



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Kristine Howard

167TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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/RepKHoward • @RepKHoward

Dear Neighbor,

It's Budget Season in Harrisburg, but that also means summer is heating up! As we debate the budget, I am doing all within my power to guarantee that our district gets all that it needs for the coming fiscal year and to ensure that Pennsylvania government works for all of us.

My office is here to help you with any state-related services. If you're having an issue, please call my office at

(610) 251-1070 and my staff will do all they can to guide you as you navigate your concerns through our government.

To minimize wait times while allowing us to research your issue and to provide the best possible service without the need to rush our visitors, appointments are encouraged.

Best wishes,

CONSERVATION CORNER

White-Nose Syndrome is a cruel disease devastating bat species in Pennsylvania. This terrible disease is caused by a fungus imported to the states in the early 2000s. Notably, four species have had their populations decline by an estimated 99 percent – the eastern small-footed bat, northern long-eared bat, tri-colored bat, and, most notably, the little brown bat, once the most common bat in southeast Pennsylvania, now among the rarest.

This should be a concern not only out of a general interest in the well-being of animals in our state, but also because bats are among the best helpers that agriculture has – not only do they pollinate crops, but their appetite for insects ensures farmers need far less pesticide, which saves farmers money, and, notably, reduces the likelihood of environmental and health effects related to pesticide use.

All the news about White-Nose Syndrome until recently had been tragic, with one bat colony after another being destroyed as the disease caused them to awaken from hibernation in the winter and then starve from lack of food.

However, there is, finally, some sign of hope. Researchers have uncovered evidence that more bats

are finally developing some resistance to the disease; while they are still affected, the number that have been dying as a result has been decreasing. Moreover, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has been making valiant efforts to stymie the spread of the disease through innovative methods, such as cooling and spraying caves with polyethylene glycol to stop fungal growth.

But our wildlife protectors need our help, and I am exploring what more can be done legislatively to ensure this tragic story has a happy ending. Previously, I introduced House Resolution 65 and House Bill 840 to draw attention to this issue and to preserve wildlife habitats.

What can you do? In addition to adding a bat house to your property, the most important thing you can do is to stay out of caves marked off-limits. If you do enter permitted caves, change your clothes and shower before entering another cave.

Spelunking has, unfortunately and inadvertently, been one of the main ways in which this fungus has spread from cave to cave. It is a fine way to enjoy Pennsylvania's natural beauty, but if you choose to do so, please heed all warnings and take care to not cause harm when doing so.

LIBRARY SATELLITE OFFICE HOURS

Henrietta Hankin Library

2nd Tuesday of each month
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Chester County Library

4th Tuesday of each month
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The 167th District includes Malvern Borough and the townships of Charlestown, East Whiteland, West Pikeland, West Whiteland, West Vincent, East Caln, and part of East Goshen Township.

NEW LEGISLATION

RELIEVING SOCIAL WORKER SHORTAGES

Social workers aid in the treatment and prevention of mental illness, and these licensed professionals are instrumental in assessing, diagnosing, and treating psychosocial disabilities and impairments that often include mental and emotional disorders, developmental disabilities and addiction. They help individuals address the psychological, emotional, social or behavioral challenges involved in their day-to-day lives and offer services and support to those in need.

Unfortunately, obstacles such as budget cuts, low wages and high caseloads often lead to burnout among social workers, making it difficult to prepare a sufficient workforce to meet the growing demand. In fact, a 2015 study concluded that the continued growth of social worker supply would be unable to keep pace with anticipated demand by 2030, with Pennsylvania projected to have a shortage of 5,000 social workers by that time.

Given that one of the greatest issues facing Pennsylvania is the lack of access to mental health treatment, social work plays an outsized role, and a staff shortage will have an immense impact, as more people will end up waiting indefinitely as their untreated issues take root. To address this, I have introduced House Bill 2272 to implement the Social Worker Educational Enrollment and Training (SWEET) Program, which would provide stipends to graduate students completing internships as a requisite of an accredited masters of social work program, allowing more students to pursue this important work.

STOP BANKRUPTING PENNSYLVANIANS OVER FAMILY MEDICAL BILLS

“Filial” responsibility laws oblige a person’s children, spouse, and parents to protect, care for, and support impoverished family members, thus holding family members financially responsible for medical expenses.

This is by no means a hypothetical concern: in the 2012 case of Health Care & Retirement Corporation of America v. Pittas, the Superior Court ruled that corporate nursing homes can sue the children of patients for outstanding medical bills. Given that Pennsylvania nursing homes average a cost of nearly \$400 per day, this can quickly lead to bankruptcies.

