



Winter
2024

LIZ HANBIDGE

PA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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Dear Friends,

I hope the new year has found you and yours well! I'm writing to provide an update on the bills I have been working on this session, as well as an overview of some of the legislation currently in the House and Senate. I'm very grateful that governing in the majority has given me a better opportunity to introduce and pass legislation that I believe will move Pennsylvania forward and better serve the needs of our communities!

Many bills that have been languishing for years without committee votes have passed the House and now await a vote in the Senate, such as requiring background checks for the purchase of "long guns" (like AR-15s) and Red Flag laws to temporarily disarm people at risk of harming themselves or others, safe staffing ratios for hospital workers, protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, raising the minimum wage, reforming the criminal justice system, lowering the Corporate Net Income Tax for businesses, and closing the Delaware loophole. Over 200 bills have passed the House and now await a vote in the Senate.

This year's budgeting process was a piecemeal endeavor. The General Appropriations budget bill was weeks late, and tensions between the House and Senate meant that the code bills which permit for the spending of some of the allocated funds took months to finalize. While it took too long to accomplish, the results are a negotiated product that prioritizes Pennsylvanians. We have a budget that invests critical education funding, helps keep seniors in their homes, makes investments in public safety, healthcare access, access to justice, and expanded the Dependent and Child Care Tax Credit and makes childcare more affordable. The budget also made a historic transfer of \$900 million into the Rainy Day Fund. The recently finalized School Code bill released funding for libraries, community colleges, and environmental remediation for schools.

This past year has also been a busy one in the district. My office hosted over six senior fraud prevention events, two blood drives, four town hall and open house events, a dog licensing event, a shredding event, two electronics recycling events, a mammogram bus, a license plate restoration event, a family resource fair, a special education information resource panel, and many visits to local schools. My staff and I have attended seven community festivals and hosted more than 70 mobile offices in the district. We have another busy year ahead with several events on the horizon this spring. See my upcoming events section to see what is approaching!

I continue to write weekly emails regarding legislation, policy issues, and local issues to keep everyone up to date. To sign up for my weekly updates, please visit pahouse.com/hanbidge/emailsignup! Please continue to communicate with me regarding what's most important to you; sharing your ideas, concerns and needs allows me to better serve our community!

Sincerely,



LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

Pelvic Exams Without Consent: HB 507

Until Act 31, medical students could perform pelvic, rectal, and prostate exams on unconscious patients, as a learning exercise, in the absence of an emergency or as part of a scope of treatment, without first obtaining consent to do such an exam. Act 31 ensures that no one going under general anesthesia could be used as a teaching tool for such exams without their explicit consent. While most teaching hospitals in our region have prohibited this practice in recent years, the practice existed in the commonwealth and is now prohibited. Representative Elizabeth Fiedler (D-Phila) and I have been championing this legislation for the past four years and I'm very happy it's now law.

Expansion of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program (PTRR)

Act 7 of 2023 substantially changes the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program (PTRR) and is the first update to this law since 2006. PTRR helps seniors stay in their homes. Act 7 extends the reach of the PTRR Program, making 175,000 more Pennsylvanians eligible to receive a rebate by raising the income cap to \$45,000. The maximum standard rebate amount has also been increased from \$650 to \$1,000, meaning that eligible applicants can receive a larger rebate to help offset their property taxes or rental expenses. Going forward, the income caps will be adjusted based on the cost of living. This ensures that those who qualify for a rebate won't lose their eligibility in the future due to inflation or other economic factors.

Protecting Seniors: HB 1760 - Awaiting a Senate Vote

I worked with Rep. Paul Schemel (R-Franklin) to protect older Pennsylvanians by sponsoring a bill to add elder abuse to our Slayer Statute. Historically, Slayer Statutes prevent individuals from profiting off the willful and unlawful killing of another with the intent to collect any benefit or acquire property as the result of the death of the decedent. This is a "legalese" way of saying "you can't inherit money or property from someone you've murdered."

House Bill 1760 aims to expand Pennsylvania's Slayer Statute by prohibiting convicted elder abusers from automatically benefiting from the estate of someone they've abused. No one should benefit after abusing the seniors in his or her life. To ensure seniors retain full power over their testamentary decision-making, the bill includes language to allow for such inheritance, post-conviction, if the abused person and their abuser reconcile. HB 1760 passed the House unanimously and now sits in the Senate.

Menopause Education: HB 807 - Awaiting a Senate Vote

My House Bill 807 also passed the House and awaits a vote in the Senate. The bill would create partnerships between the Department of Health and medical providers to improve information access for women about menopause. Studies have shown that a third of women feel substantially under-educated about menopause and perimenopause, which can impact their ability to obtain care to reduce symptoms. According to the Mayo Clinic, the annual cost of lost workdays in the U.S. related to menopause symptoms is \$1.8 billion, and the annual medical costs associated with menopause symptoms are \$26.6 billion. Empowering women to have a better understanding of menopause can help them better communicate their needs to medical professionals and their loved ones, can help destigmatize this natural process, and has the potential to significantly impact our economy.

