



State Representative

Pamela A. DeLissio

194th Legislative District



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2015-2016 BUDGET UPDATE

On Dec. 29, the governor signed the General Appropriations (GA) bill, which was passed by the legislature. **I was a no vote on House Bill 1460 because it did not adequately fund basic education or human services programs.**

The governor “blue lined” about 100 line items in this GA bill. Some line items were zeroed out in their entirety; other line items were reduced from the amount in the legislation.

Funding for the last six months of the fiscal year for basic education and human services was blue lined because funding was vastly short of what is needed to fund them adequately. Both of these areas had significantly reduced funding over the past four budget cycles.

Additional budget-related bills remain unfinished. The Fiscal Code and Tax Code bills, both integral to operating the budget, have yet to pass both chambers.

Increased revenue is needed to support H.B. 1460 as it was passed. Revenue can originate from many sources including Sales and Use tax, a Marcellus Shale

severance tax, Personal Income Tax (PIT), and tax on other tobacco products and cigars – neither of which are currently taxed in Pennsylvania.

It is important that we have smart government, and my commitment remains to ensure that all revenue dollars are spent effectively. For context, a one-quarter percent increase in the PIT, last raised in 2004, would raise almost \$1 billion. The impact on a household with annual income of \$50,000 would be about \$2.50 per week.

In my opinion, during our six-month budget negotiations, egos, rigid ideology and personal political ambitions continue to derail the budget process. I often used my hashtag #cluckfuster on Twitter to describe these budget negotiations.

My actions to assist with this negotiation include continuing to dialogue with members of my own party, who are not necessarily all on the same page and to dialogue with members of the majority party – some of whom are more aligned with members of the minority party than their own party. A group of bipartisan

women legislators – I refer to them as my “gal pals” – has been meeting in the mornings in the Capitol cafeteria. We gather regularly to get to know each other better and to discuss strategy pertaining to the interminable budget discussions.

On Nov. 25, I sent a letter to the governor and House leaders suggesting that it was time to retain a mediator. My letter regarding mediation was also picked up in the Sunday Inquirer on Nov. 29.

Please know that I think of myself as a fiscally responsible legislator.

For some of my colleagues, fiscally responsible means no new taxes EVER.

For me, fiscally responsible means identifying and funding sufficiently the priorities of Pennsylvanians. The people are clear that basic public education is a – if not THE – priority.

It is also critically important that sufficient new revenue be raised to address the structural deficit of \$1 billion and counting.

Safety on Henry Avenue

In August, I received a petition from 60 constituents who live on or near the upper part of Henry Avenue. The petition was in reference to the number of accidents that have occurred along this corridor as a result of speeding and resulted in injury and property damage.

The petition was filed as a safety request and describes that portion of Henry Avenue as a “speedway.” I would describe almost the entire stretch of Henry Avenue, down to where it intersects with Hunting Park, as a speedway.

Over the past several years, PennDOT officials have reviewed and discussed proposed safety improvements, which are the result of an almost two-year federally funded safety study.

During the course of the study, PennDOT presented information at many civic association meetings in the Roxborough area and held a public meeting with their findings on Sept. 30, 2014. I arranged for another public meeting to review those findings, which resulted in the meeting in October.

At that meeting, representatives from PennDOT, the Philadelphia Streets Department, City Councilman Curtis Jones’ office, and local and state law enforcement agencies reviewed the outcome of the study, the proposed improvements and heard community feedback.

Constituents learned that speed enforcement is hampered by the fact that only state troopers can use radar, and that the mechanism for local law enforcement to issue a speeding violation that would not be challenged is also cumbersome.

PennDOT agreed to review and evaluate the additional community input, and all agencies agreed to participate in a follow-up meeting, which was held on Feb. 11. At the Feb. 11 meeting, it was clear that PennDOT and their consultant had heard the concerns of the community in reference to speeding and presented many additional possible design measures for traffic calming. My office will remain in touch with PennDOT and the community as the design work proceeds.



Town and Gown meetings to continue quarterly

In November, I convened the district's fourth Town and Gown meeting – comprising a coalition of universities including St. Joseph's, Philadelphia, Temple and LaSalle and a list of stakeholders including representatives of civic associations, local law enforcement from the 5th and 39th police districts, Liquor Control Enforcement, the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB), city agencies, Philadelphia City Councilman Curtis Jones' office and bar owners – to discuss liquor-control enforcement as it pertains to irresponsible drinking and underage drinking by students who frequent bars and party in the neighborhoods of the 194th.

The goal of the group, known as the Town and Gown Coalition, is to foster responsible drinking by students, and to identify ways to encourage students to be responsible neighbors on and off campus.

It was encouraging to hear the progress that the universities have made to educate and orient students to drinking responsibly and being good neighbors in the community. Although not without incident, representatives of the civic groups present indicated that it was a relatively quiet fall semester and reinforced their willingness to participate with the universities in such programs as off-campus housing fairs.

