



State Representative  23rd Legislative District

# Dan Frankel

Democratic Caucus Chairman

Summer 2014

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## Democrats reject Pa. budget time bomb

Republicans often unfairly compare the state budget to a family budget. That's ironic this year, since no family I know would budget like Governor Tom Corbett and Republican legislators did. They tried to "balance" the budget by looting \$2 billion from other programs and relying on an inflated revenue projection to do the rest. That is like emptying your bank accounts, using one credit card to pay off another and then pinning your hopes on winning the lottery.

This is not a responsible budget – it's a time bomb wrapped in legislative language. In fact, only weeks after the budget passed, \$95 million that Gov. Corbett counted on was put on hold – a court said "Not so fast" on his drilling plans for state forests.

The crisis that we can already see coming is certainly not what Pennsylvanians deserve. Democrats would like to see a responsible budget, one that solves our problems today and also looks toward the future.

I have long been advocating for common-sense solutions: passing a fair gas-drilling tax; accepting the federal funding for a clean Medicaid expansion that would cover 350,000 people; and closing corporate tax loopholes. Only by facing our problems square-on can we address the fiscal issues facing the commonwealth.



## UPMC/Highmark consent decrees leave more to do

In June, the attorney general's office and the governor's office reached an agreement with UPMC and Highmark resulting in limited consent decrees intended to protect patients.

I'm disappointed that it took the threat of a lawsuit to get any agreement to patient access at our local hospitals. But I'm even more distressed at the way this agreement is playing out.

Initially, the agreement brought hope and relief for our most vulnerable patients.

We were told patients going through medical treatment, patients living with cancer or cancer survivors, adults in the Medicaid program, children, and seniors will have access to the full range of providers in our region. Patients with chronic conditions will have time to find another provider, or use UPMC doctors if no others are available. Anyone suffering a

heart attack or other health care emergency won't have to ask their ambulance driver to bypass a UPMC hospital to get to one that is willing to accept their insurance.

The consent decree makes clear that community assets such as Children's Hospital, Western Psychiatric and Hillman Cancer Center will be open to all.

Unfortunately, that initial relief is tempered by continued threats to block access that my constituents are hearing from the media – and from their own doctors.

**Clearly, these consent decrees don't magically fix the health care marketplace.** I will continue to advocate for greater transparency, broader access, and a fairer health care marketplace. In the meantime, I invite anyone with concerns about their individual situation to call my office – we will attempt to find an answer.

## Frankel, Stack introduce Patient Trust Act to keep politics out of exam room

I recently introduced legislation with state Sen. Mike Stack to counter increasing efforts to insert politics into the provider-patient relationship.

This issue is widespread: This summer, judges upheld a Florida law preventing pediatricians from asking parents about gun safety in the home. Pennsylvania has a gag rule on doctors discussing chemicals used in gas-drilling, and in other states, doctors are forced to provide patients with inaccurate information, such as the false link between pregnancy termination and breast cancer risk.

The exam room is not where political battles should be fought. Patients visit the doctor to receive care, not legislative agendas. Our legislation, the Patient Trust Act, would create a protection for providers from those laws asking them to violate their own standards of quality medical care.

The language of our bill is simple: Government agencies can't require physicians, nurse-midwives, or physician assistants to provide care in a way that isn't medically appropriate, or to say anything that isn't medically accurate.

The truth is, doctors make better doctors than legislators do.

## Pa. Women's Health Caucus unveils phase 2 of legislative agenda

As co-chair of the legislature's bipartisan Women's Health Caucus, in June I helped to unveil the second phase of our "Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health," which includes several new pieces of legislation:

- **Patient trust** (see separate article at left)
- **Protecting all employees from sexual harassment:** S.B. 475, sponsored by Sen. Jay Costa, D-Allegheny; and H.B. 2300. These similar bills would ensure all employees are protected from sexual harassment, including those at very small businesses.
- **Ensuring fair pensions for widows of state and municipal employees:** H.Bs. 2307 and 2308; Senate versions to be introduced. The federal government and 27 states have a spousal consent requirement to protect spouses, usually women, from being blindsided after a spouse's death when they discover that they are not entitled to any of their deceased spouse's pension benefit. This legislation would provide the same protection to Pennsylvania spouses.
- **Creating a task force on women veterans' health care:** Under this resolution, a task force would submit a report by Nov. 30 on health care issues unique to women veterans, along with the quality of and access to care for women veterans.

More details about phase two of the agenda are available at <http://is.gd/PaWomenPhase2>.

