



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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119th Legislative District

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Road repairs would be required after underground work

Public utilities and municipal authorities would be required to restore a roadway to the same or better condition as when they start underground work, under legislation that I recently introduced.

Whether commuting to work or driving kids to school, Pennsylvania drivers traveling on roadways that are unpaved or need repairs can sustain damage to their vehicles. At the same time, these conditions can lead to further deterioration of the roads in our communities.

When a public utility or municipal authority conducts work on underground utilities beneath a roadway, there are no established criteria regarding repaving or repairing the road surface. Once the utility work is completed, roadways often remain unpaved or in disrepair for extended periods of time.

In some cases, even after being repaved or repaired, the roads could be in worse condition than before the initial utility work commenced. My proposal would help Pennsylvania communities and their drivers avoid unnecessary costs for road repairs and vehicle damage.

To help alleviate the problem, my legislation (H.B. 1604) would create the Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act and require contractors to restore a roadway to the same or better condition as when the work started. Any work must meet the satisfaction of either the secretary of Transportation or the municipal public works director, depending if the work was completed on a state or municipal road.

“There is no excuse for roads being in poor repair for long periods after utility work. The Legislature should pass the bill and PennDOT and local governments aggressively should enforce it.”

– Citizens’ Voice editorial 6/20/19

PennDOT awards \$1 million for West Hazleton project

West Hazleton Borough received \$1 million from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to replace the Jaycee Drive bridge over Black Creek in the Valmont Industrial Park. Replacement of the bridge is needed after the bridge was recently inspected and was found to have severe damage to its substructure.

Under the leadership of Transportation Secretary Leslie Richards, Multimodal Funds continue to invest in significant infrastructure building and job-creating projects of great regional value to northeastern Pennsylvania.

It’s great to see West Hazleton awarded funding toward a very important infrastructure project. Mayor John Chura and I discussed how important the Jaycee Drive bridge project was to the borough on my One.19 District tour last year. I’d like to thank Sen. John Yudichak for working with me to help secure this funding.

“A recent inspection showed that the bridge is in dire need of replacement due to damage to the bridge’s foundation,” West Hazleton Borough Council President Lou Pacelli said. “The Jaycee Drive bridge is a vital infrastructure asset within our community inside the Valmont Industrial Park, which is utilized by hundreds of workers every day. I’m grateful for the state’s investment in this project and for realizing its importance to our borough.”

\$2.1 million in grants awarded for Luzerne County projects

Earlier this year, more than \$2.1 million in state grants were awarded to fund 13 projects in the 119th Legislative District in Luzerne County.

I would like to thank state Sens. Lisa Baker and John Yudichak for their help with funding these very important projects in our region.

A \$500,000 grant was awarded to the Earth Conservancy to construct the Loomis Bank Access Road in Hanover Township. The new road will be two lanes with curbs and gutters, and tie directly into the second roundabout of the South Valley Parkway. The funds are from the state Multimodal Transportation Fund Program.

Additional Commonwealth Financing Authority grants awarded through the Local Share Account included:

- Slocum Township: \$350,000 toward building a new 4,320 square foot fire station with a four-bay garage for the Slocum Township Volunteer Fire Co. that is expected to be completed by July 2021.
- West Hazleton Borough: \$225,000 toward replacing a deteriorated bridge over Black Creek along Jaycee Drive that is vital to Valmont Industrial Park.
- Rice Township: \$150,000 to purchase a new backhoe for street and township maintenance to replace a 1992 backhoe currently in use.
- Plymouth Borough: \$150,000 to purchase vehicles.
- Sugar Notch Borough: \$140,000 to help purchase a building at 892 Main St. that will become the new municipal/police building, replacing its current facility that is over 100 years old.
- Wright Township: \$140,000 to purchase a backhoe/loader to replace its current 12-year-old backhoe/loader that needs expensive repairs; \$100,000 to help to purchase and install lights this summer at the Mountaintop Area Little League complex.
- Dennison Township: \$100,000 to conduct drainage and asphalt repairs on roads throughout the township, including repairing the intersection of Walnut Street and 4th Street with inlet boxes, drainage and pavement and curb restoration.
- Warrior Run Borough: \$100,000 to purchase two trucks that will replace 1993 vehicles currently in use which are experiencing costly mechanical issues. The new trucks will be used for snow removal, street repairs and maintenance, and landscaping throughout the year.
- Nuangola Borough: \$63,833 to build a new pole barn.
- Larksville Borough: \$49,200 to purchase a new police cruiser. The new vehicle will be equipped with a license plate scanner allowing officers to verify vehicle registration immediately rather than requesting the information from the individual at a traffic stop.
- White Haven Borough: \$37,116 to buy a new police vehicle.



