



# State Representative JORDAN HARRIS

Representing the 186th Legislative District



www.RepJordanHarris.com • /RepJordanHarris • @RepHarris • @RepHarris

Dear Neighbor,

The past 6 months have not been easy. Our way of life was disrupted in a way none of us have seen before, and we're still working to recover and adjust to our new normal. Hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians have been negatively impacted by the novel coronavirus COVID-19 and the social unrest we've witnessed starting with the murder of George Floyd has further put a spotlight on the injustice far too many of us still face daily.

I've continued to work in Harrisburg since the pandemic started to not only ensure Pennsylvanians remain safe, but to begin to address the radical inequality Black and Brown communities are facing. I'm proud of the work we've accomplished with Governor Tom Wolf to slowly and safely reopen Pennsylvania as well as taking the first real steps to reform law enforcement and increase transparency and accountability. But make no mistake – our work is far from over on both fronts. The virus continues to exist in our community and the police reforms we've signed into law are simply the first deposit in the bank of justice. There is much more work to do.

In this newsletter you'll find updates on police reform, criminal justice reform and help that's available to you to deal with COVID-19. Please take a moment to also complete a brief survey I've created to help me know your thoughts on these issues. You can take that survey by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this page or by visiting <https://bit.ly/2Q2IUlt> on your phone or computer. It's imperative to properly representing you and our community to make sure I'm taking your voices with me to Harrisburg. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office for any assistance we may be able to offer. We're here to serve you.

With kind regards, I am:

State Rep. Jordan A. Harris  
House Democratic Whip  
186<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



# First Police Reforms Become Law

In July, Governor Wolf officially made the first part of our police reform package a reality by signing two bills into law. First, House Bill 1841 will ensure that records of police misconduct follow officers as they try to move from department to department.

Allowing officers with a history of bad behavior to simply jump from department to department without those departments knowing of their misconduct erodes the public trust and simply shuffles bad officers around the state. Now, there will be a statewide database that departments can check to see if an officer has a history of misconduct prior to hiring them. If they still choose to hire that officer, they must file a report acknowledging they're aware of this bad history and giving reasons they're choosing to overlook it.

Second, House Bill 1910 will mandate increased training on how to deal with people of different socioeconomic and racial background, increased training on how to recognize and deal with child abuse, and PTSD evaluations whenever an officer is involved in a deadly use-of-force incident. We want law enforcement to understand how to better interact with the communities they're supposed to protect as well as ensure their mental health is taken care of.

Trust me when I say this is only a start. There is much more work to be done to ensure that we bring accountability and transparency to policing and most important, protect Black and Brown communities that have felt the heavy hand of police misconduct for far too long. Our future work involves creating a statewide public use-of-force policy to ensure that law enforcement is trained in a universal way to properly respond to incidents and apply the same guidelines statewide.

We also must reform how police unions negotiate contracts to make it more transparent and allow for public input as



well as rethink what's called binding arbitration. Binding arbitration allows for a way to resolve disputes, commonly used when a law enforcement officer is accused of misconduct. Unfortunately, binding arbitration makes it very difficult to fire police officers who commit bad deeds while on duty. This keeps officers who break the public trust at work without repercussions. This is unacceptable and changing it is a priority for the Police Reform Working Group.

I'll keep you updated as we make progress on these issues vitally important to our community.

## New Law Increases Job Access

I'm proud to let you know that legislation I cosponsored with Rep. Sheryl DeLozier that will increase access to professional licenses for those with a criminal record was signed into law this summer. This bipartisan law will remove outdated barriers that have prevented those with a criminal record from starting a job. Previously, while incarcerated, many individuals train to become barbers, hair stylists or beauticians, only to be released and find they're unable to get a license to practice their trade. Thankfully, this will no longer be the case.

This new law is about jobs and allowing people to start a new career and support themselves and their families. Someone who made a mistake in the past that has nothing to do with the profession they're looking to enter should not be barred from bettering themselves and becoming gainfully employed. I appreciate that this bill had strong bipartisan support and I look forward to further improving opportunities for those who are looking for a fresh start.

# New Group Formed to Tackle Police Reform

Following the murder of George Floyd, I joined legislators and advocates at the state and local level from across Pennsylvania to form the Police Reform Working Group. Our goal is to increase accountability and transparency in law enforcement through collaboration across different levels of government. We began our journey with a press conference at the Octavius Catto statue outside city hall and have since held several more meetings and virtual town halls to hear what the public thinks about the need for police reform. The members of the group are:

House Democratic Whip Jordan Harris

House Democratic Chairwoman Joanna McClinton

House Philadelphia Delegation Chairman Jason Dawkins

Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Chairman Stephen Kinsey

State Rep. Donna Bullock

State Rep. Danilo Burgos

State Rep. Morgan Cephas

State Rep. Austin Davis

State Rep. Ed Gainey

State Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta

State Rep. Summer Lee

State Rep. Chris Rabb

State Rep. Jake Wheatley

Philadelphia Councilmember Kendra Brooks

Philadelphia Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson

Philadelphia Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson

Philadelphia Councilmember Isaiah Thomas

Keir Bradford-Grey, Chief Defender of the Defender Association of Philadelphia

Attorney Kevin Harden Jr.

