



# STATE REP. PERRY WARREN

31ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



## Dear Neighbor,

*Welcome back, and welcome to all new residents of our communities. I am honored to have been re-elected to serve as your state representative for another term. This newsletter includes updates on new legislation, reports on state grants, information on state services, and news from our communities and Harrisburg.*

*In addition, among the many roles of a state legislator is to introduce legislation, with the hope and objective that the legislation will become law. The process of passing a bill was perhaps most famously described in the Schoolhouse Rock video, "I'm Just a Bill." If you have not seen it, it is on YouTube. I have included in this newsletter a "deep dive" into the process by which a bill that I originally introduced became law.*

*As Schoolhouse Rock's "Bill" says, outside the doors of a committee hearing, "most bills never even get this far." Indeed, of over 4,000 proposed bills in the Pennsylvania House and Senate during the 2019-20 Session, 113 bills had been signed into law as of November 15. I originally introduced two of those bills, now Acts 18 and 21 of 2020, and I hope my essay provides insight into how a bill becomes law here in Pennsylvania.*

*As always, please contact me if we can help with any state matter or issue.*

*Happy Holidays!*

## Progress on Kayden's Law

Kayden's family, including her mother, Kathy Sherlock, are champions for reform of child custody and visitation law. Working with Kayden's family and child protection advocates, state Senator Steve Santarsiero, state Representative Tina Davis and I introduced Kayden's Law in both the Senate and the House. Kayden's Law would ensure that the best interest of the child is the top priority in judicial child custody and visitation determinations.

This fall, Kayden's Law was unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee. This committee vote is a critical first step in demonstrating legislative recognition of the shortcomings of present child custody and visitation laws and bipartisan support for Kayden's Law.

We will continue to work to raise awareness of Kayden's Law, to move the bill forward toward becoming law, and to ensure that the best interest of the child is the top priority in all child custody and visitation cases.

## WINTER 2020

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*Look Inside!*

**Banning Child Marriage in PA: How My BILL Became a LAW**

# Banning Child Marriage in PA: H

**1** I was a few weeks into my first term as state representative on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2017 when my cell phone rang. At that point, I was the prime sponsor of several House bills, most of them “inherited” from my predecessor, now-state-Sen. Steve Santarsiero, or other former House members. The caller was Newtown Borough Councilor Tara Grunde-McLaughlin. “You have to see this article,” she said, “in the Washington Post, about child marriage.” I already had seen the article, I replied, because another constituent, a Yardley resident, had emailed me an hour earlier. The article, entitled, “Why can 12-year-olds still get married in the United States?” was authored by Fraidy Reiss, the executive director of Unchained at Last, a nonprofit that works to end child marriage in the United States. “Well, then,” Councilor Grunde-McLaughlin said, “you have to do something about it.”

Over the following week, I learned that no state banned child marriage, and the minimum age requirement varied from state to state. In Pennsylvania, there was no minimum age. However, bills to end child marriage were pending in several states, including New Jersey, and there was little or no opposition. I read the New Jersey bill and called its sponsor in the New Jersey General Assembly. In what would turn out to be a harbinger of my experience in Pennsylvania, the New Jersey bill’s sponsor, a Democrat, was not the original proponent of the bill. Rather, it had been proposed by a Republican member. Because the bill had bipartisan support and there was a Democratic majority in the New Jersey legislature, the Democratic sponsor agreed to introduce the bill and work with the Republican member toward getting the bill passed. I contacted the Republican assemblywoman and her office sent me information and their background research. I also contacted Fraidy Reiss at Unchained at Last and arranged a meeting among her, me and my staff and Councilor Grunde-McLaughlin.

Then, I started writing ... and writing. In practice, elected legislators come up with ideas for bills, and often outline or draft them. Ultimately, though, the final language of a bill is written by the Legislative Reference Bureau, a non-partisan bureau that prepares requested bills and resolutions for introduction in the General Assembly. LRB took my concepts and essentially boiled it down to language stating, “No marriage license may be issued if either of the applicants for a license is under 18 years of age.”

**2** I “introduced” the bill by sending it to all my colleagues in the House of Representatives along with a “co-sponsorship memorandum,” which describes the bill (in a lot more words than in the bill itself) and asks House members to “co-sponsor” or “sign on” to the bill. Within a few days, 15 representatives, 13 Democratic and two Republican, had cosponsored the bill. The bill was introduced as House Bill 1308 and was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee.