LEFT TO RIGHT are Wright Township Supervisor and Road Master Matt Howton, Township Secretary Pam Heard, and Township Supervisor and Chairman Mike Marshall in front of the new backhoe/loader that was purchased with a state grant.



Rice Township used a state grant to purchase a new backhoe/loader. LEFT TO RIGHT are Rice Township public works employee Ron Miller, Supervisor Robert Pipech and state Sen. Lisa Baker.

True Value bringing jobs to Lower South Valley

In case you missed it, the True Value C. announced a \$150 million investment and plan to open a 1-million-square-foot distribution center along the new South Valley Parkway.

I would like to thank True Value for working with local economic development officials to make this project a reality in Hanover Township. The hundreds of jobs that are expected to be created at this new facility are welcome news and a testament to the work ethic that Luzerne County residents are known to possess.

It's also a positive move for Luzerne County Community College, which will be tasked with helping to train future workers.

This announcement is another step forward in showing positive results from the development of the South Valley Parkway.

Projects like this one and others have led to competition for workers and has resulted in local starting wages rising to \$16.50 per hour and brought hundreds more family-sustaining jobs in the Nanticoke/Hanover area.



Rep. Jared Solomon from Philadelphia, LEFT, joined me for a tour of American Paper Bag in Sugar Notch. APB is revolutionizing retail packaging in a carbon and environmentally friendly way. We discussed our "Zero Waste PA" legislation and efforts to limit single-use plastics. We must thank Ian Robson, APB's CEO, for offering an inside look of his operation and providing a different perspective on environmental issues facing our commonwealth.



It isn't every day you get to meet an American hero. It was my great pleasure to listen to Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col. James Harvey give remarks to Crestwood High School students in May. This 95-year-old "Top Gun" had the students' complete attention as he delivered his historical and inspirational story. Thank you to Mr. Harvey for his service and for sharing his journey with me, Rep. Ed Pashinski and the next generation.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate deadline extended

The deadline for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for the 2018 tax year has been extended to Dec. 31, 2019.

The rebate 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 is 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 2018 and meet all other eligibility criteria.

You can get your application at www.revenue.pa.gov or by calling 1-888-222-9190. My office also can help you apply for FREE, so don't hesitate to contact me.

Bill would make it easier to get deer permits

Deer hunters could apply for their antlerless deer permits online under legislation that I introduced in the House of Representatives and which also has been introduced in the state Senate.

Considering the Pennsylvania Game Commission's recent updates to the Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System, we now could ensure that hunters have a more convenient and efficient way of applying for and receiving hunting licenses. I believe that we should transfer the antlerless deer license application process from counties to the PGC through the Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System. This will make the process of obtaining a license much more convenient for all Pennsylvanians.

The current system is managed by the PGC, responsible for determining the number of antlerless licenses to be allocated, while the actual distribution of permits is the responsibility of each county treasurer's office. When applying for a doe license, hunters across the state fill out a form, write a check and submit it to the county treasurer, normally the one in their home county.

As Democratic vice chairman of the House Game and Fisheries Committee, I know the current system is outdated and doesn't always work because there are some counties that don't always have the financial resources or staff to process applications in a timely manner.

