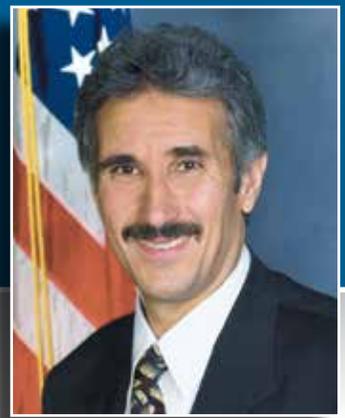


Rep. Chris

Sainato



Summer 2016

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Pa. budget: A step in the right direction

Pennsylvania has an on-time spending plan to carry through next June.

While we did avoid a repeat of last year's disastrous stalemate that put many of our schools and human services in financial peril, I voted against the tax increases and fiscal tricks used to pay for the 2016-17 state budget because it increases the tax load on working families and again raids and borrows funds to try to make it work.

THE TAX INCREASES INCLUDE:

- A \$1-a-pack in the cigarette tax, raising the tax to \$2.60 a pack;
- New taxes on loose leaf and smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes, but not cigars;
- Income tax on lottery winnings over \$600; and
- Imposing the state's 6 percent sales tax on digital downloads, including music, movies, books and apps.

The revenue package repeats the deceptions rampant in previous budgets. Standard & Poor's issued another warning that an unbalanced budget would result in another credit downgrade. Yet, the tax package borrows \$200 million from next year's budget at a time when Pennsylvania has a structural deficit of more than \$1.2 billion.

However, the spending plan provides a \$250 million increase for pre-K through 12 education funding. Basic and special education funding increases enacted for local school districts are:

	BASIC EDUCATION	SPECIAL EDUCATION
Laurel School District	\$83,220, 1.1 percent	\$7,142, 0.9 percent
Mohawk Area School District	\$123,482, 1.3 percent	\$10,270, 0.9 percent
Neshannock Township School District	\$78,194, 2.5 percent	\$7,321, 1.1 percent
New Castle Area School District	\$807,951, 3.6 percent	\$49,427, 1.9 percent
Shenango Area School District	\$96,208, 1.3 percent	\$9,551, 1.2 percent
Wilmington Area School District	\$99,838, 1.8 percent	\$10,182, 1 percent
Union Area School District	\$94,917, 2 percent	\$10,100, 2.1 percent

One bright spot with this budget is it provides a \$452 million increase for the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and dedicates \$15 million to combat heroin and opioid addiction, including funds for emergency addiction treatment and behavioral health services.

The overall budget isn't an ideal spending plan. We need to do more and Pennsylvania deserves better!



A beautiful day for a 5K with the Crisis Shelter of Lawrence County in Pearson Park.



I was honored to present a citation to the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life Committee members.

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, heroin and opioid overdoses are the leading causes of accidental deaths, killing more Pennsylvanians than those involved in 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.

Recently, House Democratic and

Republican lawmakers stood with Gov. Tom Wolf in solidarity to detail legislative progress that has been made on fighting the opioid epidemic and outline more recommendations made by a special task force. This fall, a special session will be held to focus lawmakers' attention on combatting this crisis.

Pennsylvania has taken several important steps to combat the heroin and opioid crisis. Dr. Rachel Levine, the physical general, signed a standing order for naloxone, making access to this crucial anti-overdose drug available to all Pennsylvanians.

State troopers are equipped with naloxone for when they arrive first on the scene of a drug overdose. This life-saving drug is also available in public high schools across the commonwealth at no cost. Pennsylvania has developed a prescription drug monitoring program to help detect and prevent prescription fraud and abuse.

I will continue working with my colleagues — both Democrat and Republican — on bipartisan ways to address this crisis head on. Pennsylvanians are counting on us to make it happen!

Medical marijuana now legal in Pa.

This spring, Pennsylvania became the 24th state to legalize marijuana for medical purposes.

I voted to legalize medical marijuana and allow doctors to prescribe the treatment they see fit to help their ailing patients. The measure, S.B. 3, was signed into law by the governor in April and took effect in May.

Regulated medical marijuana will help bring relief to tens of thousands of children, adults and senior citizens suffering from serious medical problems, including epilepsy, chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, HIV/AIDS, Lou Gehrig's and Parkinson's diseases, and glaucoma.

