



State Representative

MARK LONGIETTI

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I voted NO to hikes on the gasoline tax, driver fees

Late last year, Gov. Tom Corbett signed a \$2.4 billion gasoline tax and fee increase into law.

I VOTED NO on this legislation because it is one of the largest tax increases in recent history, and raises over 150 different driver-related fees.

According to the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy, the new law raised gasoline taxes by about 13 cents this year. The tax will increase by almost 39 cents per gallon by 2016, and possibly more. That's because under the new law, gas tax increases are tied to the wholesale cost of a gallon of gasoline. If future gasoline prices escalate rapidly, so will the tax. Pennsylvania's gasoline tax most likely will be the highest in the country. In regards to diesel fuel tax, Pennsylvania's tax is already the 6th highest among the 50 states and would double by 2017.

I am concerned about the condition of our roads and bridges, but we should have pursued other sources of revenue, such

as a modest tax on natural gas drillers that other states have on their books. I also opposed the law because it includes nearly \$500 million per year for Pennsylvania's two largest mass transit systems, Philadelphia-based SEPTA and the Port Authority of Allegheny County.

Additional costs in the transportation law

- Photo ID cards from \$5 to \$19
- Accident reports from \$5 to \$22
- Certificate of title from \$22.50 to \$50
- Vanity plates from \$20 to \$76
- Annual ambulance registration from \$54 to \$77
- Traffic violations under Section 3111 from \$25 to \$150
- Incremental increases for four-year driver's license renewal and registration fees for cars, motorcycles, trucks and commercial vehicles.

Bill that would partner industry, schools to promote manufacturing careers passes Pa. House

Legislation has passed the House of Representatives that can help build a bond between our public schools and local manufacturers.

Under House Bill 1816, which I supported, teachers would receive professional development credits by visiting school board-approved local manufacturers to gain a better understanding of job opportunities and job requirements.

This could be particularly helpful in Mercer County.

I have heard from local manufacturers who are concerned about a lack of qualified

applicants for available positions, particularly a lack of graduating high school students seeking these jobs. I believe this legislation could help get the word out about job opportunities and the workforce requirements.

I believe we can do even more.

I want local schools to take students to visit local manufacturers so that they can see firsthand the technical and advanced nature of the work environment and to understand the opportunities that are available.

These partnerships can keep employers and jobs in Mercer County, and strengthen our economy.



State grant, KOZ designations aid Mercer County redevelopment efforts

I'm pleased that the state is aiding redevelopment plans for the Damascus-Bishop Tube site, a former steel tube mill in Pymatuning Township that closed on Dec. 31, 2002.

A \$2 million Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant, matched with an equal amount of private investment, will help transform the brownfield site into a home for new, good-paying jobs. The Greenville-Reynolds Development Corp. will use the grant to acquire the 32-acre site, clear the property and build infrastructure. There also are plans to restore a 35,000 square-foot building at the site. Once redeveloped, Northeast Industrial Manufacturing Co. plans to occupy and operate the facility and bring new jobs to our community.

In addition, the state recently designated the Damascus-Bishop Tube site, as well as the Reynolds East Business Park in Delaware and Hempfield townships as Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZ), boosting redevelopment efforts at both locations.

Businesses and properties that are located in a KOZ are eligible to receive significant state and local tax benefits. In addition, projects in a KOZ are given priority consideration for state assistance under various community and economic building initiatives.

I am gratified to have played a role in redevelopment efforts in Mercer County. But this is a team effort with many local and state officials, and the business community pulling together.



I presented a citation to the Board of Directors of Shenango Valley Childrens' Transplant Fund for the organization's 30th anniversary.

Can vehicles powered by natural gas help Mercer County?

The abundance of natural gas in our region has many businesses and local governments considering converting their vehicle fleets from gasoline to natural gas. Natural gas burns cleaner than gasoline, may result in less vehicle maintenance and is significantly less costly.

Recently, I partnered with Ohio state Reps. Sean O'Brien and Nick Barborak, as well as chambers of commerce from the Shenango Valley, Lawrence County and the Youngstown/Warren region, to discuss growing interest in converting vehicle fleets to natural gas, construction of natural gas fueling stations and business opportunities related to this.