Attorney Kevin Mincey, Mincey Fitzpatrick Ross, LLC



## PHLConnectED to help students learn virtually

In August, Philadelphia announced a new partnership to help ensure all K-12 public school students have access to learn virtually this fall. This new program, PHLConnectED, will help connect up to 35,000 K-12 student households with internet service at no cost through Comcast's Internet Essentials program. PHLConnectED will also provide students who lack a device to access the internet with a laptop or tablet. There will also be digital training available for those who don't know how to use these devices.

This program aims to help our neediest students continue their education uninterrupted. The school district plans to gather data to identify eligible households, specifically prioritizing families without internet access or those who are homeless or housing-insecure. We must ensure that amid this pandemic that has disrupted our lives, we do all we can to not disrupt our children's education. We're entering a "new normal" for the start of this school year and educational equity is necessary to keep our students from falling behind.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications now available

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate program is open and now accepting applications, and my office is available by appointment to help you fill out your paperwork. This program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities. The income limit is \$35,000 per year for homeowners and \$15,000 per year for renters. Half of Social Security income is excluded, and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Please keep in mind that thanks to a new law, the Department of Revenue has started distributing rebates earlier this year. The sooner you file, the sooner you can receive your rebate. Applications are due by Dec. 31, 2020, but there's no need to wait. Contact my office at 215-952-3378 to schedule your time to fill out the paperwork.

Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2019 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

# Don't forget to fill out your 2020 Census

If you haven't yet filled out your 2020 Census, don't wait any longer. You only have until the last day of September to ensure that you're counted in our community. Visit [www.2020Census.gov](http://www.2020Census.gov) to complete yours.

Filling out the Census is essential to ensuring proper representation in both Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. If you're not counted, our community will lose out on funding for health care, education, and so many more things that make our communities great. In fact, it's estimated that every person who isn't properly counted equals \$2,000 leaving our community. Do your part to ensure that doesn't happen by filling out the Census today.

## Legislature Passes Temporary Budget

Earlier this year, the state Legislature passed a temporary budget lasting until the end of November to guide our state through the onset of the pandemic. Signed into law by Gov. Wolf, this stopgap budget fully funds education for an entire year so our schools can properly plan their expenses and keep our children learning. We don't yet have a full picture of what Pennsylvania's finances will be, but the hit our economy has taken from COVID-19 is severe. Our hope in passing this partial budget is that by November we'll have a better idea of just how severe our funding shortfall will be. There's also hope of federal help for states across the nation as we all grapple with the damage the pandemic continues to do.

The current budget does include federal CARES Act funding to help some of our most vulnerable residents and provide worker protections for essential employees. From the \$2.6 billion CARES Act funding, money has been specifically earmarked for certain areas, including:

- **\$632 million for vulnerable populations, such as long-term care centers and nursing homes.**
- **\$150 million for essential employee protections.**
- **\$347 million for schools.**
- **\$870 million for businesses and local services relief.**
- **\$30 million for health care initiatives.**
- **\$225 million for food and shelter resources.**

The legislature will have to work with the governor's office to complete the budget for the remainder of the fiscal year this fall. Make no mistake, tough choices will have to be made. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we can revive our economy, but we can't revive lost lives. I'll continue to fight to protect the services we rely on and ensure priority is placed on our education system, health care system and those Pennsylvanians who need help the most.

# Are You Ready to Vote in 2020?

**ARE YOU  
READY TO VOTE  
IN 2020?**

**VotesPA.com** 

#ReadyToVotePA

#VotesPA

#TrustedInfo2020

Most Pennsylvania voters know that our upcoming General Election on Nov. 3 will help select elected officials from the federal level down to the local level. What you may not know is that there are big changes to our election laws that will make your voting experience different this year. Here's what you need to know to be an informed and prepared voter in 2020.

Some important changes to Pennsylvania election laws were passed in 2019. These changes include:

- **Extended deadlines for voter registration.**
- **A new option to vote by mail-in ballot.**
- **An end to straight-party voting.**
- **Extended deadlines to return your mail-in ballot.**

If you are a registered voter in Pennsylvania, you have a new option to vote by mail-in ballot. This is a great option for voters who prefer the convenience of voting at home. You do not have to provide a reason for requesting a mail-in ballot.

