



State Representative

MARK LONGIETTI

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Why I voted against the state budget

I voted against the 2013-14 state budget because it locks in Gov. Tom Corbett's \$860 million education cut from two years ago, and provides little help, this year, for our schools. That cut has resulted in property tax increases, school layoffs and larger class sizes in Mercer County and across the state.

The state's share of public education costs has fallen from 44 percent to 32 percent, and is now well below the national average of 48 percent.

When the state fails to pay its share, property owners, school employees and our children suffer.

Locally, state education funding cuts have forced Hermitage School District to eliminate 31.5 positions during the past few years and to raise taxes by 1.2 mills this year. Farrell School District cut eight positions and raised taxes by 1.6 mills this year. Sharon School District cut eight positions and raised taxes by 1.8 mills.

During the governor's first year in office, his budget cut basic education funding by \$860 million. Last year, he flat funded basic education. This year's budget provides just a 2 percent increase for basic education – less than the rate of inflation.

What's also troubling is that this year the budget included a \$30 million fund for 21 hand-picked school districts, while the other 479 school districts were left out. This money was distributed based on politics as opposed to a rational funding formula.

Education should be a top priority for state government, and partisan politics should not determine how we fund it. It's imperative that we properly prepare our children for higher learning and to enter the work force.

Local fire companies receive state grants

Many local fire and ambulance companies are benefitting from the Fire Company Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

The program's annual funding was increased from \$25 million to \$30 million through a law I supported. The law also increased the average grant to fire departments from \$9,500 to \$12,000, with a maximum grant of \$15,000, and the average grant to volunteer ambulance companies increased from \$4,500 to \$5,600, with a maximum grant of \$10,000.

The law also extends eligibility for the grant program to 35 paid fire companies across the state, including the Sharon Fire Department and Greenville Fire Department.

The grant program is funded by gaming revenue. Tax revenue produced from the play of slot machines during the 2012-13 fiscal year, which ended June 30, totaled \$1.3 billion.

Here's how much local fire companies received to help them continue their important work.

Local 2013 Fire Company Grant Program Awards	
Clark Volunteer Fire Department	\$12,792.76
Farrell Volunteer Fire Department	\$12,469.91
Greenville Fire Company	\$13,062.95
Hermitage Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,116.29
Patagonia Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,116.29
Sharon Fire Department	\$13,116.29
Sharpsville Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,116.29
Shenango Township Volunteer Fire Department	\$11,822.84
South Pymatuning Township Volunteer Fire Association	\$11,500.00
Transfer Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,116.29
West Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department	\$12,954.87
West Salem Fire Department	\$12,469.91
Wheatland Volunteer Fire Department	\$11,822.84

I'm working to find a fairer way to fund special education



I participated in numerous hearings this summer about special education funding, including one held in Harrisburg on July 10.

I am serving on a commission that is tasked with determining the best way to distribute state funds for special education.

Under the current formula, special education funding is distributed with the assumption that 16 percent of students in each school district require special education, even though that figure varies from district to district. The formula does not take into account the severity of student disability.

Special education funding has been a significant concern for many years, and many school districts are grossly underfunded in this area. Many of our local school districts have rising populations of special needs students and have been shortchanged in the process.

I am hopeful the Special Education Funding Commission will help remedy this problem by recommending a funding formula which includes consideration of the severity of student

disability and the number of students served. We expect to issue a report in November.

The 15-member commission was the result of Act 3 of 2013. In addition to the chairmen and vice chairmen of the House and Senate Education committees, it includes eight legislators, the secretaries of Education and Budget, and the state deputy secretary for elementary and special education. I was appointed by Speaker of the House Sam Smith.

I want to know!

Do you believe we should allow counties, such as Mercer, to increase their hotel room tax that out-of-town guests pay and use the revenue to promote local tourism? To answer the question, visit my website, www.pahouse.com/Longietti and look for the survey.