We also heard success stories from an Ohio business, as well as the City of Columbus, in converting vehicles to natural gas.

I want to help Mercer County businesses find efficiencies that give them a competitive edge so they can prosper and grow jobs. Additionally, I am committed to working with my counterparts in Ohio as we explore ways to work together to advance the economy of our entire region.



Ohio state Reps. Sean O'Brien, Nick Barborak and I hosted a luncheon to discuss interest in converting vehicle fleets to natural gas.

Working toward a fair special education funding formula

The Special Education Funding Commission, on which I served, issued its final report and recommendations regarding how additional special education dollars should be distributed to public schools across the state.

Currently, the state assumes that special education students represent 16 percent of the overall student population in every school district.

That shortchanges some school districts. For example, in Sharon schools, the actual percentage of special education students is near 20 percent. The recommended formula for new dollars would use an actual count of special education students and would not apply the same assumed percentage for each school district.

In addition, the current system does not take into account the cost to

educate special education students with different disabilities. That's unfair because some students require a relatively low level of services to meet their needs while others require an intensive level of services to realize their potential.

The recommended formula breaks students into three cost categories, least intensive, moderate, and intensive, and assigns a weight to each category to reflect cost differences. It recognizes that a student receiving the least intensive special education services cost about 1.5 times more than the cost of educating a regular education student, while a student receiving the most intensive level of services cost about 7.5 times more.

The data to implement the new formula does not burden local school districts, because they are already reporting it.

The recommended formula also applies factors for school districts based upon relative wealth or poverty, local tax effort, and for small schools and rural schools.

The commission still must develop legislation to implement the recommendations. The General Assembly will need to pass the legislation and then appropriate additional funding in the 2014-15 budget.

I was just one of six state representatives to serve on the Special Education Funding Commission. I'm proud to say that the state representatives and senators, along with other officials who served on the commission, worked in a bipartisan manner to recommend a funding formula which is fair, logical and based upon real data.



Kaitlin Winslow of Hermitage served as a guest page in the House of Representatives in June. Students 12 or older may serve as guest pages. All are welcome to participate. However, students must be accompanied to Harrisburg by a parent or legal guardian. For more information, please call my Harrisburg office at 717-772-4035.



Along with his parents Jim and Sharon Rust, I recognized James Rust on achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.



I spoke to Boy Scout Troop 65, Shenango Township, for their merit badge.

CRIZ could help redevelopment efforts in local communities

I am introducing legislation that would expand the new City Revitalization Improvement Zones (CRIZ) program, which helps communities develop vacant, blighted and abandoned properties for commercial use, to include additional cities, such as Hermitage, Sharon and Farrell.

My legislation also would allow boroughs and townships with a population of 2,000 or more to be eligible to participate in CRIZ through a pilot program.

The CRIZ program allows eligible cities to create an authority to issue bonds for a redevelopment project. The bonds are repaid using most state and local taxes generated within the CRIZ area during and after construction. Developers would be required to supply at least 20 percent of the development cost for the project through private dollars.

However, the law enacted last year limited the program to just eight cities: Altoona, Bethlehem, Erie, Lancaster, Reading, Wilkes-Barre, York and Chester. It also permitted one borough or township with at least 7,000 people to participate in a pilot program for smaller municipalities.

Under my proposal, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development would award 15 City Revitalization and Improvement Zones between now and 2016. Bethlehem and Lancaster would be included in that total, but spots would open for other communities based on population and other criteria.

After 2016, the state would add two cities every year to CRIZ, regardless of population. This is the current requirement under state law.

It's time to restore tutoring program for struggling schools

Due to new regulations adopted by the State Board of Education, students will have to pass Keystone Exams in Algebra I, biology and literature in order to graduate, beginning with this year's freshman class.

I am concerned that we will set up too many students for failure without having in place the necessary support for them to pass the Keystone Exams and to excel in the classroom.

