



# STATE REPRESENTATIVE RYAN BIZZARRO

PROUDLY SERVING THE 3RD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



SPRING EDITION

## LOCAL DISTRICT OFFICES



**Peninsula Plaza** ■ 1101 Peninsula Drive, Suite 209 ■ Erie, PA 16505 ■ (814) 835-2880  
Open Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Extended office hours: Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.)

**Edinboro Office** ■ 124 Meadville St., Suite 222 ■ Edinboro, PA 16412 ■ (814) 734-2773  
Open Tuesday - Thursday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Closed Friday)

**McKean Township Municipal Building** ■ 9231 Edinboro Road ■ McKean, PA 16426 ■ (814) 835-2880  
Open by appointment

## State budget debacle should not be repeated

Pennsylvania has a 2017-18 budget, but it was almost four months late and its fiscal underpinnings are wobbly and suspect.

I voted against both the spending plan approved in June and the revenue plan to pay for it, which wasn't approved until late October.

From the start, I made my opinion clear: You don't approve the spending without a plan to pay for it.

The budget still relies on too much borrowing and raiding of funds.

The state's broad-based taxes – the Personal Income Tax and the Sales and Use Tax – were not increased. Other highlights include:

- \$750,000 earmarked for treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans and \$580,000 for veterans' mental health services;
- \$1.63 million for autism and intervention services;
- \$235,000 for early literacy and school readiness; and
- An additional \$14 million in recurring revenues for the cash-strapped Erie School District.

I was an emphatic "no" on the gambling expansion bill approved as part of the revenue bill in October. House members had scant hours to review the 979-page measure, and the bill and how it advanced are textbook examples of why Pennsylvania's budgeting process needs to be overhauled.

I fear gaming expansion will jeopardize the region's shares from casino revenues and the valuable programs supported by the Pennsylvania Lottery. And, the guidelines for video gaming terminals that the measure authorizes for truck stops, gas stations and convenience stores are too haphazardly defined.

Now we've started the process of devising another state budget. I hope that some lessons were learned, and the process puts people first.

*I made my opinion clear from the start about Pennsylvania's budgeting process: You don't approve the spending without a plan to pay for it.*



## Sign up for email updates

You can sign up to continue receiving my email alerts during the 60-day blackout period that precedes the May 15 primary election by visiting my website at [www.pahouse.com/Bizzarro](http://www.pahouse.com/Bizzarro), clicking "Stay Connected" in the upper right corner and filling out the form. Signing up to "Stay Connected" for my emails will enable 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.

# Plan for PA puts people first



*In December, I helped launch Plan for PA, which puts people first with fair opportunities for ALL families.*

I'm supporting Plan for PA, a comprehensive strategy that puts people first, supports good jobs, fights for quality schools and promotes a fairer tax structure.

The House Democratic Plan for PA focuses on four components:

1. A People First Plan for PA that protects the safety, health, financial security, and dignity and opportunity that every Pennsylvanian deserves, not just those at the top.
2. A Jobs Plan for PA that attracts good jobs that support families, moves the economy forward, expands opportunities for working people, and protects the financial security of the middle class.
3. A Quality Schools Plan for PA that gives every child access to a safe school and a quality education, and allows adults to gain the skills and training they need to do the jobs businesses are looking to fill.
4. A Fair Taxes Plan for PA that eases the tax burden on working people and homeowners and prevents special interests from exploiting the middle class.

Unfair taxes in Pennsylvania mean that working families pay more while special interests can pay less. Since the day you sent me to Harrisburg, I've fought to promote tax fairness across the board so that both employees and employers benefit from working and operating a business in Pennsylvania.

It's imperative that we close tax loopholes so that we can reduce our corporate net income tax and restructure the payroll tax on small businesses. Making these crucial reforms should not only hold the line on taxes, it will create a better environment where everyone has the ability to grow and thrive.

For more information and to stay up to date on the Plan for PA, please visit <http://planforpa.pahouse.com>.



## Recognizing Pa.'s addiction crisis for the emergency it is

I salute the governor's emphatic declaration in January establishing Pennsylvania's heroin and opioid addiction crisis as a statewide emergency.

Combatting the addiction scourge requires total commitment and full-throttle resources.

The addiction epidemic is a public health crisis that is tearing at the fabric of our communities and state. The governor's action will result in expedited treatment and prevention efforts, cut bureaucratic red tape for treatment center licensing and bolster effectiveness of first responders.

We must be quick on our feet in the battle. Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, was detected in almost three-quarters of overdoses by December 2016 after being found in less than a third of drug-related deaths at the start of the year.

Besides streamlining the state's responses and allowing medics to leave behind a life-saving drug with people who have overdosed but are reluctant to enter treatment, the declaration establishes a Unified Opioid Coordination Group and command center within the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to better coordinate treatment and prevention efforts.

The proclamation opens new fronts in a battle that we cannot afford to lose. Pennsylvania has the fourth-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the country, and the toll is growing.

I'm eager to expand the fight as part of the Plan for PA that focuses on putting people first, as well as ensuring that Pennsylvania puts real solutions in play expediently.