Over the ensuing months, I was in regular communication with Unchained at Last and other groups that advocate for child protection and safety. I attended an Unchained at Last event, and when Unchained at Last representatives came to Harrisburg to advocate for the bill, I joined them in meeting with some of my colleagues in the House and Senate.

Meanwhile, the New Jersey legislature passed its bill to end child marriage, only to have it vetoed by then-Gov. Chris Christie.

**3** About a year after I introduced H.B. 1308, state Rep. Jesse Topper, a Republican who represents rural areas of Bedford, Franklin and Fulton counties, approached me. Rep. Topper said he liked the bill; he was on the House Judiciary Committee and proposed that we work together in our respective caucuses to build support for it. At the time, the Republican majority in the House was 121-82, and Rep. Topper noted that the bill would have a better chance if it were, as a member of the majority party, in his name. I ran it by several senior members of the Democratic caucus, and they agreed that this would present an opportunity both to move the bill forward and to build a working relationship with a more senior Republican member.

The bill to end child marriage was reintroduced as H.B. 2542, with Rep. Topper as the first sponsor and me second. Twenty-eight members, 15 Democratic and 13 Republican, co-sponsored the bill.

Despite the email and call on that Saturday morning in February 2017, the phone wasn’t exactly ringing off the hook in my district office. As Rep. Topper would say at the eventual House Judiciary Committee hearing on the bill, political candidates run for office on many issues, but child marriage wasn’t one of them. I issued press releases and discussed the bill in my email updates and newsletters. When I talked

## 1 DRAFTING A LAW



Laws begin as ideas. A legislator may get ideas for laws from other elected officials, civic groups, businesses, teachers and people like you. These ideas are then written into a draft bill by experts. That draft is sent to other legislators to notify them of the idea and ask them to support the bill by signing on as a co-sponsor. The bill is then officially introduced. When introduced, the bill receives a number and is referred to a committee.

## 2 COMMITTEE REVIEW



When a bill is introduced in the House, it is referred to a committee, where it may get more in-depth review and the committee may even hear how the bill would impact people. If the committee votes to approve the bill, it may move to the full House for consideration.

## 3

## M HOUSE

When the bill is over yet. The bill and even receives a majority they try again

# How My BILL Became a LAW

with people about child marriage, their response often was along the lines of “child marriage – is that a thing? Well, then, yeah, it should be stopped.” But, for the most part it did not receive much local attention.

The national level, however, was another thing. I heard from reporters throughout the country. Child protection advocates contacted me and other legislators. Rep. Topper spoke with a French newspaper. A Girl Scout troop in Pittsburgh called legislators around the state to end child marriage.

In May 2018, Delaware became the first state to end child marriage. A month later, New Jersey became the second, as the legislature again passed the bill, and it was signed into law by Gov. Phil Murphy.

Over on our side of the Delaware River, the 2017-2018 Session ended, and, as with all bills at the end of a legislative session, H.B. 2542 ceased to exist.

Nonetheless, Rep. Topper and I again joined together and reintroduced the bill in February 2019 as H.B. 360. Representatives of both parties signed onto the bill. In April 2019, the bill was placed on the House Judiciary Committee calendar, where it passed unanimously. On June 5, 2019, H.B. 360 was put before the House for a vote. It passed by a vote of 195-0.

That’s not the end of the story. To become law, a bill must be passed by both the House and the Senate and be signed by the governor.

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In October 2019, state Sen. John Sabatina of Philadelphia introduced a Senate version of the bill. Thus, the three lead sponsors of the bills were from rural, suburban and urban communities. Even if Sen. Sabatina’s bill were passed, that wouldn’t make the bill law, though, because the same bill must be passed by both the House and Senate. The Senate has to pass the

House’s bill, or vice versa; both chambers passing their own bills does not make a law.

And so we waited.

On April 2020, H.B. 360 had 86 cosponsors – I didn’t count how many Republicans and Democrats, there were a lot of both – when I got a call from Rep. Topper: the Senate was going to vote on H.B. 360. We were into the coronavirus pandemic, and the Senate planned to amend H.B. 360 to include emergency provisions for recertification of employees having contact with children and to allow persons to obtain a marriage license remotely during the pandemic. Our one-sentence bill to establish a minimum marriage age of 18 grew to six pages, including the recertification and remote marriage license language.