The universities were awarded a grant from the PLCB, which will help with efforts to provide additional police on certain dates and weekends identified as having a high risk for excessive drinking.

I continue to be impressed with the commitment of the stakeholders in collaborating to address this shared



concern. The group agreed to meet quarterly, and a report summarizing our first four meetings is available on my website at www.pahouse.com/DeLissio.



Redistricting reform remains a top priority

Following November's state Supreme Court elections in Pennsylvania, which saw three new Democratic judges voted in, I voiced my concern that the pendulum of redistricting power should not benefit any one party's favor.

Pennsylvania has five Democratic judges on the Supreme Court and two Republicans. The state Supreme Court historically wields great influence on the approval of redistricted legislative maps that are updated each decade in concert with the U.S. Census.

As a state legislator, I am familiar with the redistricting process and remain hopeful that the new majority of Democratic judges creates an opportunity to counterbalance what has historically been severely gerrymandered districts designed by the Republican majority that controls the House and Senate.

To this end, I am supportive of a new initiative led by Common Cause PA and the League of Women Voters to establish a coalition to advocate for redistricting reform. Fair Districts PA is focused on working diligently for redistricting reform. Such reform requires a constitutional amendment and that the legislation must pass in two successive sessions of the legislature and then be approved or disapproved by the voters.

I am a strong advocate for the formation of a nonpartisan independent redistricting commission, which would correct the practice of gerrymandering. Such a meaningful change would produce a very different atmosphere in Harrisburg.

Short of redistricting reform legislation becoming law before the next census in 2020 – followed by redistricting in 2021 – Pennsylvania will need to rely on its Supreme Court to ensure that the newly drawn districts are indeed compact, contiguous and keep communities whole.

State House districts include about 60,000 people; state Senate districts include about 250,000 people.

Plan for merit-based judge selections clears Judiciary Committee

Legislation to replace the current process of voting for politically backed appellate judges in Pennsylvania with a merit-selection system was approved by the House Judiciary Committee in October.

House Bill 1336 is necessary to end the current practice of judicial candidates campaigning – and the need to raise campaign funds to mount such judicial races – and to provide the means to select judges based on merit.

Merit selection would employ a bipartisan citizens' nominating commission of lawyers and non-lawyers selected by elected officials to review applicants' qualifications and recommend a short list to the governor for nomination. After Senate confirmation, a judge would sit for four years and then voters would determine if the judge serves an additional 10-year term.

It is a daunting task for voters to research and understand the backgrounds, credentials and qualifications of judicial candidates. Many voters rely on the recommendations of the local bar association but many do not avail themselves of this resource. The discussion about merit selection is a conversation that will help people understand that there will be a true vetting process that currently doesn't exist.

Merit selection would focus on qualifications: legal experience, reputation for ethical behavior, honesty, fairness and good temperament. Judges no longer would be chosen according to their ballot position, campaign fundraising abilities or other irrelevant factors.

Because the bill is a proposed state constitutional amendment, it must pass the legislature in two consecutive sessions and then go before the people in a public referendum.

Pennsylvania's governors from the past 18 years support merit selection as does Governor Tom Wolf.

Legislation to offer health care plan introduced

In early November, I introduced legislation that would provide health care coverage in Pennsylvania at a lower cost with total freedom to choose health care providers.

The Pennsylvania Health Care Plan, House Bill 1688, sets out a blueprint of bold steps that would result in a healthier citizenry without the burden of co-payments, deductibles, premiums or concern about networks. It improves upon our current system by preserving the private practice of medicine and the right of patients to choose their health care providers. It would ensure the cost-effective delivery of covered services, which range from catastrophic care to wellness and preventative care. Health care providers would have autonomy over patient care.

This legislation is possible because the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act allows states the option to innovate with their own health care plans as long as the proposed plans are more economical and efficient. This proposed legislation meets that criteria, and the option for the states to innovate becomes available in 2017.

The plan is supported by savings from replacing the current multiple payer system, which is less than efficient and often profit-oriented. The plan would be funded by a 10 percent employer tax paid on payroll and a 3 percent personal income tax. Again, no co-payments, deductibles or premiums would be



*Legislation like mine is discussed in the documentary, **FIX IT: Healthcare at the Tipping Point**. Find out more at <http://fixithealthcare.com>.*

paid by the employer or the participant and in the majority of situations this will be a cost savings to both.

Knowing definitively their health care cost exposure for the year is a significant benefit to plan participants.

The Pennsylvania Health Care Plan is a complex topic, and I will hold informational sessions for my colleagues and cover the topic in my town hall meetings.

Billboards removed from Wissahickon train station

Following seven months of effort, a double billboard has been removed from the Wissahickon train station. This request was initiated by the Wissahickon Interested Citizens Civic Association (WICA).

