000 had to go through probate proceedings in the Court of Common Pleas and the check made payable to the estate of the deceased employee. The new law increases the amount an employer may pay directly to a surviving relative for a deceased family member's final paycheck from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

I want to thank William J. Moder III, a local attorney, for bringing this issue to my attention. More and more people were finding themselves having to get the courts involved, just because that last paycheck was larger than normal due to unused sick and vacation days. It's only right to ensure the money is delivered in a timely, commonsense fashion.

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## **\$3 million grant comes to Sharon brownfield**

At its peak, the former Westinghouse Plant was thriving, employing nearly 10,000 people, including my father and many in the local community. A portion of it had been vacant for 30 years before being remediated and getting a new lease on life, thanks to a \$3 million Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant that I helped to obtain for Winner Development LLC.

Covering 58 acres in Sharon, the plan for the grant was to adapt a portion of the facility into a multi-tenant space for research and development, a functional art business and manufacturing and warehousing areas.

The facility is now known as The Landing and already has several tenants.

It makes me very proud to think that if the economic conditions develop correctly, as I believe they will, we could see a significant level of permanent jobs created at this currently underutilized site.



*I was able to help the Hickory Hornets football team celebrate their 2016 winning season as PIAA District 10 champions.*

# Local steel plant receives state funding

It was my pleasure last year to announce a \$1 million Multimodal Transportation Program grant for NLMK Pennsylvania to upgrade its Farrell rail operation and help retain more than 700 jobs. The facility is the former Sharon Steel plant.

The grant will permit rehabilitation of 8,300 feet of track, crossties and ballast and improve grade crossings in its 13-mile rail network at the plant. The company also will replace locomotives and install and modify loading docks.

This will allow NLMK to move a sufficient amount of product to remain competitive, thereby helping to retain over 700 well-paying jobs in our community. I am pleased to have played a role in securing this funding which will help preserve these important jobs.

The scrap salvage company makes metal casing for Whirlpool, Frigidaire and other products for appliance companies.



*It was my privilege to recognize with a House citation the West Middlesex Girls Basketball District 10 Champions this spring. It was their second District 10 title in a row. Congratulations Lady Reds!*



*It's always a pleasure to meet with my constituents, but it's even more enjoyable to celebrate milestones with them, like Helen Brockman's 100th birthday.*



*Reading is one of life's pleasures, so I was thrilled to share that enjoyment with students from Farrell Elementary School earlier this year.*



*Eagle Scouts are a small group; only about 5 percent of all Boy Scouts earn the rank, so it was with pleasure that I congratulated Russell Shea of Sharpsville for earning the rank of Eagle Scout. Also pictured are his parents, William and Rachelle Shea.*



*The Farrell Steelers football team celebrated its 2016 District 10, Class A championship win, and I had the pleasure of congratulating them on their success.*

*The Sharon Tiger Techs spend their time after school completing real-world engineering challenges with Lego-based robots, and they were rewarded. They competed against 80 teams and received second place for Strategy and Innovation at the First Lego League North American Robotics Tournament in Legoland, Calif.*



## New council provides help in combatting rare diseases



A bill I sponsored created the Rare Disease Advisory Council when Gov. Tom Wolf signed the bill into law. The goal is to help the 1.2 million Pennsylvanians suffering from a rare disease.

It's startling to hear about the thousands of rare diseases that are out there that many don't even know about and go untreated. This council is designed to help improve the lives of those suffering from a rare disease, which, in the end, is the most important feature.

The Rare Disease Council will act as a partnership between patients and their families, medical providers, insurance groups and other agencies to support the needs of those dealing with these illnesses. In addition to health care professionals and industry and scientific representatives,

the council will include both individuals suffering from a rare disease and parents of children with a rare disease.

The council will be tasked with:

- Researching and determining the most appropriate method to collect rare disease data
- Identifying priorities relating to quality and cost effectiveness of access to treatment and other services
- Developing policy recommendations
- Creating strategies to raise public awareness
- Preparing and delivering a preliminary and comprehensive report of its findings.



**State Rep. Mark Longietti**  
P.O. Box 202007  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2007

lpo.kaf.1117

## What my office can do for you:

**Below are some of the ways in which my office may be of help to you. Please don't hesitate to contact me with your comments, questions or problems.**

- Handicap plate/placard applications, car registrations, special tags, driver's license applications.
- Free assistance completing Property Tax/Rent Rebate forms.
- PACE prescription drug cards for seniors.
- Birth certificate applications.
- Utility issues/complaints with the PUC.
- Attorney General consumer complaints.
- Turnpike toll issues.
- Unemployment compensation problems.
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies.
- Pennsylvania income tax problems.
- State lottery problems or questions.
- PennDOT issues.
- Issues with the Department of Human Services (SNAP, Cash/Medical assistance, LIHEAP, etc.).
- Information on financial assistance for higher education.
- Literature including copies of bills, regulations or statutes, Pennsylvania maps, hunting and fishing information, senior citizen programs, veterans programs, Pennsylvania history, including activities and coloring books for children.
- House of Representatives citations for outstanding accomplishments and milestone birthdays and anniversaries.
- State Capitol tours for individuals or groups.

**Any issue with state  
government!**