On April 29, the Senate unanimously passed amended H.B. 360. It still was not done, though, because the process requires the amended bill to come back to the House for a vote. A few hours later, the Speaker of the House called up amended H.B. 360 for a vote “on concurrence” with the Senate amendments. Rep. Topper spoke in support of the bill from one side of the aisle, then I spoke from the other side. The House voted – again unanimously – to pass the bill. After the vote, Rep. Topper and I walked toward each other to congratulate and thank one another. On another day, a hug may have been in order. On this day, we instinctively reached out to shake hands, then, in a sign of the times, pulled our hands back, each signaled a thumbs-up, pulled our masks back on, and walked back to our respective sides of the chamber.

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On May 8, Governor Tom Wolf signed H.B. 360, and it became Act 18 of 2020. Pennsylvania became the third state to end child marriage, and the first by unanimous votes of both legislative chambers.

## AND THAT, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS, IS HOW A BILL BECAME A LAW!

*Postscript: Less than a week later, Minnesota became the fourth state to end child marriage. Similar bills remain pending in several other states.*

*On the very same day that H.B. 360 passed in the Senate and House, the House passed H.B. 327, which I introduced, to clarify the process for a municipal liquor sales referendum. H.B. 327 included an amendment proposed by a Republican representative that permits licensed restaurants and hotels to sell prepared beverages and mixed drinks for off-premises consumption during the COVID-19 emergency declaration. Amended H.B. 327 subsequently passed in the Senate and on May 21, 2020 was signed into law by Gov. Wolf as Act 21 of 2020.*

## MOVES TO THE HOUSE FLOOR



reported to the House floor, it’s not members will speak for or against. Actually it’s time for a vote. If a bill majority of votes, it’s approved. If not, next term.

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## NOW ON TO THE SENATE



If approved, the bill will move to the Senate where it goes through a Senate committee and a Senate vote. A majority of votes are needed in both for the bill to move to the governor’s desk.

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## IS IT A LAW YET?



If the governor signs the bill it will become a law. If the governor vetoes the bill, it means the governor doesn’t support it and it’s sent back to the Senate or the House. If the governor doesn’t sign or veto the bill within 10 days, it will automatically become law.

## NEW LAWS ON THE BOOKS

Gov. Wolf recently signed several bills, which I co-sponsored, into law.

- **H.B. 716** created a task force to examine and reduce the practice of worker misclassification.
- **H.B. 375** helps veterans by removing disability and state service-connected payments from income eligibility calculations for the PACE and PACENET programs.
- **H.B. 440** permits expungement of a criminal record for a person unconditionally pardoned or acquitted of all charges.

## Morrisville School District receives second installment of \$1MM state grant

State Sen. Steve Santarsiero, state Rep. John Galloway and I announced that Morrisville Borough School District received \$500,000 in supplemental state funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In 2019, we secured an agreement for \$1 million in supplemental funding to help overcome budget shortfalls created, in part because Morrisville did not receive its fair share of funding under Pennsylvania's basic education funding formula.

The first \$500,000 was released in 2019. This payment represents the remainder of the supplemental funding.

We still need a comprehensive adjustment to state funding for Morrisville Borough School District, and we will continue to work with the governor's office and the Pennsylvania Department of Education to achieve appropriate funding for Morrisville students.

## Happy 75th Birthday to the Slinky!

The classic toy, the Slinky, is owned by Newtown's Just Play and is manufactured in Hollidaysburg. I joined state Rep. Jim Gregory in introducing a resolution to commemorate the Slinky's 75th anniversary.

## Emergency cash awarded

The General Assembly passed Act 26, which allocates \$50 million of CARES funds to fire and EMS organizations for COVID-19 costs. Grantees include:

Morrisville Fire Company.....	\$23,836
Newtown Fire Association .....	\$25,068
Newtown American Legion Ambulance Squad .....	\$15,048
Yardley Makefield Emergency Unit .....	\$13,754
Newtown Township Emergency Services.....	\$11,094

We're safe because of our first responders and the lifesaving work they do every day.



