

THE ROZZI *Report*

From State Representative
MARK ROZZI
126th Legislative District

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Fees for new businesses waived for veterans

Thanks to a bill I co-sponsored last session, military veterans and reservists are now exempt from certain fees for business start-ups and professional licensure.

The business fee exemption, which became effective Jan. 2, is a result of Act 135 of 2016. The act eliminates the requirement for fees to start or open a new small business if the business is veteran- or reservist-owned.

Filing fees to register a new business will be waived by the Department's Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations when the registration documents are signed by the veteran or reservist and submitted with proof of the veteran's or reservist's status.

In addition, Act 135 allows the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs to waive initial application fees for certain license types for businesses regulated by various boards and commissions.

More details can be found on the Department of State website at dos.pa.gov.

Proposed constitutional amendment would enable future tax reform legislation

In November, voters will be asked to decide a ballot question regarding the authorization of homestead tax exemptions. If passed, the measure would authorize the General Assembly to pass laws allowing local taxing authorities (counties, municipalities and school districts) to exclude up to the full assessed value of homestead properties within the taxing jurisdiction. Currently, the constitution caps homestead exclusions at 50 percent of the median-assessed value of all homestead property within a local taxing jurisdiction.

Because this change would require an amendment to the state constitution, the matter must be decided by a statewide vote.

The question will be worded like this:

Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to permit the General Assembly to enact legislation authorizing local taxing authorities to exclude from taxation up to 100 percent of the assessed value of each homestead property within a local taxing jurisdiction, rather than limit the exclusion to one-half of the median assessed value of all homestead property, which is the existing law?

A "yes" vote would permit the General Assembly to pass legislation authorizing local taxing authorities to exempt up to 100 percent of the assessed value of each homestead or farmstead from taxes.

A "no" vote would stay current law, continuing the General Assembly's capacity to pass legislation authorizing local taxing authorities to exempt only up to 50 percent of the median-assessed value of each homestead or farmstead from taxes.

In other words, this amendment, if approved by voters, would permit the state to allow local taxing authorities to eliminate property taxes for homestead and farmstead owners if the tax revenue is offset and done so without raising others' property taxes. It would not mean that homestead and farmstead properties would be exempt from property taxes – only that the state could allow local authorities to choose to make that change.



Pa. driver's licenses still valid for federal facilities access

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security granted Pennsylvania a Real ID enforcement extension. Without this extension, you would not currently be able to use your Pennsylvania driver's license or state ID to enter federal facilities, military bases or nuclear power plants due to our state's noncompliance with the federal Real ID Act of 2005. This law was passed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks to improve security.

Currently, Pennsylvania driver's licenses do not comply with federal Real ID requirements, but Gov. Tom Wolf approved a measure this spring clearing the way for appropriate changes to Pennsylvania's licenses and ID cards.

The state Transportation Department estimates that Real ID-compliant driver's licenses and identification cards will

be available as an option in 2019. This will allow residents to obtain one before the final DHS effective date of Oct. 1, 2020.

The latest extension, however, does not change the Jan. 22, 2018 date when the federal Transportation Security Administration will require Real ID-compliant driver's licenses and ID cards to board domestic commercial flights. PennDOT will continue to seek additional extensions to ensure a smooth transition.

No one will be forced to obtain the Real ID-compliant version; however, a non-compliant ID would not be sufficient for entering federal facilities or for air travel when Pennsylvania's extensions run out.

A U.S. passport qualifies as valid ID under Real ID rules regardless of Pennsylvania enforcement extensions.



Rep. Rozzi visited with students, teachers and administrators at KidsPeace in Temple, where he discussed difficulties facing facilities such as this one and the youth that they serve.

State money helps local projects

Revitalization

West Reading received a \$246,512 grant from the Keystone Communities program to go toward community revitalization earlier this year. The money was awarded to fund a streetscape project within a two-block area in West Reading's designated Keystone Elm Street area. The project addresses issues presented by old, deteriorated and unsightly sidewalks and broken curbs, a lack of green space and rain water permeability.

