

ROB MATZIE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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THE 16TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT SERVING BEAVER COUNTY

City of Aliquippa; Boroughs of Ambridge, Baden, Conway, East Rochester, Freedom, Monaca, Rochester and South Heights; and the Townships of Center, Harmony, Hopewell and Rochester.

Matzie votes to expand Property Tax/Rent Rebates, child care tax credits

A major expansion to the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program I co-sponsored will help more Beaver County seniors and residents with disabilities stay in the homes and communities they



love. By raising the income eligibility cap to \$45,000 for both renters and homeowners, the expanded program will allow another 3,200 county residents to qualify. The new law also increases the maximum rebate from \$650 to \$1,000.

It's estimated that many families will see their state tax credits more than triple.

To help working families, I voted to expand the state child care tax credit so that it now provides a 100% match to the federal tax credit. Under the expansion:

- a family earning \$43,000 or less will see their maximum state credit increase from \$315 to \$1,050 for one child and from \$630 to \$2,100 for two or more children.
- a family earning more than \$43,000 will see their maximum tax credit increase from \$180 to \$600 for one child and from \$360 to \$1,200 for two or more children.

If you have questions or need help applying to any state-related program, please call my office.

Matzie helps secure record budget funding for education

I was proud to fight for historic education increases in the 2023-24 budget.

The new spending plan includes a **\$567 million increase in basic education funding** – the largest such increase in PA history. In addition, the budget includes \$100 million for student mental health resources and a \$46.5 million increase for a universal free school breakfast program that will ensure that 1.7 million Pennsylvania K-12 students

don't start the day hungry.

Here at home, all our school districts will see across-the-board increases in basic and special education funding. I also fought for and secured an additional \$27 million to close the gap and ensure all kids can succeed.

Beyond education, the new budget boosts public safety and violence prevention, and it allocates sustainable

funding for the Pennsylvania State Police to reduce the reliance on the Motor License Fund and free up critical funding for roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure projects – all while holding the line the taxes.

To be sure, no budget is perfect. But a plan that prioritizes our public schools, boosts public safety, protects taxpayers, and bolsters our infrastructure is a plan I can support.

Basic + special education funding totals for 2023-24 budget and increases from last year

- Aliquippa School District: \$15.7 million in new funding – \$2 million increase.
- Ambridge Area School District: \$15.4 million in new funding – \$859,600 increase.
- Central Valley School District: \$11.6 million in new funding – \$448,500 increase.
- Freedom Area School District: \$10.3 million in new funding – \$527,300 increase.
- Hopewell Area School District: \$12.9 million in new funding – \$501,800 increase.
- Rochester Area School District: \$8.9 million in new funding – \$650,100 increase.



House passes Matzie legislation to strengthen rail safety in Pennsylvania

Last February's derailment of a Norfolk Southern freight train in East Palestine, Ohio that created a toxic exposure risk for Beaver County residents was a wakeup call that the federal standards we rely on to ensure safe transport of hazardous materials are inadequate.

With so many residents here in western PA living along heavily traveled freight routes, it's clear we can't afford to wait for Washington, D.C., to act. To get critical protections in place, I introduced legislation together with state Rep. Jim Marshall to strengthen rail safety here in the commonwealth.

Our "Safer Rails, Safer Communities" bill – which passed the House with bipartisan support last spring – would help prevent another disaster like East Palestine by limiting the length of work trains, implementing safe staffing levels, and bolstering reporting requirements for hazardous materials.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Establish new staffing and train length requirements – including, among other things, a minimum two-man crew and a maximum train length of 8,500 feet (approximately 1.6 miles) – to be enforced by the state Public Utility Commission.
- Require PUC, working with PennDOT, to develop standards for reporting and tracking the transport of hazardous materials, including maintaining a database to be accessed by FEMA, PEMA, and county emergency response agencies in the event of a derailment.
- Require PUC and PennDOT to ensure proper functioning of wayside detectors – trackside sensors intended to warn when train cars are overheating because of problems that can cause derailment.
- Limit the length of time trains may be parked in an area where they block road crossings needed for access by emergency response vehicles.
- Allow a union representative to be present for rail safety inspections without being accused of trespassing.

The intention is not to hurt railroads, but to get needed protections in place for the public, the workforce, and emergency responders. As majority chairman of the House Consumer Protection, Technology, and Utilities Committee, I worked hard to get this bill out of committee and up for a vote quickly. It's now with the state Senate, and I'm urging my colleagues there to get it passed and on track for the governor's signature.



Matzie, Policy Committee address key state issues

As a member of the House Policy Committee, I attend hearings on a wide range of issues affecting the commonwealth – from public safety, affordable housing, and education to economic development, business initiatives, and workforce development.

Last March, I co-hosted a hearing to gather information on the state and local response to the East Palestine train derailment and discuss ways the state can improve rail safety. Testimony from the hearing and additional input from rail workers, emergency management authorities, and other authorities prompted me to draft safety legislation strengthening state standards.



More than 50 lawmakers from all corners of the state attended to discuss this important topic.

In late August, the committee traveled to Lackawanna County for a roundtable discussion with national distribution leader McLane Co., Inc., on the critical role distribution centers play in keeping our Pennsylvania businesses running smoothly.

In another hearing this summer, we discussed the critical role career and technical education programs play in providing pathways to family-sustaining jobs and ensuring PA employers have the pool of well-trained workers they need to stay competitive.



Proud to be appointed speaker pro tem by my friend, House Speaker Joanna McClinton.



Quina Price, assistant director of the Families Matter Food Pantry in Center Township, recently gave me a tour of this vital community resource.



Matzie re-elected to new term, appointed Majority Chairman of Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities Committee

Last year, I took the oath of office to begin a new term in the state House. It is an honor to continue serving residents here at home and advocating for our community in Harrisburg to make life in our district safer, more promising, and more affordable.