Anti-SLAPP Legislation: HB 1466 - Awaiting a Senate Vote

A group of colleagues and I introduced legislation intended to stop baseless lawsuits intended to stop free speech. House Bill 1466 addresses Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, or SLAPPs, lawsuits filed against a person or organization for statements made or positions taken in connection with a matter of public interest or regulation. They're often rooted in various and wide-ranging legal theories with the intent to intimidate the party bringing the action into dropping an otherwise merit-based lawsuit. SLAPPs are essentially the bully of lawsuits and intended to quash free speech.

The legislation would create a process to quickly dismiss SLAPP lawsuits based upon protected speech through a motion to dismiss. HB 1466 passed the House unanimously and awaits a vote in the Senate.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AWAITS A SENATE VOTE

Universal Background Checks: HB 714 - Awaiting a Senate Vote

House Bill 714 would require background checks for all gun sales, excluding firearm transfers between family members. Under current law, if you want to sell a handgun in Pennsylvania you have to go to a licensed firearms dealer who will do a background check and facilitate the transfer. However, due to the current “long gun” exemption, if you want to buy an AR-15, no background check is required for private sales. HB 714 would create universal background checks for all gun sales in the commonwealth to help ensure that firearms are not being acquired by those legally prohibited from owning them. The bill passed the House 109-92 and now awaits a vote in the Senate.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders - Awaiting a Senate Vote

HB 1018, which passed the House 102-99, would create a process for temporarily disarming individuals at substantial risk of harming themselves or others. The bill would create Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs). ERPOs are designed to temporarily prevent individuals considered to be at a substantial risk of causing harm to themselves or others from possessing firearms. After a temporary ERPO is granted, a full expedited hearing in front of a judge could extend that order to disarm at-risk individuals for up to one year. By allowing for the issuance of an ERPO with due process safeguards, the bill aims to balance public safety with individual rights and protections. ERPOs have been enacted in 21 states and have been shown to reduce deaths from suicide and to have prevented mass shootings.

BILLS INTRODUCED

Making Childcare Affordable: HB 1958

The average cost of childcare in Pennsylvania was between \$9,000 to \$13,000 in 2023, costing over 15 percent of the median family’s annual income per child. To be considered affordable, childcare should not cost more than 7% of a family’s annual income. Each year, our state loses \$3.47 billion in earnings, productivity, and taxes because families can’t access childcare.

This legislation is designed to incentivize employers to help fund childcare for their employees through a state tax credit program for participating employers. By collaborating with businesses, we can make quality childcare more accessible and affordable for working families. This, in turn, will have a significant positive impact on our local economy.

Access to affordable childcare is not just a matter of family well-being; it is also critical for our state’s economic vitality. Without affordable childcare, our workforce is at risk, leading to a decrease in tax revenue and stilted economic growth. Lack of childcare access affects employee productivity, and each employee lost due to a lack of childcare costs companies money, on average, 33% of that worker’s total annual compensation.

Stopping Predatory Sales: Amending Act 12 of 2016

A group of colleagues and I have introduced a package of legislation to significantly amend Act 12 of 2016. Act 12, originally intended to allow distressed municipalities to sell municipal authorities, has, in some cases, created a somewhat predatory process which allows municipalities to sell assets for substantially more than they’re worth to cover up failed fiscal leadership. Taxpayers, often told they won’t see any increased taxes, end up paying significantly higher rates for things like water or sewer to cover the cost of significantly inflated purchase prices and dividends to the purchaser’s investors. Beyond the permanent loss of a municipal asset, the ramifications of such sales are drastically increased rates, loss of local autonomy over the utility, poor customer service, and a frustrating lack of system upgrades. The package of bills would impose new notification requirements on both buyers and sellers following the formal inception of a sale, extend the time the Pennsylvania Utility Commission has to evaluate such sales, spread out increased costs more gradually, limit the sale amount on acquisitions of healthy systems, and by capping sale amounts better reflect systems’ actual values.

House Bill 2025

I am introducing legislation to bring Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library to Pennsylvania, extending its benefits to approximately 700,000 children with an annual investment of \$13 per child. The program, which has already reached nearly 3 million children nationwide, has demonstrated remarkable outcomes. Children participating in the Imagination Library show increased readiness for kindergarten and maintain higher reading achievement scores through 9th grade compared to their non-participating peers. I am so proud to introduce this legislation to get books into the hands of all Pennsylvania children from birth to age 5.



Delivering remarks in Harrisburg for the Animal Protection Caucus.



With my fellow colleagues in the Latino Caucus.



Loving office visits by our furry friends.



Our last electronics recycling event.



Left to Right: Senator Maria Collett, Rep. Joe Hohenstein, me, Rep. Melissa Cerrato, and Rep. Ben Sanchez at the 2023 Family Resource Trunk or Treat!