For more information, please visit [www.VotesPA.com/ReadyToVote](http://www.VotesPA.com/ReadyToVote).

## Important Election Dates

Please take note of these important dates for the upcoming 2020 General Election:

- **October 19:** Last day to register for the Nov. 3 General Election
- **October 27:** Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot
- **November 3:** Mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by the county by 8 p.m.
- **November 3:** General Election day. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

# Unemployment Compensation/Pandemic

## Unemployment Compensation Help is Available

This pandemic has left millions of Pennsylvanians struggling through no fault of their own due to lost or reduced employment. Our state's Unemployment Compensation (UC) system has been overwhelmed with claims. Since March 15, 2020, there have been over 2 million new UC claims and over \$4 billion in payments issued. These are numbers unheard of for our UC system.

To help cover more Americans, the federal government created a new program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). PUA is meant to help those who don't normally qualify for regular UC, such as barbers, gig workers and self-employed individuals. In addition to the over 2 million UC claims, there have been over 1.7 million PUA applications submitted since the program started

accepting them on April 18. This adds up to over 25% of Pennsylvanians needing some form of unemployment benefits.

Unfortunately, due to the tremendous increase in requests, the UC and PUA systems have been swamped with applications. While most Pennsylvanians have started receiving payments, some are still waiting. PLEASE KNOW THAT MY OFFICE CAN HELP. If you're having trouble with the UC or PUA system, please contact us at 215-952-3378. My staff and I are here to serve you and we've already helped countless neighbors work through the issues and get their payments. Don't wait any longer and call us today for assistance.

## COVID-19 Resources

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): <https://bit.ly/3a2tXJn>

Summer Food Service Program: <https://bit.ly/30xG2mC>

Local Food resources: <https://bit.ly/3ijClqH>

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): <https://bit.ly/2ERof1q>

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): <https://bit.ly/2Pwa3x2>

PA Career Link: <https://bit.ly/2Di4pw8>

COVID-19 mortgage and rent relief: <https://bit.ly/3fHd6xb>

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program: <https://bit.ly/2DHI0sM>

Report an illegal eviction: <https://bit.ly/2DqkmQM>

Other financial resources: <https://bit.ly/2XxNgVU>



## Mitigation Tactics Crucial to Staying Safe Against COVID-19

As we move out of summer into fall, it's essential that we continue working together to keep ourselves and our communities safe from COVID-19. This virus is novel, meaning new, and we still don't know everything about it.

We don't yet know the long-term implications for our health if we catch the virus. We don't yet know the full effect it can have on our body. The reality is much more complicated than simply living or dying. Though someone may survive the virus, there can still be potential harm done to their body that could take much longer than a few weeks to recover from.

That's why we must continue practicing good hygiene, like frequently washing our hands, practicing social distancing as best as we can by avoiding large gatherings, and wearing a mask. You've probably heard it, but it's undeniably true: Your mask protects me, and my mask protects you. Multiple studies have shown the importance of wearing a mask to reduce potential respiratory droplets that come out of our mouth and nose when we talk, sneeze or cough. These droplets could potentially carry the virus, and remember, even a person without symptoms can still be carrying the virus.

So please, continue to wear your mask when in public. It's a minor act that can have major implications in protecting everyone we encounter. We will get through this pandemic, but only if we work together and take precautions to protect our family, friends and neighbors.





State Representative Jordan A. Harris  
P.O. Box 202186  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2186

lpo.jc.0820

## My Office is Open and Ready to Help

Though my district office had to temporarily close in the spring due to COVID-19, we continued to work from home and assist members of our community in getting the help they need. We have since returned to the office and are available to help you with all state government-related needs.

We do ask that you reach out to us to schedule an appointment by calling 215-952-3378. This is to ensure that our office doesn't become overcrowded and we can maintain social distancing. We also ask that you wear a face mask when visiting with us, as masks have been proven to slow the spread of COVID-19.

### We're available to help you with:

- Unemployment Compensation or Pandemic Unemployment Compensation issues.
  - Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications.
  - PennDOT services, such as car registrations, handicap placards or titles.
  - Voter registration and absentee ballot applications.
  - Birth and death certificates.
  - Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance).
  - Pennsylvania income tax questions.
  - Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones.
  - Consumer complaints.
  - PACE cards for senior citizens.
  - Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications.
- Any other question about state government.*

**STAY UP TO DATE!**

[www.RepJordanHarris.com](http://www.RepJordanHarris.com)

 /RepJordanHarris

 @RepHarris •  @RepHarris



*Stay connected* to what's happening in Harrisburg and in the community by signing up for my email updates. Go to [www.RepJordanHarris.com](http://www.RepJordanHarris.com) to sign up. You can also follow me on social media!