Task force offers suggestions to improve personal finance education

The Task Force on Economic Education and Personal Financial Literacy Education, which was the result of a 2010 law that I authored, spent 14 months studying research, best practices and trends in financial education.

The task force found that schools should play an important role in financial education because many parents do not feel confident to teach these skills and look to schools to help them.

To improve personal financial education, the task force is recommending the state take the following steps:

- Make connections between reading, literature, and mathematics state tests, such as PSSAs and Keystone Exams, and economic and personal finance concepts;
- Develop additional materials to help school districts teach the economic and personal finance concepts within state academic standards;
- Offer professional development to teachers in both curriculum and content knowledge about economics and personal finance;
- Identify the best and the brightest economics and personal finance teachers and provide ways for these teachers to share their expertise.

The Task Force on Economic Education and Personal Financial Literacy Education members were appointed by the secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in consultation with the secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities.

It includes school administrators, finance or economics teachers, school board members, students, business leaders, faculty from Pennsylvania's institutions of higher education who have a background in or knowledge of personal financial literacy and other groups with expertise in financial literacy education.

New company coming to Sharon

Noise Solutions, Inc., a Calgary, Alberta, Canada firm, recently announced that it will build its North American production facility in Sharon. I was pleased to assist in attracting this company to our area by working closely with Penn Northwest Development, our area's economic development agency, along with various business and government officials. An incentive package negotiated through the Governor's Action Team helped secure this facility for our area over stiff competition from neighboring Ohio.

Noise Solutions manufactures and installs noise containment facilities to solve various potential noise problems. Their applications in the United States primarily relate to noise containment of compressor stations relating to Marcellus Shale drilling activities. It is estimated that the facility in Sharon will employ more than 100 new workers in comparatively well-paying positions. It is my hope that the Noise Solutions announcement will create positive momentum for our area in attracting new businesses and assisting existing businesses to expand.

Deadline extended for Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

The state has extended the deadline for the popular Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program to Dec. 31.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides a state rebate on 2012 property taxes or rent to income-eligible residents who are 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older. To be eligible, your household income must be \$35,000 or less if you are a homeowner, or \$15,000 or less if you are a renter. When applying, you only have to count half of your Social Security or federal railroad retirement Tier I benefits toward your total income.

You can obtain information about the program, an application and help applying **AT NO COST** through my local office. In addition, you can obtain a Property Tax/Rent Rebate application for free at Department of Revenue district offices and on its website www.revenue.state.pa.us.

If you have already applied, the state began mailing rebates on July 1.

C2P2 grants benefit Mercer County

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program, also known as C2P2, helps revitalize communities, create new recreational opportunities, and conserve natural resources throughout Pennsylvania.

Mercer County has benefitted significantly from this grant program, which is overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. In 2012, the following municipalities received grants:

Farrell City – \$36,000 to further develop Veterans Square Park, including constructing a comfort station, providing parking, handicapped access, landscaping and other site improvements.

Hermitage City – \$25,000 to prepare a comprehensive recreation, parks and open space plan.

Hermitage City – \$100,000 to further develop the Hermitage Athletic Complex, including installing lighting at the ball field, purchasing playground equipment with required safety surfacing; constructing a pedestrian trail, providing handicapped access, landscaping, and other site improvements.

Sharpsville Borough – \$152,000 for the rehabilitation of Milliken Park, including constructing a pavilion, parking lot, access drive, pedestrian trail; installing playground equipment with required safety surfacing,

providing handicapped access, landscaping, and other site improvements.

Sharpsville Borough – \$11,000 for payment toward acquiring approximately one acre along East High Street for passive recreation, stream protection and open space.

Wheatland Borough – \$40,000 for the rehabilitation of Beechwood Avenue Playground, including installing playground equipment with required safety surfacing, providing handicapped access, landscaping and other site improvements.