In May 2015, WICA contacted me to have the billboard removed. The train station had been cleaned up within the past several years, and Ridge Avenue from Main Street west was being evaluated for improvements as the neighbors worked to clean up this gateway to their neighborhood.

The station looks great sans billboards. A big thank you to WICA for initiating the request and to SEPTA for its agreement to remove the billboards and to Clear Channel for navigating the bureaucracy to obtain the demolition permits. The gateway is looking better and better, and this effort demonstrates what cooperation and determination can accomplish.

Manayunk Bridge Opening

October 30 marked the official opening of the Manayunk Bridge, which connects the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Schuylkill River Trail. This project was a great example of how two local governments, Philadelphia and Lower Merion Township, Montgomery County and the state and federal governments can work together to make a vision a reality.

The project serves to fill a gap in the Complete the Trail Campaign, which is necessary to create a continuous, paved off-road trail for recreation and commuting between center city and Valley Forge.

The views from the bridge are magnificent, and it is now possible to walk from the Cynwyd train station near Montgomery Avenue all the way to Manayunk.

Efforts such as this require the support of elected officials at all levels, and it was a pleasure to work with the Lower Merion Commissioners, City Council, then-Mayor Michael Nutter, the Montgomery County Commissioners and Congressman Chaka Fattah to get this bridge open.

This success would not have been possible without the tireless work and support of a cadre of dedicated volunteers. With spring weather coming, make sure to add the bridge to an upcoming walk.



Second Annual Open House held Dec. 10



Constituents turned out for my second annual open house on Thursday, Dec. 10, which was held in the district office located at 6511 Ridge Ave.

Desserts were prepared by seniors in the Culinary Arts Program of the Philip Randolph Technical High School located in the East Falls part of the district.

Our open house was fun, with neighbors and friends stopping in to say hello and checking out the services the office provides. Staff skyped me in from Harrisburg – I was detained due to the budget impasse – and had a great dialogue with about 15 constituents who were present at the time.

The Annual Open House is an opportunity to ask questions and interact with me and staff, who can share information on state services and how we can best assist you to navigate the state bureaucracy.

Guests were invited to post a favorite location in the 194th Legislative District on the “brag wall,” staff researched to see if anyone had any unclaimed property being held by the Pennsylvania Treasury, and generally warm greetings of the season were exchanged by all.

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Save the dates



SATURDAY, APRIL 9

9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Roxborough Municipal Lot
514 Dupont Street
Philadelphia, PA 19128

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Old "Annie Sez" parking lot next to Staples
925 Montgomery Avenue
Narberth, PA 19072



54TH TOWN HALL MEETING THURSDAY, MARCH 3

7 p.m.

Special Guest: Secretary Pedro Rivera, Pa. Department of Education
WB Saul High School Multi-Purpose Room
7100 Henry Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19128



55TH TOWN HALL MEETING THURSDAY, APRIL 14

7 p.m.

Special Guest: Secretary Kathy Manderino, Pa. Department of Labor and Industry
Philadelphia University Tuttleman Auditorium
4201 Henry Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19144

56TH TOWN HALL MEETING THURSDAY, MAY 12

7 p.m.

Special Guest: Secretary Teresa Osborne, Pa. Department of Aging
Cathedral Village, Cathedral Hall Auditorium
600 E. Cathedral Road, Philadelphia, PA 19128

Senior Expo: A success

My first Senior Expo was held Oct. 1 and was a huge success in spite of a chilly and damp weather day. My office hosted the expo in conjunction with Roxborough Memorial Hospital's Good Neighbor Health Fair.

This was "not your grandmother's expo." Since my professional background is senior housing and services, I know that many older adults continue to live vibrant and meaningful lives well into their 90s and beyond and look for new adventures to learn about and be a part of.

Exhibitors included a casting agency, city and state agencies that provide services for older adults, the East Falls Village organization, a volunteer-driven organization that provides support, services, and programs that enable members to live healthy and meaningful lives in their own homes as well as the Roxborough School of Nursing, whose students conducted many types of health screenings.

Seniors had an opportunity to receive information about preventive measures for recognizing crime and fraud. They also were connected with initiatives promoting educational, life long-learning and foster grandparenting. Cosmetology students from Mercy Vocational High School offered hand massages.

It's important to remember that seniors are ever-interested in opportunities to teach, share and give back. I look forward to planning our next expo and building on this year's success.

Why You Should Come to the District Office!

- Property Tax and Rent Rebate applications
- Unemployment Compensation issues
- Applications for: LIHEAP (heating aid), SNAP (food stamps), medical assistance, TANF, etc.
- PennDOT: Vehicle registration forms, disability parking placards, driver's license applications, non-driver's photo ID card applications
- Birth and death certificate applications
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- APPRISE counseling
- Pennsylvania state tax forms
- Free notary service of Pennsylvania state documents
- Any matter with state government

Great Friendly Staff!