

GREG VITALI
STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 202166
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-2166

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HARRISBURG, PA
PERMIT NO. 529

lpo.ts.0216

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

FEBRUARY 2016

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT



DISTRICT OFFICE:

1001 East Darby Road
Havertown, PA 19083
(610) 789-3900
Fax: (215) 560-4197

EMAIL: greg@gregvitali.com

CAPITOL OFFICE:

38B East Wing
P.O. Box 202166
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2166
(717) 787-7647
Fax: (717) 705-2089

WEBSITE: www.gregvitali.com

Children's Health Insurance Program extended

A new law extends the state's Children's Health Insurance Program, CHIP, through the end of 2017.

CHIP covers immunizations, wellness checkups, prescriptions, dental, vision and hearing services, diagnostic testing, emergency care, mental health benefits, and hospitalizations, as well as substance abuse rehabilitation and other services.

CHIP coverage is available to any child in Pennsylvania whose family earns too much to qualify for Medical Assistance but can't afford to purchase private insurance or isn't covered by an employer.

For an average four-person family, CHIP is free if household income is \$32,253 to \$50,440, low cost if the household income is \$50,440 to \$76,145, or full cost if the household income exceeds \$76,145. Premiums vary, depending on the carrier.

If your child doesn't have health insurance, or if you know of a child who isn't covered, you can find out more about CHIP, including providers in your area, and how to enroll at www.chipcoverspakids.com or by contacting my Havertown office.

Are you paying too much for electricity?

The Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate recommends that you regularly check your monthly utility bill to ensure you're getting the best price for electricity.

As a result of a 1996 law, you are free to choose which company generates your home's electricity. You can buy electricity from PECO at a default rate called the "price to compare," or you can choose from competing suppliers. However, you might be paying more from the suppliers than from PECO.

The experience in some other states shows that many people who have switched their electric suppliers are paying more for their electricity. This is often because customers do not closely monitor their monthly bills and the electric market. While your rate may at first be lower than the price to compare, the terms of many contracts include special offers of fixed-

rate deals that expire after a certain time period, resulting in a high rate.

Energy rates fluctuate regularly. If you have already switched energy suppliers, you should continue to check for updated rates frequently to ensure you are getting the best price. You can do this by comparing the price per kilowatt hour you currently pay with PECO's price to compare, both of which can be found on your PECO bill, and the comprehensive list of energy rates for your area. Competing energy suppliers' rates can be found on www.papowerswitch.com.

Alternative suppliers may provide benefits such as renewable power sources or variable rates.

For more information regarding electricity choice, visit www.papowerswitch.com or the Office of Consumer Advocate at www.oca.state.pa.us.

Primary election is April 26

Tuesday, April 26 is Pennsylvania's primary election. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

The last day to register to vote in the primary is March 28, and you can do that online at www.register.votespa.com.

In this primary election, registered Democrats or Republicans can select nominees from their respective parties to represent them in the November general election.

Voters will cast ballots for president of the United States, U.S. senator, U.S. representative, state attorney general, state auditor general, state treasurer, state senator and state representative, and delegates to the presidential national conventions.

Your polling place may have changed since the last election. Voters can verify their polling location at www.votespa.com.

Unless you are a first-time voter or voting at a new precinct, photo ID is not required.

All voters will be asked to consider two ballot questions. The first asks whether to increase the mandatory age that judges must retire from 70 to 75. The second asks whether the Philadelphia Traffic Court should be abolished. You do not have to be a registered member of a political party in order to vote on these questions.

For more information and a complete list of candidates, visit the Delaware County Election Bureau website at www.co.delaware.pa.us or call 610-891-4673. Voters in Montgomery County can visit the Montgomery County Voter Services website at www.montcopa.org or call 610-278-3275.

Important 2016 Primary Election Dates

March 28 – Last day to register to vote

April 19 – Last day to apply for an absentee ballot

April 22 – Last day for county election offices to receive absentee ballots

April 26 – Election Day

Polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program will open in February

The state will open applications for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program in February.

This program provides a state rebate on 2015 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 free help applying through my district office or on the state Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov. There is no charge to apply to this program. If you receive an offer to apply for a fee, please disregard it.

The state will begin mailing rebate checks on July 1.

Online voter registration now available in Pennsylvania

Gov. Tom Wolf launched a website to make it easier for you to register to vote and participate in elections. You can access it by visiting: www.register.votespa.com.

The new website allows you to make updates to your voter record, such as change of name, address or party affiliation. You can also request assistance at a polling place.