The C2P2 program is open to municipalities, land conservancies and nonprofits to fund planning, acquisition and developing a wide range of projects including: recreation, park and conservation facilities, watersheds, rivers, corridors and resources, greenways and trails, heritage areas and facilities and critical habitat, natural areas and open spaces.

I would encourage municipalities and organizations throughout our region to consider applying for the program if they have a worthy project. More information and online grant applications are available at www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us, by clicking on the “DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)” link.

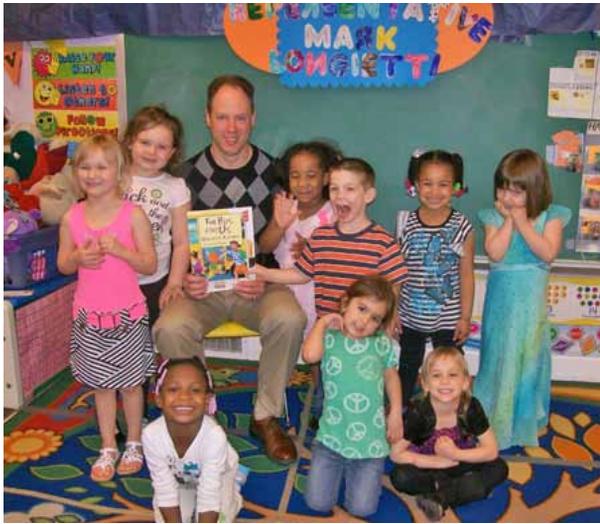


I received the Dewitt Boesel Community Service Award presented by Community Counseling Center at their annual banquet in August. I am pictured with CEO of the Community Counseling Center, Angelo Stamoolis and members of the Boesel family.



I am the co-chairman of the newly formed Bicycle Caucus in the House of Representatives. The caucus is a bipartisan collection of legislators who are committed to promoting the interests of bicyclists through public policy.

Around the 7th District with Mark



I read to preschool students during the Week of the Young Child.



I participated in the PA Breast Cancer Coalition kickoff of the 67women/67 counties exhibit at the Sharon Regional Health System Diagnostic and Imaging Center.



Congratulations to Sharon High School wrestlers Michael Bonner, 3rd place finisher in the PIAA 138-pound bracket, and Jarray Norris, 5th place state finisher in the PIAA 126 pound bracket, and their coach, Dave Ciafre.



I was honored to join the ribbon cutting at Davis Alloy in Sharon.



Matthew Dogan from the West Middlesex boys' basketball team received a citation from the state House recognizing him for setting a Mercer County career scoring record with 2,240 points.



I presented a citation to Henry and Jeanette Clinger for receiving the Lackawannock Township Community Service Award.



I presented a citation to Jim Lewis, commander of the Reynolds VFW Post #7599, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.



Congratulations to the West Middlesex Girls Cross Country team, the 2012 PIAA Girls Class A runner-up.



I helped Helen Banas celebrate her 100th birthday.



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Greenville, West Salem to join the 7th Legislative District

As a result of redistricting, Greenville Borough and West Salem Township will become part of the 7th Legislative District, which I currently represent.

I spent almost my entire life here in Mercer County, and I'm intimately familiar with Greenville and West Salem. In fact, my father, Al Longietti, was born and raised in Greenville.

The new district lines will be in place for the 2014 elections. Residents of Greenville and West Salem will be served by the representative of the 7th District beginning Dec. 1, 2014.

The district will continue to include the cities of Farrell, Hermitage and Sharon and the townships of Lackawannock, Pymatuning, Shenango and South Pymatuning and the boroughs of Clark, Sharpstown, West Middlesex and Wheatland. Delaware Township will become part of the neighboring 17th District.

The process of redrawing the boundaries of Pennsylvania's House and Senate districts takes place every 10 years following the Census. It is done by the Legislative Reapportionment Commission to equalize populations in legislative districts.

These changes do not affect your township or school district affiliation.

If you have questions about this, or any state-related matter, do not hesitate to contact my Hermitage office at 724-981-4655.