Filial responsibility laws first emerged in 17th century England and became common in the colonies. While they have generally fallen out of favor elsewhere, Pennsylvania stands as the only state to have enforced its filial responsibility law in the past 25 years. To update our laws for the 21st century, I have introduced legislation (House Bill 2094) modernizing our filial responsibility laws to ensure spouses, children and parents are only held liable for outstanding medical bills if the indigent individual has colluded with the family member to hide assets within the past five years, or if the family member fails to cooperate in the Medical Assistance process.

Pennsylvania’s outlier status in this regard is shameful, and I look forward to your support in eliminating this antiquated and objectionable practice.

ELIMINATING USE OF CREDIT SCORES IN INSURANCE

Present law allows insurers to factor credit rating into their decisions regarding a person’s policy, including revocation and premium cost. Insurance is not a loan or any variety of credit, so this process is wholly illogical – credit scores measure the likelihood that a person will pay consistently on their debts and offer assurance to creditors that loans will be honored. In an insurance relationship, however, there’s no risk to the insurer of default; if a person ceases paying their premiums, they simply are not covered.

This practice creates a barrier to many Pennsylvanians in gaining access to insurance, with rates greater than they can afford, impacting their ability to lawfully drive or to have their homes insured against the risk of fire, to give but two examples. To address this unfairness, I have introduced legislation (House Bill 2211) banning providers of personal insurance from factoring credit score into their decisions.



Constituent Services

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY AT PA TREASURY

- Did you know that the Pennsylvania Treasury is currently holding more than \$3.5 billion in unclaimed property?
- Did you know that one in 10 Pennsylvanians is owed unclaimed property?
- Did you know the average claim is worth about \$2,000?

My office is hard at work trying to notify residents of their unclaimed property, but you don't have to wait for us to reach out: you can search Treasury's online database at any time to see if you or friends and family have property waiting to be claimed. There is no fee to search for or claim property from the state. Learn more at www.patreasury.gov/unclaimed-property.

PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians aged 65 and older; widows and widowers aged 50 and older; and people with disabilities aged 18 and older.

Governor Josh Shapiro signed a new law I supported, Act 7 of 2023, to expand the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. With expanded income requirements, nearly 175,000 more Pennsylvanians are eligible to receive a Property Tax/Rent Rebate in 2024. The majority of the 430,000 past claimants may see increased rebates as well.

The income limit is \$45,000 a year, and half of Social Security income is excluded. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may also file rebate claims on behalf of claimants who lived at least one day in 2023 and meet all other eligibility criteria. Visit www.revenue.pa.gov for more information.



Birth Certificates and Death Certificates

My office can help you obtain copies of birth and death certificates. Certificates cost \$20 each and must be paid via check or money order made payable to "VITAL RECORDS."

CERTIFICATE OF VITAL RECORD

Visit pahouse.com/Howard and sign up for my email newsletter to stay up to date!

Upcoming Events Around the 167th Legislative District

Every Saturday | 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Malvern Farmers Market
Malvern Borough
(610) 644-2602

June 29 | 5 p.m.

East Goshen Community Day
East Goshen Township Park
East Goshen Township
(610) 692-7171

Wednesday, July 10 | 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation Field Day
Valley Creek Park
Malvern Borough
(610) 644-2602

July 13 | 4 p.m. – 10 p.m.

Exton Park Community Day
Exton Park
West Whiteland Township
(610) 363-9525

September 7 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Kids' Day at the Park
East Caln Township Park at Bell Tavern
East Caln Township
(610) 269-1989

September 14 | 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Shredding Event
West Whiteland Township Building
(610) 363-9525

E-WASTE RECYCLING NOW AT GOODWILL

Goodwill Keystone Area and Reworld are offering residents of southeastern PA counties the option to drop-off their e-waste (including TVs) for free!

chestercountyswa.org



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MY OFFICE CAN ASSIST WITH:

- ✓ Pennsylvania Driver's Manuals and Commercial Driver's Manual.
- ✓ Assistance with the Department of Human Services.
- ✓ Obtaining Birth and Death Certificates.
- ✓ PennDOT Services: vehicle registrations, special tags, titles, driver's license applications, disability placards.
- ✓ Questions for the Department of Revenue.
- ✓ SEPTA Senior Keycards.
- ✓ Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions.
- ✓ Obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds.
- ✓ Voter registration and absentee ballot applications.
- ✓ Unclaimed property.
- ✓ Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems.
- ✓ Unemployment compensation, disability, and workers' compensation.
- ✓ Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, and 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.
- ✓ Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications.
- ✓ Problems or questions about the state lottery.
- ✓ PACE cards for senior citizens.
- ✓ Liquor Control Board concerns or questions.

REPORT POTHOLES!

Potholes and other roadway concerns on state roads can be reported by calling 1-800-FIX-ROAD or visiting www.penndot.gov and clicking on "Submit Roadway Feedback."