Bills from phase one of the Women's Health Caucus agenda that have advanced include:

- **Equitable protections for domestic violence victims:** H.B. 1796 would ban municipal ordinances that penalize crime victims for calling for help. This bill passed the House 197-0 in January but has been delayed by an unrelated issue in the Senate.
- **Stopping intimate partner harassment** (ban "revenge by invasion of privacy"). This new law (Act 115 of 2014) bans publishing any photo or video identifying another person, who is naked or engaging in a sexual act, without that person's consent.

More information about the phase-one bills can be found at <http://is.gd/PaWomenPhaseOne>.



*Rep. Frankel speaks at a Capitol news conference about Equal Pay Day. This year, April 8 was Equal Pay Day because it takes the average Pennsylvania woman one year, three months and eight days to make as much as a man. Rep. Frankel is a co-sponsor of H.B. 1890, which would update the conditions under which employers could pay different wages because of a factor other than sex. The bill would also strengthen anti-retaliation protections for employees attempting to bring a pay-equity lawsuit against their employer and for those who share information about their pay.*

## House approves overdose-prevention amendment

On June 24, the House approved bipartisan legislation I co-sponsored with Rep. Gene DiGirolamo, R-Bucks, to provide better access to the life-saving drug naloxone to prevent overdose deaths from heroin and other opioids. The vote was 177-26.

The amendment and a bill we introduced were modeled on the legislation that Rep. DiGirolamo and I crafted, working with advocates such as Prevention Point Pittsburgh.

The bill with our amendment (S.B. 1164) must now come up for a final vote in the full House, and then pass again in the Senate. If it does, police officers and firefighters would be able to save lives by providing naloxone to someone experiencing an overdose, and friends and family members would be able to keep the drug on hand to prevent the death of a loved one.



*Family members and friends of drug-overdose victims rally at the Capitol in May in support of Rep. Frankel's legislation to provide better access to the life-saving drug naloxone to prevent overdose deaths from heroin and other opioids.*

## Ride-share services allowed in Allegheny County

I'm delighted that Uber and Lyft have decided to seek temporary operating authority and can now operate legally in Allegheny County as appropriate regulations are created. I sent the PUC a letter about two weeks before the decision urging approval of experimental licenses for ride-sharing services in the city of Pittsburgh on an interim basis.

Pittsburgh residents are asking for these services. I want to make sure that they don't come at the expense of the safety of customers – or workers. I want to find a balance that protects our drivers and riders, while still making sure companies such as Uber and Lyft can operate.

## Frankel welcomes passage of Holocaust education law

I'm pleased to announce passage of a compromise law on educating Pennsylvania children about the Holocaust, genocide and other human rights violations.

So often in Holocaust observances, we say "Never forget" or "Never again." Act 70 of 2014 is a strong compromise that will help us to carry out those words through age-appropriate teaching of those terrible historical events so that future generations do not forget.

Under this new law, within two years, if at least 90 percent of Pennsylvania public school districts are not teaching about the Holocaust, genocide and other human rights violations, the state will require it.

## Voter deadlines

In the Nov. 4 election, voters will choose Pennsylvania's governor, as well as members of Congress and the state legislature. **The deadline to register to vote in this election is Oct. 6.**

Other important deadlines to know are: Oct. 28, the last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot; and Oct. 31, the last day for the county elections office to receive voted civilian absentee ballots.

For more information, please visit [www.alleghenycounty.us/elect/](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/elect/) or call the county elections office at 412-350-4500.





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## Affordable Care Act can still help Pittsburghers

With the next enrollment period for Affordable Care Act coverage approaching, I'll sponsor FREE events to help you learn more. All of these will take place at the Carnegie Library in Squirrel Hill, 5801 Forbes Ave., from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. **If you plan to attend, please RSVP to my office to reserve a space: 412-422-1774.**

**Informational session: Oct. 22.**

**Enrollment events: Nov. 19, Dec. 17, Jan. 7 and Feb. 9.**



*Rep. Frankel and other local officials and volunteers help to plant a tree at Frick Park on Earth Day 2014.*

## My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Birth certificate applications
- Pennsylvania income tax problems
- Problems with the Department of Public Welfare (food stamps, welfare)
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, student aid information, etc.
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Consumer complaints
- Complaints about state road conditions
- Problems or questions about PennDOT
- Tours of the State Capitol for individuals or groups
- Disability plates and placards
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies

***Any problem with your state government!***