# Out and about at home and in Harrisburg



*My staff and I sponsored two highly successful Senior Fair & Older Living Expos in late summer in Erie and Edinboro. The annual fairs are always fun and educational while providing venues to provide vital information about state programs and services. It was gratifying to see so many take advantage of the health screenings and flu shots. Can't wait to see everyone this year!*



*The Erie Delegation honored Trevon Jenifer of Edinboro with a Pa. House of Representatives citation for being a member of Team USA's gold-medal-winning wheelchair basketball team in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio De Janeiro. Everyone from Erie County and from Pennsylvania are very proud of Trevon Jenifer who is no stranger to winning medals for the United States.*



*I joined other lawmakers to witness the signing of H.B. 2148 (Act 145 of 2016), which adds airport firefighters, fire suppression instructors, fire and safety marshalls, assistant fire marshalls, forest patrolmen and technicians, and emergency medical services personnel employed within a city fire department to the Enforcement Officer Disability Benefits Law, also known as the Heart and Lung Act.*



*It's always fun to hang out with fellow Erie representative Pat Harkins as we did here with students from Early Connections.*



*Parental alienation is on the rise, causing long-term devastating effects on children. I had the chance to meet with families who shared their traumatic and painful personal stories.*



*The Erie guys from Keystone Boys State visited the Capitol to see firsthand the legislative process.*



*I had a great time reading "How Do Dinosaurs Go To School?" to Ms. Jenn's Pre-K class at Walnut Creek Elementary.*





*It was a surprise to learn that I was named Humane Pennsylvania Legislator of the Year by the Pa. Humane Society. The announcement came on Humane Lobby Day at the Capitol.*



*During my first Veterans Expo, I had the opportunity to meet many veterans, while also letting them know of the various programs and services available to them.*



*I am proud to be a supporter of early learning in Pennsylvania - it's an investment in our future.*



*With the Cub Scouts and their families at Asbury Elementary.*



*I attended a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing in Northeast Philadelphia to discuss the rise of anti-Semitic acts.*



*I participated in the Second Harvest Food Bank of NW PA's annual Legislative Challenge. As a group, we labeled and boxed over 8,000 canned items for distribution throughout the region.*



# My legislation contributed to passing a strong animal abuse law

## State ranked 'most improved' for animal protections laws

There is a new era in Pennsylvania where animals have a new lease on life thanks to Act 10 of 2017, an animal abuse penalty law.

Pennsylvania was ranked "most improved" by two national organizations, the Humane Society of the United States and the Animal Legal Defense Fund, that issued reports ranking all 50 states' animal protection laws.

As you may know, two of my bills, H.B. 869 and H.B. 13, were written into H.B. 1238, which passed last year and became Act 10.

Act 10 will help put an end to instances of torture and extreme neglect that are too rampant. Our animal friends deserve better and this law does just that.

The biggest change is that for the first time ever in Pennsylvania, it will be possible to file felony level penalties for first time cruelty offenses outside of animal fighting or killing an endangered species.

I was more than pleased that provisions I introduced nearly two years prior to the passing of Act 10 – such as calling for the forfeiture of abused, neglected or deprived animals after conviction – were incorporated into the legislation.

I am crediting the Boston Terrier pup, Libre, for getting the momentum going for this law. Libre was left for dead but was nursed back to health and is now with a loving family.

The legislation breaks down penalties for different grades of cruelty and different penalties based on the severity of the conduct and how many prior offenses there have been.



## Here is a breakdown of what you need to know about our animal cruelty law

**Neglect of an animal – failure to provide necessary food, water, shelter or veterinary care.**

- Penalty: Summary offense – up to 90 days in jail and/or a \$300 fine.
- Penalty: if neglect causes bodily injury or places the animal in imminent risk of serious bodily injury – Misdemeanor of the second or third degree – up to one year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

**Animal Cruelty – intentionally, knowingly or recklessly beats, abandons or abuses the animal and the treatment causes bodily harm.**

- Penalty: Summary offense – up to 90 days in jail and/or a \$300 fine.
- Penalty: if neglect causes bodily injury or places the animal in imminent risk of serious bodily injury the penalty is a second degree misdemeanor – up to one year in jail and/or \$2,000 fine.

**Aggravated cruelty – torturing an animal or violating either of the above sections and causing serious bodily injury or an animal's death.**

- Penalty: third degree felony and up to seven years in jail and/or a \$15,000 fine.

**A dog may not be tethered for longer than 30 minutes in temperatures below 32 degrees Fahrenheit or when it's 90 degrees or warmer. Additionally,**

- A dog may not be tethered for longer than nine consecutive hours within a 24 hour period.
- A leash must be at least three times the length of the dog or 10 feet, whichever is longer.
- The area where the pet is kept must be clear of excessive feces and have access to drinkable water and shade.
- The dog must have a well-fitted collar – no tow or log chain, or pinch, choke or prong collars – and no open sores or wounds on the dog's body.

**Civil immunity is provided for veterinarians, vet techs and Humane Society Police Officers for reporting animal cruelty in good faith.**





STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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## INSIDE:

- State Budget
- Plan for PA
- Photos from Harrisburg and around the region

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## New Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications, help available

My constituent-service offices have received Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program applications for eligible residents to begin claiming rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2017, and the staff is ready to help!

The rebate program benefits income-eligible Pennsylvanians 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and people with disabilities 18 or older.

Claimants must reapply for rebates every year because rebates are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid annually. Spouses, personal representatives or estates may file rebate claims on behalf of deceased claimants who lived at least one day in 2017 and met all other eligibility criteria.

The rebates normally are distributed beginning on July 1. So, the sooner you file, the sooner you will receive your money! The deadline to apply, for now, is June 30, 2018, but it is routinely extended until the end of the year.



Please ignore offers to assist with filing the application for a fee. My offices offer help at no charge, and the Revenue Department does not charge a fee to process your application.

Applications also are available online at [www.revenue.pa.gov](http://www.revenue.pa.gov) or by calling 1-888-222-9190.