This online system is more secure because the form will be transmitted directly to the proper county voter

registration office for processing, compared with the traditional paper application containing personal information that might pass through several hands before you are officially registered.

The site is directly linked to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, so if you have a driver's license or PennDOT ID card, your signature on file can immediately be linked to your voter record.

Persian Gulf Veterans' Bonus Program extended

A new law extends the Persian Gulf Veterans' Bonus Program for three years, to Aug. 31, 2018.

The program pays \$75 per month of active duty service in the Persian Gulf Theater, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in the operations, an additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for

an additional \$5,000.

Those who were Pennsylvania residents and served on active duty between Aug. 2, 1990 and Aug. 31, 1991 may qualify for the bonus.

For more information about the program and to apply, visit the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs website at www.dmva.pa.gov or call 1-866-458-9182.

Free tax help for seniors

Free electronic filing tax preparation assistance programs for seniors are available throughout the state. Two local locations are in Havertown and Wayne.

Help will be available at the Oakmont Administration Center, 50 E. Eagle Road, Havertown, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 2 through April 15. Appointments must be made in advance by calling 610-853-5900, ext. 7050.

Help will be available at the Wayne Senior Center, 108 Station Road, Wayne on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. by appointment only. Please call 610-688-6246 for an appointment.

For other sites in the area, call 1-888-227-7669 or go to www.aarp.org.

Returns are prepared by volunteers who are trained by AARP Tax-Aide in conjunction with the IRS.

2016 House of Representatives calendar available

You can download the 2016 House of Representatives calendar on my legislative website, www.gregvitali.com. It contains 12 seasonal color photos of the state Capitol Building. Just scroll down the right-hand side of the page to "Download your 2016 Capitol Scenes calendar here."

Free notary service at district office

You can have most official documents notarized for free in my district office. Please call ahead to make sure the notary is in the office and can accommodate your type of document. Notary work is done most weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The person whose signature is to be notarized must sign the document in person in the presence of the notary and provide proof of identity such as a valid

driver's license, photo ID card, or passport. Please let my staff know if witnesses are needed, in addition to the notary, for your documents. My office has a limit of five notarizations per person.

My office is on the second floor. If you are unable to climb stairs, please let us know when you call, and we can arrange to have the notary meet you on the ground floor.

Naloxone availability expanded

Naloxone is a drug that can reverse an overdose caused by an opioid drug, such as heroin, oxycodone or Percocet. Naloxone is now available to all Pennsylvanians through a standing order issued by the state physician general.

This standing order is a prescription that applies to all Pennsylvanians. It entitles family members and friends to access the medication without obtaining a prescription from their family doctor. Although the standing order is kept on file at most large-chain pharmacies, it is best to call your pharmacy to see if they have the standing order on file and have Naloxone in stock. Should you need to download a copy of the standing order, it is available at the state Department of Health's website at www.health.pa.gov.

Naloxone is administered by nasal spray or auto-injector. Not all pharmacies stock both forms, and insurance coverage may vary depending on the form of Naloxone being purchased and individual insurance plan. You can call your benefits manager to determine if the medication is covered by your particular plan or if your purchase of the medication will be an out-of-pocket cost.

For more information about Naloxone and how to administer it, please visit the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs' webpage at www.ddap.pa.gov and click on the link for the Naloxone & Reverse Overdose Toolkit.

New law provides jury duty exemption for those 75 and older, and for breastfeeding mothers

A new law permits people 75 and older and breastfeeding mothers to opt out of jury duty. Pennsylvania is now one of 27 states that exempt the elderly from serving on juries.

If you are selected for jury duty and do not wish to serve because you are over 75 years of age or a breastfeeding mother, you may note that in the appropriate section of the jury questionnaire.

For more information about this new law, contact the Delaware County jury administrator at 610-891-4621 or online at www.co.delaware.pa.us or in Montgomery County, contact the jury commission at 610-278-3215 or online at www.montcopa.org.

Heating assistance program accepting applications

Pennsylvania's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program – LIHEAP – is now open for applications, and 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.

To qualify for either a cash grant or a crisis grant, the income limit for a one-person household is \$17,655. This income limit increases by \$6,240 for each additional person in the household.

Residents who received a LIHEAP grant last season should have already 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.

Join my email update list

I maintain an email list to provide you with the latest information about public meetings, traffic alerts, community events, state and local programs and services, and other items of interest to the community. If you would like to be added to my email list, please email my office at RepVitali@pahouse.net.