I am hopeful that by working with Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-Erie, we can bring this needed change to our licensing system.



It was my great pleasure to present Trevor Grohowski with a House Citation recognizing his attainment of Eagle Scout. To fulfill his community service requirement, Trevor designed and constructed a toddler area at the Hanover Recreation Park. Congrats Trevor!

Helping municipalities battle blight, absentee landlords

Municipal governments would have an additional tool to fight blight and combat absentee landlords under legislation that I recently introduced.

A big part of community revitalization efforts is ensuring there are safe, quality buildings owned by a reliable tax base. Current Pennsylvania law gives municipalities the ability to deny permits to individuals who have delinquent taxes, outstanding municipal fees, or have building code violations within the municipality. However, if the delinquent applicant forms a limited liability corporation and reapplies for permits, the municipality may be forced to issue the permits.

I drafted the bill after learning of the loophole during a discussion with West Hazleton officials.

It is time to put an end to this loophole and help our municipal governments. My legislation would give power to the municipality to deny a permit to an LLC not only when the LLC has delinquencies, but also if one of its principals has any delinquencies in the municipality.

House Bill 645 has bipartisan co-sponsors and awaits action by the House Local Government Committee.

Progress being made in Nanticoke

A former personal care home in downtown Nanticoke will see new life as a pharmacy and physical therapy center.

The city's General Municipal Authority has agreed to sell the former Villa Personal Care Home and Nockley Family Pharmacy plans to open its third location at the property.

Cawley Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation also plans to use part of the building to relocate and grow its Nanticoke practice by adding an aquatics therapy pool.

Additional retail space will be available.

The Municipal Authority bought the property at East Main and Walnut streets after the personal care home closed in 2014. The purchase was made through a \$1 million grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Pennsylvania First program.

In addition, Main Street and Market Street were recently paved which provided much needed infrastructure improvements downtown.

Youth Advisory Council completes 1st year with visit to Capitol

We recently wrapped-up the inaugural year of my Youth Advisory Council, which consisted of 28 bright and inspirational high school students from the 119th District.

The students had energetic discussions with staff from Pennsylvania's Attorney and Auditor General's offices. They engaged in robust roundtable discussions and attended local Policy Committee hearings. They finished their year with a visit to Harrisburg where the group toured the state Capitol, met with Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, sat in on a House of Representatives committee meeting and met with a variety of staff



originally from Luzerne County and working in state government.

These students are committed to public service and improving our community, having their voice heard and playing an active role in government. I want to thank them for their input and for making this first year a tremendous success.

I'm in the process of assembling our second class of the Youth Advisory Council and I look forward to another exciting year of hearing from our best and brightest.



State Sen. Lisa Baker and State Rep. Ed Pashinski joined me in recognizing Heller Orchards on its 100th Anniversary. I'd like to thank Greg and the entire Heller family for giving us an inside look at their operations and farm.

REAL IDs are now available



October 1, 2020 is the deadline to get a REAL ID.

Pennsylvanians will need a REAL ID to:



Board a domestic flight.



Enter a federal building.



Enter a military base.

PennDOT recently announced the optional REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses and photo ID cards are now available for PA residents. To get a REAL ID driver's license or photo ID, residents have three options:

1. Order online if you have already been pre-verified;
2. Visit any PennDOT Driver's License Center, have your documents verified and imaged and your REAL ID driver's license or photo ID will be mailed to you within 15 business days; or
3. Visit one of the twelve REAL ID Centers, have your documents verified and imaged, and receive your REAL ID driver's license or photo ID over-the-counter at the time of service.

Call my office if you need assistance obtaining documents or with questions!



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Thank you to the Mountain Top Area Little League for inviting me to participate in its Opening Day! Some 600 kids are playing on 51 teams sponsored by 51 local businesses in a league celebrating its 50th Anniversary. Good luck to all the players!