Rep. Cerrato and I presenting a citation commemorating Wissahickon Library's 100 years of service to the community.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to my office's Thanksgiving Donation Drive!



Several constituents joined me in Harrisburg for a ceremony recognizing H.R. 256 – which deemed November 2023 Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Remembrance Month in Pennsylvania.



Writing cards to veterans during the holiday season.



Attending the hearing on modifying Act 12 of 2016.



Giving remarks in the Judiciary Committee Hearing on HB 1888.



Rep. Melissa Cerrato and me on a tour of the North Montco Technical Career Center.



Watching votes being counted in the House on HB 507.



Me and my dogs, Lucy and Kaida, on National Dogs in Politics Day.



Joining Officer Gallagher and Whitpain Township Supervisor Joyce Keller in placing wreaths on the graves of fallen heroes, for Wreaths Across America Day.



Rep. Elizabeth Fiedler and me in the House chamber celebrating the passage of HB 507.



Delivering remarks on HB 974, which would update the Right-To-Know Law to create a specific exemption covering disability accommodations.



Thanking those who protect and serve... even the four legged ones!

MY OFFICE IS HERE TO HELP YOU WITH ANY STATE GOVERNMENT-RELATED ISSUE YOU MIGHT HAVE SUCH AS:

- Driver & vehicle services renewals (Department of Transportation)
- Disability plate & placard applications (Department of Transportation)
- Unemployment compensation (Department of Labor & Industry)
- Applications for birth/death certificates (Division of Vital Records)
- Providing property tax/rent rebate and other tax forms (Department of Revenue)
- SEPTA Key Card applications
- SNAP, LIHEAP, etc. (Department of Human Services)
- Free Notary Services (for nonpolitical documents)

Please do not hesitate to contact my District Office if you have any questions and/or issues at (610) 277-3230.

BENEFICIAL PROGRAMS



Unclaimed Property

The Pennsylvania Treasury is required to hold various financial assets, until the rightful owner is located. This results in hundreds of millions of dollars in unclaimed property every year, often because of something as simple as a misspelled name or an out-of-date address. Search using the QR code to the left or the link below to see if you have unclaimed funds!

Search www.patreasury.gov or call my office for assistance at (610) 277-3230.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program (PTRR) – State & Local

Since 1971, the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has provided more than \$7.1 billion in property tax and rent relief. The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians aged 65 or older; widows and widowers aged 50 or older; and people with disabilities aged 18 or older. The income limit is \$45,000 for homeowners and renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded.

My office can assist you in completing your 2023 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Application. The deadline to apply is June 30. Please call my office at (610) 277-3230 to schedule an appointment.

Additionally, both the North Penn and Wissahickon School Districts have developed their own rebate program to assist seniors and those who are permanently disabled. Applicants must qualify for the state rebate program to be eligible for the school district program.

SEPTA Senior Key Card

Our office is proud to continue our partnership with SEPTA to help constituents gain local access to SEPTA Key Cards! This card is provided to residents aged 65 or older and offers free rides on all SEPTA transit routes including buses, trolleys, subway, and regional rail. Additionally, seniors who wish to take SEPTA to Delaware or New Jersey will receive a 50% discount on fares when they tap their Key Senior Card.

We can assist in your application for an initial SEPTA Key Senior Photo Card. Please call our office to schedule your appointment. The process normally only takes about five to ten minutes, and you are required to bring a government-issued ID that lists your birthdate (like a driver's license or photo ID). The current time for SEPTA to process your application and send your Key Card is four to six weeks. Unfortunately, the site will not allow us to create a duplicate Key Card. In order to receive a replacement for a lost/stolen card, please call SEPTA at (855) 567-3782.

We have had many calls regarding the renewal of expiring Key Cards. My office can assist you in renewing your expired or soon-to-be expired card. Please call (610) 277-3230, and we will assist you in getting a new card issued to you in the mail!



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lpo.kw.0224

UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY 23
9 A.M.

MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY SCREENING
Our District Office | 1098 Skippack Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422

MARCH 1
10 A.M. - 2 P.M.

SCAM PREVENTION BINGO WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BANKING
Spring House Estates | 728 Norristown Road, Lower Gwynedd, PA 19002

MARCH 2
11 A.M. - 2 P.M.

IEP FORUM: STUDENT TRANSITIONING
Temple University Ambler | 580 Meetinghouse Road, Ambler, PA 19002

MARCH 15
12 P.M. - 5 P.M.

BLOOD DRIVE
Christ United Methodist Church | 1020 S. Valley Forge Rd., Lansdale, Towamencin Township, PA 19446

MARCH 16
11 A.M. - 2 P.M.

LICENSE PLATE RESTORATION EVENT WITH SENATOR MARIA COLLETT
Lower Gwynedd Police Department | 1130 N. Bethlehem Pike, Spring House, PA 19477

APRIL 6
9 A.M. - 11 A.M.

SCAM PREVENTION BINGO WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF BANKING
Montgomery County Community College | 340 Dekalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422