Act 16 of 2016 establishes an independent, 12-member State Board of Medical Cannabis Licensing to oversee growers with indoor and secure facilities and regulate dispensaries across the state. Doctors will be able to prescribe marijuana in pill, oil, vapor or liquid form. Patients will not be able to legally obtain marijuana to smoke and will not be allowed to grow it on their own.

A parent of a child who suffers from one of the qualifying illnesses will be immune from prosecution for possessing medical marijuana that was legally purchased in another state. Caregivers must apply for a Safe Harbor letter and carry it with them whenever medical marijuana is being transported outside the home. You can apply by going to <https://apps.health.pa.gov/PASafeHarbor>.

All patients will be required to receive a Department of Health Medical Marijuana ID card.



It is always a pleasure to meet with the young volunteers at the St. Camillus Fall Festival.



I enjoyed visiting with the members of the Maitland Lane Free Methodist Church during their Community Day.

Expanded wine sales, improved convenience on tap

The House this spring passed and the governor signed into law legislation that allows the sale of wine-to-go in restaurants and grocery stores and makes the sale of wine and liquor more convenient for Pennsylvania consumers.

I voted for the legislation because it will modernize rather than dismantle a state store system that annually delivers millions of dollars to help balance the state budget and provide nearly 5,000 good-paying jobs to Pennsylvania residents with the potential to create more jobs.



Here's what Act 39 of 2016 allows:

- Grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants and hotels to sell wine
- Direct wine shipments by the case
- Expanded hours — state liquor stores can be open on Sundays and holidays
- Ability for PLCB to take advantage of better pricing on wine and liquor and offer coupons and loyalty programs in state stores
- Expanded hours for selling beer, wine and liquors at casinos
- An expected \$150 million a year in generated revenue

Apply now to receive your Property Tax/Rent Rebate

The deadline to file a 2015 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program application is Dec. 31 and my office is here to help!

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The maximum standard rebate is \$650, but supplemental rebates can boost rebates up to \$975.

My office can help with the applications. Please don't assume you are not eligible. Half of Social Security income is discounted, and claimants are not disqualified from rebates solely because of Social Security cost-of-living adjustments.

To find out if you qualify or if you need assistance with filling out your application, please visit my office.

Working to expand seniors' prescription coverage

I'm pleased to report that the state House of Representatives has unanimously passed legislation that would expand prescription drug coverage to over 32,000 older Pennsylvanians by increasing income eligibility guidelines for the PACENET program.

It's been more than a dozen years since PACENET income limits have been increased. By updating the income limits, we can ensure access to affordable prescription drugs and help thousands of senior citizens maintain their quality of life.

House Bill 2069 would increase the annual maximum income limits for PACENET to \$31,000 for a single person and \$41,000 for a married couple.

Current maximum annual income limits for PACENET, which covers those individuals with incomes exceeding PACE maximums, are \$23,500 for an individual and \$31,500 for a married couple.

PACE (Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly) and PACENET (Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly Needs Enhancement Tier) offer lower-cost prescription medications to qualified residents 65 or older, thanks to roughly \$200 million a year in funding from the Pennsylvania Lottery. Advancing this measure will bring even more life-saving medicines to older Pennsylvanians.

The bill now is before the state Senate for consideration.



Lots of fun was had during the Fireworks Festival in downtown New Castle.

Commemorating the 43rd anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War

As the Democratic chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I joined the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and other elected officials in March to commemorate the end of the Vietnam War.

During an event at the state Capitol on the 43rd anniversary of the day the last of our troops departed Vietnam, I honored and thanked Pennsylvania veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices.

More than 3,100 Pennsylvanians made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.





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Around the district ...



I enjoyed talking with some of the participants of the Memories Car Cruise in downtown New Castle.



It was nice to see friendly faces at the Home Street reunion.

Sign up for email updates

I want to alert you of House rules that prohibit when I can contact you leading up to an election. Unless you specifically opt in to continue receiving my emails, I'm prohibited from sending you legislative email updates for 60 days before the 2016 primary and general elections.

Opting in will allow you to continue to receive notices about important issues that matter to you, including:

- Updates on legislation
- News and events in the district
- Other relevant government-related information

You can sign up to receive my email alerts — and opt in to continue to receive them before elections. Visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Sainato, click the "Stay up to date" box on the right side of the page, fill out the form and leave the box checked.



I commended these young people for participating in the Alicia's Food for Thought Campaign at Scotland Meadows Park in Union Township to fight child hunger.