

State Representative

TIM BRIGGS

149th Legislative District



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## State Budget Season Opens with Commonsense Proposals

*Wolf spending plan, due June 30, could be bolder*



Governor Tom Wolf delivered his fourth budget address to a joint session of the General Assembly on Feb. 6 and provided a responsible proposal that puts the needs of Pennsylvania families first.

While his budget proposal was not as bold as I would have liked, I appreciate that the governor is making a responsible proposal in a deeply divided government where **no-tax** Republicans hold large majorities in both the House and Senate. Previous budgets have relied on excessive borrowing, and irresponsible and reckless gimmicks that hurt our fiscal stability.

Governor Wolf outlined a budget that will improve Pennsylvania now and into the future by helping build our workforce for family-sustaining jobs, prioritizing good education opportunities for all students, increasing the minimum wage to \$12 an hour, and protecting the environment. He is proposing to do this **without** a single broad-based tax increase.

I have been a strong voice for our kids and the environment in the legislature, and I am pleased to see the governor's proposal prioritize them as well. I strongly support the plan to increase education by \$225 million. These investments in education, from pre-K through college and technical education, will improve classroom learning for students across the commonwealth and prepare them for the 21st century workforce.

The governor's budget plan also includes important funding to ensure that our kids have a safe and clean environment by providing additional funds for high-quality, responsive oversight and improved customer service at the Department of Environmental Protection.

This responsible budget proposal, like House Democrats' Plan4PA, puts people first by prioritizing quality schools and training for good jobs, and is paid for without any new broad-based taxes. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to pass this responsible budget.

Sincerely,

Tim



## Fighting to Protect Net Neutrality

I am pleased to report that I have introduced legislation, House Bill 2117, to ensure a free and open internet in Pennsylvania.

The loss of fair internet delivery is a big problem for consumers, but an even bigger impediment for new business, new ideas and the voices of people online who expect their democratic rights to outweigh powerful and moneyed interests. Allowing corporations to act as internet gatekeepers would be an alarming – if not terrifying – adjustment to how we inform ourselves and advocate for social progress, democracy and transparency.

Based on a California bill, the legislation would prohibit an internet service provider from blocking, degrading or impairing lawful internet traffic based on content, application or service. It also would prohibit an ISP from allowing certain websites preferential treatment for a fee or sum.

In December, the Federal Communications Commission took steps to repeal net neutrality regulations. Without these consumer protections, ISPs would be able to block, slow, or speed up websites depending on content or service agreements.

My bill would stop that from happening in Pennsylvania. **All websites, large or small, should be provided to the consumer at the same speed.**

The bill also has a procurement clause requiring the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to only purchase internet services from ISPs that abide by the principals of net neutrality. Hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians use commonwealth-owned websites for information and services every day, and we need to protect their interests as well.

I also am introducing a bill to protect Pennsylvanians' online privacy by restoring part of the protections recently stripped by Congress and President Donald Trump. Together, the bills would go a long way in protecting our rights to privacy and transparency and preserving access to online information and commerce.

# SEPTA News

You can apply for a SEPTA Key Senior Photo ID Card at my office by simply calling for an appointment. My staff will help you fill out the application and take your picture. The SEPTA Key Senior Photo ID Card will be mailed to you.

Riders with disabilities who have not previously registered with SEPTA for the Reduced Transit Fare Program are urged to do so as soon as possible. Because Reduced Fare Key Cards can be loaded with funds and require verification of medical documentation, applications for reduced fares must be submitted in person at SEPTA Headquarters, 1234 Market St., Philadelphia 19107, or from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Accessible Travel Center (Room 108) in Suburban Station.

A phase-out of token sales continues as part of the SEPTA Key fare modernization project. Customers who still use tokens and paper transfers are urged to switch now to a SEPTA Key Card.

SEPTA will continue accepting tokens for fare payment until further notice, but in March will begin phasing out token sales at remaining authority-owned stations.

Packs of tokens will continue to be available at SEPTA Headquarters, 69th Street Transportation Center, Frankford Transportation Center, Olney Transportation Center and 15th Street.

Please visit [www.septakey.org](http://www.septakey.org) for more information on how to obtain a SEPTA Key Card.

# West Norriton Receives \$613,336 from Red Light Program

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in February awarded two Automated Red Light Enforcement grants to West Norriton Township.

