

State Representative

**TIM BRIGGS**

149th Legislative District



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## Wolf signs bill to delay Keystone Exams

In February, Gov. Tom Wolf signed legislation that will delay the graduation requirement associated with the Keystone Exams until the 2018-19 school year. While I believe it is important to hold our students to a high standard of achievement, I was proud to support this legislation in the House and I am glad Gov. Wolf signed it into law.

I've heard from many people throughout the district about their concerns with the Keystone Exams. In too many cases, some students do not perform under the stress of a high-stakes standardized test, while teachers are forced to throw creativity and innovation aside in order to "teach to the test."

The Keystone Exams would have required students to attain a passing score in three standardized tests focusing on algebra, literature and biology as a condition of graduation. If a passing score was not achieved after two attempts at the exam, a project-based assessment was required.

We need to take a step back and take a hard look at this requirement, especially considering the cost to implement the exams with a new school funding formula on the horizon. The implementation of these exams was a product of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education – without legislative input. I'm glad so many of my colleagues agree that we need to re-evaluate this decision before it's required to begin.

In the end, we all have the same goal – to ensure our students are properly prepared for life after high school. I am sure we all can support high academic and educational standards for our students, but going about it in the wrong way can cause more harm than good. I will continue working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to ensure our educational standards benefit our students and advance their education.

## Working hard to secure a budget deal

As of this writing, Pennsylvania remains without a complete budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year, and Gov. Tom Wolf has now announced his budget proposal for 2016-17.

Shortly before the new year, an agreement had been reached that would have put an end to this unfortunate impasse. A bipartisan group of legislators, with Gov. Tom Wolf, agreed to a comprehensive budget framework that would properly fund Pennsylvania's schools and our health and human service providers while starting to address our structural deficit that previous administrations had created. Yet, in the hours leading up to the final vote, Speaker of the House Mike Turzai cancelled the rest of session and sent all representatives home for the holiday.

Because of this political gamesmanship, the Senate hurriedly sent a poorly planned and structurally unbalanced budget bill to the governor, simply to avoid closure of our cash-strapped schools and human service providers following the Christmas holiday.

The governor vetoed large chunks of the budget bill he was handed. He approved enough money to keep our schools open and sent funding to vital nonprofits, with the understanding that his vetoes would require continued negotiations. To this point, that has not happened, and Republican leaders have not shown any willingness to finish the 2015/2016 budget since returning to Harrisburg in January.

Despite good-faith efforts from many officials on both sides of the aisle, we still find ourselves in this absolutely unacceptable position, and it must end.

I stand ready to compromise for a comprehensive budget that resolves our long-term structural deficit; makes a substantial investment in our education system; makes sure human service organizations and safety-net programs are made whole; and puts Pennsylvania on the right path forward.

# PSAHPERD Award

In November, I was proud to accept the 2015 Legislative Honor Award from the Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance (PSAHPERD). This award was in recognition of my support and advocacy for quality health and physical education in our public schools.

Some of the initiatives cited by the association were my work in the introduction of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Act (requiring a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity for every child every regular school day), as well as the passage of the Equity in Interscholastic Athletics Disclosure Law (strengthening Title IX reporting requirements for schools), and the Safety in Youth Sports Act (setting new requirements for Departments of Health and Education aimed at preventing serious head injuries in student athletes and raising awareness of how to deal with concussions). I was honored to accept the award at PSAHPERD's State Convention.



*Accepting the PSAHPERD Legislative Honor Award in November.*

## 'There Ought to Be a Law' fifth-grade essay contest



My seventh annual "There Ought to Be a Law" fifth-grade essay contest is now under way! Over the past few months, I've been pleased to speak with several participating classes about the role of government and the legislative process.

I look forward to reading their persuasive essays promoting laws that they feel would make their school, community or state a better place. I will announce the winner and finalists this spring. The winner will receive an official citation from the Pennsylvania House and be



*The fifth-grade students from Penn Wynne Elementary School were excited to discuss this year's "There Ought to Be a Law" essay contest.*

invited along with his or her family to spend the day with me in Harrisburg for lunch, recognition in the House chamber, and a personal guided tour of the state Capitol Building.



## UMAHS Art Show Open House

As part of my Student Art Series, I am committed to displaying outstanding artwork from local artists at my district office. As chairman of the House Arts & Culture Caucus, I strongly believe arts education to be integral to a well-rounded curriculum, and I'm focused on supporting arts programs in our schools and throughout the region.

*In January, I recognized the talent of several students from Upper Merion Area High School whose artwork was displayed at my district office.*

## Norristown Farm Park

As spring approaches and the weather begins to warm, I encourage you and your family to visit the Norristown Farm Park. As a member of the Norristown Farm Park Advisory Board, I believe it is one of the most unique parks in the state park system, and it is operated and maintained by Montgomery County.