It's imperative that we continue to revitalize our neighborhoods and give our communities the sense of pride they deserve. Buildings age and streets crack as they get older, and I'm appreciative that Gov. Tom Wolf approved this funding for a very worthwhile cause.

Preserving history

A \$40,030 Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission grant for The Foundation for the Reading Public Museum was awarded to help build displays featuring science and civilizations, a planetarium and a 25-acre arboretum. It also offers educational programs for families, adults and children.

The money will augment its operations.

Congratulations to all of the hard workers and volunteers at the Reading Public Museum! They do an outstanding job of preserving and telling the story of our regional history and culture, and their work brings great credit upon everyone who calls Reading home.

Improving traffic

A \$134,536 Pennsylvania Department of Transportation grant was awarded to improve area traffic signals. The money will pay for a traffic signal modernization project in the Borough of West Reading. West Reading will provide the remaining \$33,634 match of the total project cost of \$168,170.

Countless vehicles travel through this area each day. Improvements and investments to our roads and infrastructure are vital to our local communities, and residents of West Reading will benefit from this project for years to come.

Administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Keystone Communities program is designed to encourage the creation of partnerships between the public and private sectors in the community that jointly support local initiatives such as the growth and stability of neighborhoods and communities; social and economic diversity; and a strong and secure quality of life.

The PHMC awarded almost \$2 million in grants to 141 eligible museums and official county historical societies from 57 Pennsylvania counties

PennDOT's Green Light - Go Program provides state funds for the operation and maintenance of traffic signals along critical and designated corridors on state highways.



Deadline for Property Tax/Rent Rebate extended

The deadline to apply to the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for a rebate on property taxes or rent paid in 2016 was extended from June 30 until Dec. 31, 2017.

The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters. Half

of Social Security income and all Social Security cost-of-living increases are excluded, and the maximum standard rebate is \$650.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because they are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid each year. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day

in 2016 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

The state began distributing rebates July 1 to those who have already applied to the program.

The application is available on the Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov or at my office.

My office can also help complete and submit the application.



Rep. Rozzi sponsored a HeartSaver CPR certification course over the summer.



New Law increases protections for animals

New legislation, commonly known as Libre's Law, sets forth new rules and penalties related to animal cruelty in Pennsylvania.

Under the new law:

- Owners can no longer leave their dogs outside on a lead for more than nine hours in a 24-hour period.
- Veterinarians and humane society police will have limited civil immunity for reporting suspected animal cruelty.
- Abuse of horses will be treated the same as that of domestic pets.
- An animal must be forfeited upon conviction for a felony-level cruelty case, which includes any intentional act of abuse that causes serious bodily injury or death.
- A misdemeanor conviction under the law, which includes any intentional act of abuse that causes injury, could result in forfeiture of a pet.
- A summary-level animal cruelty conviction, which now covers neglect, could also result in forfeiture of a pet.

The law is named after Libre, a Boston terrier puppy left for dead last summer but nursed back to health, for helping to sustain momentum for the legislation.



Rep. Rozzi helped facilitate a gun safety event in conjunction with the Berks County Sheriff's Office in Muhlenberg Township.

STAY CONNECTED

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Free Document Shredding Event

10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 21

**Temple Fire Company (parking lot)
Kutztown Road, Temple**

Bring your personal documents to be safely shredded on site and recycled. To find out more, call 610-921-8921.

NOTE: There is a 10-box maximum per resident. No business documents will be accepted.

Pathway to Pardons

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 9



**Temple Fire Company
Kutztown Road, Temple**

Learn more about Pennsylvania's pardons process at a meeting hosted by state Rep. Mark Rozzi and Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Mike Stack.

Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The program will be interactive, and questions from the audience will be welcome.

Please RSVP in advance by calling the office 610-921-8921.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP WITH:

- Car registrations, special tags, titles and license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Unemployment compensation problems
- Birth certificate applications
- Pennsylvania income tax problems
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, welfare)
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information, student aid information, etc.
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the PUC
- Consumer complaints
- Complaints about road conditions
- Problems or questions about PennDOT
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Disability plates and placards
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- Local government officials' problems with state agencies

Any question about state government!