The township will receive \$196,090 to upgrade the traffic signal at the intersection of Whitehall Road and Sterigere Street by installing new ADA curb ramps, pedestrian signal modules, a battery back-up system, an emergency preemption system, and by updating the controller cabinet and vehicle detection system.

It will receive another \$417,246 to upgrade the traffic signal and improve layout of the intersection at Whitehall Road and Marshall Street by installing a new traffic signal and altering the angle of the intersection.

Infrastructure investment is key to growing our economy as well as providing safe travel for residents. The administration has recognized that this stretch of Whitehall Road is worthy of significant investment. This is why I have continuously supported these funding initiatives, as it reflects highly on the people who make our communities great places to work and live.

# Be Sure to Register and Vote

The 2018 primary election will take place on Tuesday, May 15. The last day to register to vote in it is Monday, April 16.

You can register to vote, change your party affiliation, and find your polling location at [www.votespa.com](http://www.votespa.com). For anyone who turns 18 on or before May 15, you can still register before the April 16 deadline and be able vote in the May Primary.



## Important 2018 primary election dates

- April 16** – Last day to register to vote
- May 8** – Last day to apply for an absentee ballot
- May 11** – Last day for county election offices to receive absentee ballots
- May 15** – Primary election day



You may vote by absentee ballot if you are unable to make it to the polls because of illness or disability, or you will be out of your municipality the entire day. Applications for absentee ballots are available at my district office, Montgomery County Voter Services in Norristown, or online at [www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=753](http://www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=753).

# PA Tax Forms Available

My office is ready to provide any state and federal tax forms you may need.

Please contact my office for more information or to have a state personal income tax form or filing manual set aside for you.

You also can consider e-filing your PA Personal Income Tax Return with [padirectfile.state.pa.us](http://padirectfile.state.pa.us) or at [www.revenue.pa.gov](http://www.revenue.pa.gov).

You can contact my office for more information.



# Property Tax/Rent Rebate Deadline is June 30

The application deadline for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program is June 30. The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program provides a state rebate on 2017 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 an application in my office or download the form online by going to [www.revenue.state.pa.us](http://www.revenue.state.pa.us), clicking on "Individuals" on the left side of the page, and then clicking on "Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program."

My office can help you apply.





# Opioid and Heroin ‘Disaster’ Declared

In January, Governor Tom Wolf issued a disaster declaration for the heroin and opioid epidemic, a step that will bolster efforts already underway to combat the crisis in Pennsylvania. I applaud his action and will continue to support the fight against all forms of addiction.

The disaster declaration speeds up and expands access to treatment, improves tools for families and first responders to save lives, and enhances coordination and data collection to improve state and local response.

Elements of the declaration include:

- Creating an Opioid Operational Command Center within the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
- Enabling emergency medical responders to leave behind naloxone
- Waiving some requirements to make accessing treatment easier
- Allowing the expansion of medication units for narcotic treatment programs

The declaration can remain in effect up to 90 days from issuance and can be extended.

1-800-662-HELP is Pennsylvania’s 24/7 helpline to connect those suffering from substance use disorder with treatment.

From Montgomery County, you also can reach out to:

**Montgomery County Office of Drug and Alcohol**  
610-278-3642

Montgomery County Human Services Center  
430 DeKalb St., Norristown

In 2016, 64,000 Americans died from drug overdose – even more than by gun violence or car accidents. And in Pennsylvania, 4,642 people died of overdose; that’s 13 people a day, every day, in our state alone.

Please do your part by reaching out to a helpline if you or someone you know is struggling with addiction. It very well could save a life.

# We Must Act to Protect Our Children

If you are like me, you know that this has been a disturbing time regarding gun violence and safety in our schools. But, it is inspiring to see so many citizens from Parkland to Penn Wynne speak loudly about the long overdue need for gun safety measures. Something needs to be done for our kids.

Since being elected as your representative, I have always been committed to supporting responsible gun safety proposals – and not just days after tragedies. Over the years, I have introduced and reintroduced many bills that could help prevent senseless tragedies. After many sessions of unsuccessfully attempting to work through the legislative process to close the Florida Loophole, in 2013 I was able to work with the Office of the Attorney General to address these reciprocity agreements. Also, my Child Access Prevention legislation (H.B. 1635) has been held in the state House Judiciary Committee by the Republican majority for several sessions.

I am a member of the PA SAFE Caucus, which is a group of legislators who believe in reducing all types of violence in our

society through adequate funding for mental health services; stronger tools for law enforcement; resources to curb the effects of addiction and illegal drugs; and solutions that reduce gun violence and promote public safety.