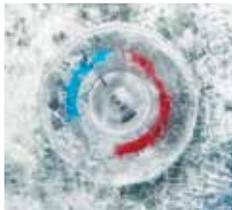
It is a working farm that has been in continuous use since colonial times. One of the last undeveloped areas in Montgomery County, the 690 acre park includes terrific outdoor amenities such as nature trails, paved trails for biking and running, picnic areas, and areas for fishing such as the Farm Pond or either of the two trout-stocked streams, Stony Creek and Kepner Creek.



It is truly a magnificent combination of recreation, agriculture and nature located in our region.

*You can visit the park at 2500 Upper Farm Road, Norristown, PA 19401 or learn more information by contacting my office or visiting the county's website at [www.montcopa.org/norristownfarmpark](http://www.montcopa.org/norristownfarmpark).*

## Keep your family warm this winter



Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is accepting applications, and is expected to close April 1. LIHEAP helps low-income families pay their heating bills.

LIHEAP provides two types of grants – a cash grant sent directly to utility companies to pay a portion of the resident's fuel bill, and a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat due to a furnace failure or an unexpected fuel shortage.

LIHEAP cash grants – based on household income, family size, type of heating fuel and region – will range from \$100 to \$1,000 in 2015-16. LIHEAP crisis grants will range from \$25 to \$500.

Residents who received a LIHEAP grant last season should have received a postcard or a 2015-16 LIHEAP application with a registration number.

Those who did not receive LIHEAP last season may obtain an application by contacting my office, calling LIHEAP directly at 1-866-857-7095, or applying online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

## Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award

In January, I presented an official citation from the Pennsylvania House to recognize ACLAMO Family Centers of Montgomery County, an agency that assists Latino and other low-income residents. ACLAMO was the 2016 recipient of the Upper Merion Township Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award, and I was honored to attend the ceremony, speak of the importance of giving back to the community, and recognize the vital work the agency is doing.



*From left: Nelly Jimenez, Executive Director and CEO of ACLAMO, Laney Durland, ACLAMO teacher and social worker, UM MLK Chair LaVera Seymour, and 2015 recipient Garfield Jackson.*

## PA BIO Award

I am honored to be the recipient of Pennsylvania Bio's 2016 State Official of the Year Award. Pennsylvania is becoming a major hub for the life sciences industry in the United States. Pennsylvania Bio is a group of companies from the bio-tech industry working to promote the life sciences by creating a business and public policy environment that fosters growth and success in the bio-tech field. I expect to be presented with the award at Pennsylvania Bio's Annual Dinner in March. As Co-Chairman of the House Bio-Tech/Life Science Caucus, I look forward to continuing the work to ensure the advances happening in our state benefit the prosperity and well-being of all Pennsylvanians.



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## Working for you!

My office assists thousands of constituents just like you with problems, questions and concerns about state-related issues. I could not do it without the help of great staffers who are always ready to serve you. At my district office, you can obtain a variety of informational booklets, brochures and other publications on state programs; receive help completing state forms; and get help solving a problem regarding a state law, program or service.

The office is located at 554 Shoemaker Road in King of Prussia, and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. To be as open and accessible as possible, we also have satellite offices at locations that might be more convenient for you. Free notary service is also available at all offices.

Problem-solving and constituent service is a lot of what we do, but I am also just as committed to being available to discuss legislative issues and concerns about our state. I have been excited to host a number of community events including town halls, community roundtables and my "Breakfast with Briggs" meetings. This helps me to stay in touch with you and hear what's on your mind. I look forward to seeing you around the district.



## Save the Date! Free Upcoming Events!

These events are always a success, and I enjoy hosting them for my constituents.

### Community Document Shredding Event

**Saturday, April 23**

**11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Harrilton High School  
 600 N. Ithan Ave. • Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

*\*To ensure everyone has an opportunity to shred their documents, it's requested that attendees limit themselves to three boxes/bags of documents.*

## Upcoming SEPTA Community Meetings to discuss High Speed Rail Line Extension

### Monday, March 7

**Open House: 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. | Presentation: 6 p.m.**  
 Radisson Hotel Valley Forge • 1160 1st Ave., King of Prussia

### Wednesday, March 9

**Open House: 4 p.m. – 8 p.m. | Presentation: 6 p.m.**  
 Norristown Municipal Building • 235 E. Airy St., Norristown

### Tuesday, March 15

**Open House: 2 p.m. – 8 p.m. | Presentation: 6 p.m.**  
 DoubleTree Hotel Valley Forge • 301 W. DeKalb Pike, King of Prussia

## Constituent Breakfasts

Join me for my next breakfast to discuss your concerns about state issues and get an update on the current legislative session.

### Friday, May 20

**8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.**  
 Westover Country Club  
 401 S. Schuylkill Ave. • Jeffersonville, PA 19403

### Friday, June 3

**8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.**  
 Michael's Restaurant and Deli  
 130 Town Center Road • King of Prussia, PA 19406