That's why I'm supporting legislation that would restore the Educational Assistance Program (EAP) and its funding. Enacted in 2003, EAP funded tutoring and remedial services for needy students in struggling schools. During the 2006-07 school year, the high water mark for the program, Farrell School District received \$73,367, Sharon City School District received \$45,563, Sharpsville Area School district received \$22,996 and West Middlesex School District received \$22,782.

Unfortunately, Gov. Tom Corbett eliminated EAP during his first year in office when he cut nearly \$1 billion from public education.

The legislation would force the state to put its money where its mouth is by suspending the Keystone Exams graduation requirement if the state fails to adequately fund EAP. Local school districts and taxpayers simply do not have the resources to adequately deal with this new requirement.

The EAP program provided extended learning opportunities and was designed to boost student achievement and help all students succeed. It had proven results as academic performance improved for those school districts participating in EAP.

There would also be five pilot programs for boroughs and townships of at least 2,000 people, under my legislation. Additionally, communities deemed financially distressed under Act 47 would receive priority status if they applied for CRIZ participation. Farrell and Greenville would have the opportunity to take advantage of this provision.

Expanding CRIZ will bring more investment and new jobs, while strengthening local economies and improving the quality of life across the commonwealth.

Bill could breathe new life into old factories and mills

I am co-sponsoring legislation that would give tax incentives for owners to rehabilitate former factory or mill buildings.

The bill would establish three types of tax incentive programs.

The first program would provide a tax credit of 25 percent of the rehabilitation and reconstruction costs of the factory or mill.

The second program would provide a tax credit equal to 100 percent of the total amount of Pennsylvania salaries and wages paid to qualified full-time employees, and would have a maximum allowable credit of \$5,000 per qualified employee.

The final program would be an interest income tax program, which would permit a taxpayer to receive a tax credit of 10 percent, up to \$10,000 per taxable year, of the tax liability for interest earned and paid on loans made to eligible businesses for expenditures within the building. The taxpayer also would be allowed a tax credit of 10 percent, up to \$20,000 per taxable year, of the qualified liability of the interest earned on loans made for substantial rehabilitation.

I believe we must find creative ways to breathe new life into our abandoned and decaying industrial sites. This program would offer the opportunity to revitalize these facilities and turn them into job creators again.



I attended the Founder's Day celebration at Thiel College I am pictured with Mark Nordenberg, the outgoing chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh and a Thiel College graduate, and Thiel College President Troy VanAken. Nordenberg was honored at the event.



I presented a citation to Gordon Smith for 50 years of service with the West Middlesex Kiwanis Club. Mr. Smith is seated and I am standing with Karen Sherwood and Jerry Williams.



Congratulations to the 2013 Hickory High School 2013 Football Team, District 10 champions.



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Inside:

- I voted no on gasoline tax, driver fee increases
- My bill could bolster economic development in Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon
- I want to restore tutoring program for struggling schools

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Local fire companies receive state grants

Again this year, the Fire Company Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program is helping many Mercer County fire companies to continue their lifesaving work.

The program's annual funding was increased from \$25 million to \$30 million through a law I supported. The law 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.

HERE'S HOW MUCH LOCAL FIRE COMPANIES RECEIVED TO HELP THEM CONTINUE THEIR IMPORTANT WORK.

Clark Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,295
Farrell Volunteer Fire Department	\$12,404
Greenville Fire Company.....	\$13,619
Hermitage Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,619
Patagonia Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,295
Sharon Fire Department.....	\$13,414
Sharpsville Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$13,619
Shenango Township Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$12,161
South Pymatuning Township Volunteer Fire Association...	\$12,161
Transfer Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,619
West Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department	\$13,458
West Salem Fire Department	\$12,809
Wheatland Volunteer Fire Department.....	\$12,323



Raw Boxing and Fitness is a new venture at the Chavers Center in Farrell. It was started by Cliff Gregory, a competitive boxer, to get young people off the streets and get them into positive activities which include boxing and physical fitness. From left to right are Farrell City Manager Michael Ceci, Joellen Arenas from the Shenango Valley YMCA, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Gregory's mother, Eva Collins, state Sen. Bob Robbins; Farrell Economic Development Consultant Ken Carano, and Jill Newcomer from the Gannon Small Business Development Center.