I was appointed majority chairman of the House Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities Committee,

which promotes bills to ensure PA consumers and utility customers receive a fair shake. I'm excited to have a leadership role in protecting the state's consumers.

I also serve as a member of the Pennsylvania Athletic Oversight Committee, which oversees actions of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association; the Pennsylvania

Broadband Development Authority, which has been working to bring high-speed internet to unserved or underserved communities; and the Historical and Museum Commission.

On occasions when Speaker of the House Joanna McClinton participates in debate in the House chamber, I carry out my duties as speaker pro tempore.



I met with Freedom High School students to discuss protecting free speech and freedom of the press.



I hosted Realtors from our community for a productive talk at the State Capitol.

Matzie votes to protect prescription assistance for seniors

As seniors continue to face rising costs, we need to do all we can to keep life affordable for them, and that includes ensuring continued access to prescription drug benefits. This year, I voted to pass legislation that will ensure current PACE and PACENET recipients remain eligible for those programs – despite disqualifying increases in their overall income due to Social Security cost-of-living increases – by extending the current Social Security COLA moratorium for two years, through Dec. 31, 2025. Please contact my office if you need help applying for PACE/PACENET.



Matzie: Broadband plan finalized to bridge digital divide

As one of just 11 people appointed as a voting board member of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, I wanted to update you on the group's progress in bringing reliable, high-speed internet to unserved or underserved areas of the state. There are more than 276,000 households that still lack internet access, and another 52,000 without reliable access.

Last August, after meeting with hundreds of residents, business owners, and industry partners, the group has finalized a five-year action plan to guide expansion of broadband infrastructure using nearly \$1.2 billion in federal funding. More information is available by visiting www.dced.pa.gov and entering "PBDA" into the search bar.

Affording internet

On a related note, residents struggling to pay for internet should find out whether they qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides a discount of up to \$30 per month on broadband service and connected devices.

Eligible households include those receiving WIC benefits or having an income at or below 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines – \$29,160 for a household of 1, \$39,440 for a household of 2, \$49,720 for a household of 3, and \$60,000 for a household of 4.

More information is available at www.affordableconnectivity.gov.

Matzie leads committee with hearings on consumer protection issues

Last year was a busy one for the House Consumer Protection, Technology and Utilities Committee, and I am proud of our bipartisan efforts that sent a slate of new bills to the House chamber.

After hearing comprehensive testimony in multiple hearings, the committee approved my bill that would ban the deceptive practice of speculative ticketing. We also approved bills by my colleagues that would:

- Ban "grinch bots," which scalpers use to buy up mass quantities of high-demand items for resale at inflated prices.
- Ban surprise "junk fees" added to the price of goods or services, by requiring online sellers to show the total cost up front for items like event tickets and lodging accommodations, so fees can't be tacked on at the end.
- Prohibit telecommunications and utility companies from charging early termination fees when a customer dies before completion of a contract.

I'm happy to report that all of these bills passed the House and are now awaiting consideration in the state Senate.

The committee is currently reviewing my bill to reauthorize soon-to-expire protections for utility customers regarding service connections and shut-offs, delinquent bills, and payment plans. We are also considering bills that would help contain repair fees passed along to utility companies and protect customers from high-pressure tactics from some fly-by-night companies.



House passes Matzie bill to ban unfair ticket sales practices

Last fall, the House passed my legislation that would ban speculative ticketing, in which ticket resellers list event tickets for sale even though they do not yet have – and may never have – those tickets.

Speculative ticketing is not only deceitful – it's inherently unfair to fans and consumers, who have a right to know – without a shadow of a doubt – who they are buying a ticket from and that the ticket is in the possession of the seller. My bill addresses simple question: How can you sell something you don't have?

This deceptive practice also hurts businesses. At best case, they may get a refund. At worst case, they're out the price of the ticket and any other money they've laid out for travel, hotels, and other expenses.

Area businesses lose, too. When the promised ticket fails to materialize, the venue loses credibility in the eyes of the public, and businesses like restaurants, bars and parking garages lose vital income.

My bill would add the practice to the list of offenses enforceable under the state deceptive trade practices act and allow purchasers who are left empty-handed to sue for damages.

State Rep. **Rob Matzie**

2023 *Year in Review*

\$24 Million

in funding brought home to the district



200+

bills voted to help working families



10,127

constituent services provided, including 1,000+ PennDOT services



5,458

residents served



 RepMatzie.com

Matzie's office can help

- Property Tax/Rent Rebates.
- PACENET prescription medicine assistance for seniors.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
- Senior ConnectCards.
- Handicap placards and other PennDOT services.
- Birth and death certificates.
- Problems or questions involving all state agencies.

If it's about state government, we can help!

ROB MATZIE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Breaking new ground, marking new independence



Also in December, I spoke about the collaborative efforts of many and celebrated the city of Aliquippa's exit from Act 47 Status as a Financially Distressed community with Mayor Dwan Walker and Council member Donald Walker.

In December, I participated in a ground-breaking in Hopewell Township for a new park project and other community projects based on funding I helped secure.



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NEW OFFICE COMING TO CENTER TOWNSHIP. STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES!

**ROB
MATZIE**
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Helping our Kids & Schools

This year, I fought for and secured

\$27 Million

to close the education
funding gap and make sure
all students can succeed

\$1.2 Million

to cut property taxes



During my visit to Beaver County Rehabilitation Center, Executive Director Lesley Hallas, right, and BCRC Board Member Tracey Antoline-Patton, left, updated me on the center's wide range of employment, recovery, community, and youth services.

During his Capitol visit, I had a chance to thank Hopewell High School Principal Mike Allison, who will be retiring this year after 25 years of amazing service to the district.