All commonsense, reasonable reforms have been blocked by the Republican NRA-controlled leadership in Harrisburg. This is not acceptable. We must have a conversation on these important issues. Continued advocacy, from those who have been long fighting for this cause and the thousands of our youth who are joining as one to speak out for their own future, is needed to apply pressure to House and Senate leaders to make sure that action is taken on these important measures.



# Gambling Expansion Leads to Positive Changes for Montgomery County

In an effort to raise revenue for the state budget, legislation was enacted in November authorizing new forms of gambling across Pennsylvania. During this debate, I was able to advocate for provisions to help Valley Forge Casino Resort (VFCR) continue to be a successful competitor in the Pennsylvania market. These provisions included an additional 250 slot machines, allowing poker tournaments, and removing the patron access/amenity fee. VFCR is a great asset and partner for our community, and I was happy to help them remain competitive.

In addition to the local share that Upper Merion Township receives, Montgomery County also receives a portion of gaming revenue. This legislation included positive changes to how the county share is distributed and utilized. This share is projected to be around \$2 million a year, with 75 percent dedicated to 11 county parks and historic sites, as well as the 91 miles of hiking trails. The remaining 25 percent will be divided evenly between two nonprofit organizations: Mission Kids and Laurel House.

For help with a gambling problem, call Pennsylvania’s gambling helpline at 1-877-565-2112 or go to [www.paproblemgambling.com](http://www.paproblemgambling.com).





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## Distracted Driving Kills Thousands a Year

With new technology being introduced every day, distracted driving continues to be a major traffic safety issue.

Although we lawmakers at the state, federal and local level are examining a wide variety of issues related to driver focus, the most common concern is the potential distraction caused by cell phones and other technology in the car. More than 220 million people in the United States subscribe to wireless services, and it is estimated that as many as 80 percent of those subscribers use their phones while driving.

In 2015, 3,477 people were killed due to distracted driving.

Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so I encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family, and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Also, parents first have to lead by example — by never driving distracted — as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving.

Visit my website at [www.PaHouse.com/Briggs](http://www.PaHouse.com/Briggs) to take the pledge today!



## Supreme Court Takes Bold Step to Address Partisan Gerrymandering

I wanted to share with you my thoughts regarding Pennsylvania's congressional redistricting plan as prescribed by the state Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court's map does a much better job following concise boundaries throughout the Commonwealth than the partisan gerrymander that Republicans brought us in 2011. If you look closely, however, and visit [www.pahouse.com/Briggs](http://www.pahouse.com/Briggs), you can see there are still places where communities are split and Lower Merion Township is one of them. Unfortunately, the legislature failed in drawing a fair map and the Supreme Court was forced to impose this new plan.

As a new census is just two years away, it will not be long before a new map is debated. It's time we have a serious conversation about redistricting reform. I have sponsored H.B. 722, which would establish an Independent Redistricting Commission to provide the nonpartisan process for redistricting state Senate, state House and congressional districts.

The court's map still splits fewer counties than other proposed maps and eliminates the sprawl that was heavily featured in the previous gerrymander.

Overall, I support the court's map but am eager for real reform in our drawing process. That step is simply too important to democracy to rush. You have been waiting for real reform for too long, and we've got to get it just right.

## Leave for New Children Should Be Paid

I'm proud to announce that I've introduced legislation that, if passed, would require mandatory paid family leave for the parents of new children.

Establishing the "Paid Family Leave Act," H.B. 1634 would provide eligible employees up to 12 weeks leave at full pay, counted against Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for which they are entitled. To meet eligibility requirements, employees would have to be parents to a new child through birth, adoption or foster care placement. Periods of leave would be able to be taken from the onset of pregnancy through one year after the birth or placement of an adopted or foster child.

Statistics have proven that bonding time is instrumental in the development of healthy children. Ensuring this time for working mothers and fathers via paid leave is crucial not only in raising secure children, but in nurturing strong families. Supporting our children and the parents that raise them helps Pennsylvania to thrive.

At present, the federal Family Medical Leave Act grants employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per 12-month period. However, many families cannot afford time away from work without a paycheck. With this in mind, a number of states and cities in the U.S. have adopted laws to extend paid family leave coverage to employees. It is time for Pennsylvania to address this matter in support of our working families so our Commonwealth can continue growing a strong workforce.