

PennDOT selling drivers' data is a bridge too far

What if I told you that your favorite app or website was collecting your personal information and selling it to the highest bidder? It probably wouldn't thrill you, but I bet you wouldn't be shocked.

While the idea of anyone selling our personal information may be unseemly, it is a reality of the world we live in. If you don't want that company to sell your information, you are free to delete their app or stop using their website.

But what if I told you that some or all of the personal information that you provide to PennDOT is sold to third parties, who then can turn around and resell that information at a profit? And that you're powerless to stop it?

PennDOT sells personal data such as information on drivers, registrations and titles to other individuals and businesses. While this is nothing new – in fact, this practice has gone on for decades – the practice has ramped up since passage of the transportation funding plan in 2013, which made the sale of consumer data easier and more lucrative. This year, PennDOT, which is the only state agency that sells consumer information, is estimated to rake in over \$40 million on these transactions alone.

The third parties have the authority to resell that information for an unspecified fee and without payment of any additional fee to PennDOT. Recently, in a published internal Office of the Budget audit, it was revealed that Sterling Infosystems, one of the third-party vendors, had been ignoring security procedures laid out by the state, putting your personal information in jeopardy.

In 2013, I raised concerns over this very issue, but the selling of data to third parties continues. This problem needs fixed, and it needs fixed now. I've recently re-introduced legislation, H.B. 2039, which would prohibit third parties from being able to sell personal driver and vehicle information for profit. This practice simply needs to stop. Selling data when consumers are paying for services from the government is simply bad policy.

In fairness, there are appropriate situations where PennDOT should – and in fact is required by federal law to – provide information: at the request of an insurance provider, for example. My legislation would allow for this necessary sharing of information. But, in my judgment, it is unacceptable for PennDOT to become a clearinghouse of personal data for anyone willing to pay the right price.

Legislation update

Digital textbooks could save money

I am working on a proposal that would require publishers to offer an identical digital equivalent for any college textbook sold within the state. I am always looking at ways



to make higher education more affordable in Pennsylvania. While the cost of tuition continues to increase at colleges and universities across the country, Pennsylvania should be focused on providing attainable, quality education that can attract students both from within the commonwealth's borders and beyond.

Earthquakes

I am working on a proposal that would require insurers in Pennsylvania to cover all types of earthquakes for homeowners who have purchased earthquake insurance, including earthquakes caused by human activity such as methods used to find natural gas deposits.

Recent seismic testing caused several structures in the district to sustain damage, but homeowners were initially informed that their claims would not be covered despite having earthquake riders as part of their homeowners'

insurance. My proposal would clarify this situation and ensure that homeowners who have purchased earthquake insurance aren't on the hook for damages due to the origin of any seismic activity.

Setback requirements for drilling near dams

I am working on a proposal that would prohibit the drilling of unconventional gas wells within 4,000 feet of any existing dam or reservoir, like the Ambridge reservoir. Additionally, the proposal would prohibit the drilling of unconventional gas wells within 2,000 horizontal feet of any existing water well, surface water intake or water supply extraction point used by a water purveyor without the written consent of the water purveyor.

I want the natural gas industry to be successful in Pennsylvania, because that means Pennsylvania will be successful. My proposal, based on the expert analysis of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Texas, would allow these companies to continue their operations without significant risk of them damaging our water and waterways.

Opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement

I have co-authored a resolution with Reps. Stephen Barrar and Dan Miller that would urge Congress to reject the Federal Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP is the latest in a line of poorly designed trade deals that have destroyed our manufacturing base and negatively impacted our middle class, both in our state and across our nation.

Pennsylvania tackling opioid, heroin epidemic head-on

Special session planned for the fall

Pennsylvania is dealing with a major epidemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heroin and opioid overdoses are the leading cases of accidental deaths, killing more Pennsylvanians than deadly crashes. This epidemic crosses all social, geographic and political lines.

A recent study by the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association provides a harsh reality: seven Pennsylvanians die every day due to heroin or prescription opioid overdose. In 2014, nearly 2,500 Pennsylvanians died from a drug overdose.

Personally, my childhood friend Amy Scherfel-Watkins' son, Brooks, was a victim of a heroin overdose in Washington County last year.

Since then, Amy, her husband and her family have been telling the story of the devastation their family has endured, hoping to capture the attention of anybody and everybody.

As she told me, if they can help even one person, then their son's purpose here on Earth will be fulfilled. I echo those statements and believe as a parent and a policy maker it is my duty to do all that I can to end this epidemic that is affecting families across Pennsylvania and our nation.

This fall, a special session will be held to focus lawmakers' attention on combating this crisis from every front possible.

Addiction is an issue that every part of this state is currently in the midst of battling. But rural and small-town Pennsylvania communities face very different challenges than communities in Philadelphia or even Pittsburgh. During the special session in the fall, I will do everything in my power to ensure that rural communities are not overlooked.

I will continue working with my colleagues — Democrats and Republicans — on bipartisan ways to address this crisis head-on.

2016-17 state budget a step in the right direction

Over the summer, I supported the bipartisan passage of a state budget that funds education at record levels, without a broad-based tax increase. I will be the first to admit that this budget is far from perfect, but it is a solid step in the right direction — especially for our schools and students.

After the protracted impasse of last year, it is refreshing to see this compromise, especially as it contains historic education funding but doesn't add to our structural deficit.

The state spending plan includes a \$250 million increase for pre-K through 12 education funding, including \$200 million for K-12, \$30 million for pre-K and Head Start, and \$20 million for special education.

The budget will also:

- Provide funding for three additional Pennsylvania State Police cadet classes;
- Transfer millions from the Oil and Gas Fund to the General Fund to give money to conservation programs, Growing Greener and the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund; and
- Dedicate \$15 million to combat heroin and opioid addiction, including funds for emergency addiction treatment and behavioral health services.

While there are parts I dislike about the budget, in reality it is a workable compromise that will invest in our state without relying on a sales or income tax increase, and avoiding an impasse should prevent future downgrades of the state credit rating.

I was proud to stand in solidarity with Gov. Tom Wolf and House Democratic and Republican lawmakers in June to detail progress that has been made on fighting the opioid epidemic.



Matzie serving as Southwest Delegation Chairman & Deputy Whip

Last year, my fellow House representatives from the Southwest region elected me to serve as Chairman of the Southwest Delegation. I was honored to be entrusted with this crucial role and I have been seeking to work with those colleagues since then to improve the quality of life for citizens throughout Southwest Pennsylvania.

I was also selected as Deputy Whip by our leadership and was selected to serve on the following committees this session: Commerce, Consumer Affairs as the Subcommittee Chair on Public Utilities, Insurance, Health, Policy as Vice Chairman and Transportation as the Subcommittee Chair on Railroads. Other appointed positions include the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Legislative Data Processing Committee and the PIAA Oversight Committee.