## Money-in-Hand

Newtown Borough will receive a DCNR grant of \$70,000 for the Court Street lot, behind the Bird-in-Hand.

Newtown Borough Council creatively structured a plan to purchase, protect and preserve the lot. This state grant helps the borough improve this historic location for the benefit and enjoyment of our residents now and for generations to come.





# Morrisville, Yardley Infrastructure Improvement Grants

Morrisville will receive \$122,008 for its Melvin Avenue Basin Improvements Phase II project, and Yardley will receive \$211,989 for its North Main Street Sidewalk Drainage Phase II project through the Small Water & Sewer Program.

The Morrisville grant will enhance delivery by meeting water quality best management practices, and with the landscaping it will be more aesthetically pleasing.

The Yardley grant will enhance safety and accessibility for Yardley and northern Lower Makefield residents and will be an economic boost to businesses and the community. Yardley Borough Council worked on this project for a long time, and it is great that the state is supporting it.

## Big Oak Road paved!

Have you had the opportunity to drive the newly paved Big Oak Road?

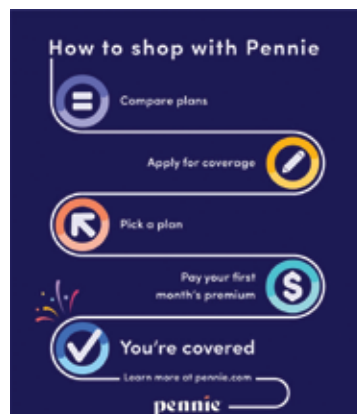
The repaving spanned the entire state portion of the road from West Trenton Avenue to Oxford Valley Road.

In 2017, my first year as state representative, I joined PennDOT officials on a “ridearound” of our communities. We identified Big Oak Road as one of the top road improvement priorities in the district. Following our “ridearound” PennDOT placed Big Oak Road on its long-term road improvement project list. Over the following three years, nearly half of our calls about state road conditions were about Big Oak Road. We regularly reported our residents’ concerns to PennDOT, and they listened and moved the project up to 2020, making for a smoother and safer drive across our communities.

## Pennie Enrollment Period is Open

Pennie replaces healthcare.gov as the state-based health insurance marketplace. Open Enrollment ends Jan. 15, 2021. A health insurance policy purchased before Dec. 15 will take effect Jan. 1, 2021. A policy purchased between Dec. 16 and Jan. 15 will take effect Feb. 1, 2021.

For more information, go to <https://pennie.com> or contact our office.



## Keeping students safe

Students need and deserve to feel safe in their schools so they can focus on what they are there to do: learn. Six local schools, including Abrams Hebrew School in Yardley and St. Andrew Catholic School in Newtown, received Department of Education Safe Schools grants to purchase safety and security-related equipment.

## Home heating assistance grants available

**Do you struggle to pay your home heating bills?**

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program helps eligible Pennsylvanians cover their home heating bills. Go to <https://bit.ly/3mQ50G8> to learn more.

My office can help if you need more information or help filling out the application.

household size	Maximum Income
1	\$19,140
2	\$25,880
3	\$32,580
4	\$39,300
5	\$46,020
6	\$52,740
7	\$59,460
8	\$66,180

Each additional person - \$6,720

## Need help with Medicare open enrollment?

Medicare’s open enrollment period continues through Dec. 7. APPRISE is a free program run by the Department of Aging and helps Pennsylvanians choose Medicare supplements based on their income and medical needs.

For more information, call APPRISE at **1-800-783-7067** or visit its website: <https://bit.ly/2GFHFYk>.



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## Bucks County Library

Libraries are a bedrock of an informed and vibrant community. These student notes were forwarded to me by the Yardley-Makefield branch of the Bucks County Free Library. If you'd like to see me reading *If I Had Your Vote* by Dr. Seuss, the video is posted on its website here: <https://bit.ly/36VShf5>.



## Session at Grace Church

The House held a ceremonial session at Grace United Methodist across from the Capitol.

In 1897-98, the church served as the temporary Capitol after fire destroyed the Capitol building.

The House met in the church in honor of its bicentennial.

## Veterans Day 2020

I was honored to participate in ceremonies honoring veterans in both Lower Makefield and Yardley. Our veterans served our nation with honor and sacrifice, and they continue to share their skills and commitment with our communities. We owe them a great debt.

