



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Summer 2020

# Pam Snyder

50TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

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## Protecting energy jobs

*Supports measure requiring legislative approval before PA could join RGGI*

It's likely you've heard quite a bit about RGGI since my last newsletter to you. RGGI, also known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, is an effort supported by the governor that would require any carbon-producing power plant to purchase allowances to continue to operate.

RGGI is a bad move all around. It would require what amounts to a carbon tax to be paid by our coal and natural gas-fired plants, leading to millions of dollars in taxes they'd be forced to pay. As a result, those same companies would leave our area, resulting in the loss of family-supporting jobs. That's not all – joining RGGI would have a devastating trickle-down effect on the local economy, including restaurants and other businesses which rely on these industries who support them.

To be honest, the data showing RGGI is effective doesn't exist. In fact, the states that currently belong to RGGI aren't showing a significant reduction in carbon emissions. In addition, RGGI could also lead to higher electricity rates across Pennsylvania.

This summer, I joined several of my colleagues and voted in support of a bill that would require legislative approval before Pennsylvania could formally enter RGGI. That measure was approved in the House and is currently being considered in the state Senate.

While I support efforts to protect our environment for future generations, RGGI is not the way to go about it. Winter will be here before you know it, and we need our oil, gas and coal companies to meet our state's energy demands.



We've already made substantial progress in reducing our carbon emissions in Pennsylvania – RGGI would hurt our communities, our residents and our local businesses. It would be a step backward, not forward.

## Helping our state recover from COVID-19

Our communities are beginning the process of recovering from the effects of the pandemic. We took proactive, measured steps to get us to where we are now, and I will continue to do all I can to move us forward in the right direction.

Beginning in March, I ensured that coal mining operations in our community and statewide would be allowed to continue to operate during the pandemic shutdown. Initially, coal

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# COVID-19 continued....

operations were categorized by state labor officials as non-life sustaining. That was unacceptable. I worked directly with our local coal mining operators, members of the United Mine Workers of America and the governor's office to update that designation to keep energy producers fully operational.

Our coal operations are a vital part of keeping our energy grid running as it should. Shutting down operations, even temporarily, would have been devastating on so many levels, and I am thankful that a shutdown didn't occur.

To that end, I will continue to work with my colleagues to help our communities in the days, weeks and months ahead on a variety of measures. You'll notice that several of these bills have already been signed into law.

- **House Bill 68 (now Act 9)** – made applying for unemployment compensation easier for workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **House Bill 1232 (now Act 10)** – allowed the administration to use \$50 million toward the purchase of medical equipment and supplies for hospitals, nursing facilities and emergency medical services to meet the urgent needs by patients and staff.
- **Senate Bill 422 (now Act 12)** – rescheduled the 2020 primary election from April 28 to June 2 and makes additional election process changes, including the temporary consolidation of polling places and allows counties to begin processing mail ballots at 7 a.m. on Election Day, instead of after the polls close at 8 p.m.
- **Senate Bill 751 (now Act 13)** – waived the requirement for schools to be in session at least 180 days, provides for continuity of education plans for schools, and ensures school employees are paid during the closure.

I've also supported a measure to help further curb the spread of COVID-19.

House Bill 2455 would call for the state to develop a comprehensive testing plan and would also fund research,

development and manufacturing of COVID-19 testing equipment and supplies, contact tracing and other measures. In addition, it would require health care and other essential workers to be given testing priority once the plan is activated.

Medical experts agree that the only way we can truly stop this virus is with a robust, wide-ranging testing program to protect every Pennsylvanian, including our health care and essential workers.

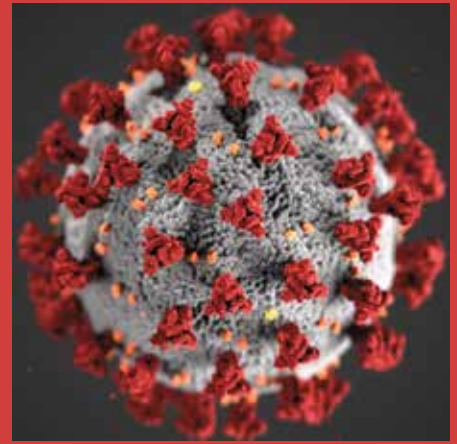
I've partnered with state Rep. Jennifer O'Mara on legislation that would deem COVID-19 as an occupational disease for employees of life-sustaining businesses and occupations. This would remove the burden of proving that COVID-19 is occurring more in their occupation than in the general population.

We rely on these essential employees to protect us and keep us safe. Removing the burden of proof on workers who have contracted COVID-19 is the right thing to do.

I'm also working with state Rep. Joe Ciresi on legislation that would create a grant program for small businesses to help them reopen safely and provide them with the tools they need to take necessary precautions to protect their customers and staff.

These small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities, and I know many of them are struggling to recover from the financial challenges brought on by the pandemic and previous shutdown.

Rest assured; I remain dedicated to doing all I can to help each of you as we move forward in this recovery process.



## Fiscal code measure protects communities, school districts

With casinos closed during the height of the pandemic, that led to a \$300 million loss of revenue for homestead exemption funds that would normally be distributed to our school districts.

I wanted to make sure our property owners wouldn't be stuck with an enormous property tax hike. That's why I supported a state Fiscal Code measure to direct federal funds to protect property owners and ensure vital funding for school districts.

With House Bill 1083, I ensured that specific wording was included in the bill to use funds from the federal CARES Act to provide that vital funding to school districts, protecting school districts, property owners and our school students.

The bill was signed into law by the governor in late May.







Rep. Pam Snyder with Bill Jackson from Jackson Farms in Redstone Township, Fayette County. The farm has been able to expand its products with a line of cheeses, thanks to state funds from the Pennsylvania Dairy Investment Program.



Rep. Snyder and Greene County Sheriff Brian Tennant at the Capitol in 2017.

## Local heroes honored

I was honored and humbled by my colleagues' unanimous support for a bill that included designations to honor three local men who died while serving their country and their community.

House Bill 1510, which was signed by the governor in July, honors Greene County Sheriff Brian Tennant, Pfc. Joseph Frank Duda of Brownsville, Fayette County, and Cpl. Denny Ray Easter, also from Fayette County.

A bridge on South Porter Street over the South Fork Tenmile Creek in Waynesburg, Greene County, will be named as the Sheriff Brian A. Tennant Memorial Bridge. Ten years ago, Tennant saved several lives from a house fire and was later elected sheriff in Greene County for two terms. Tennant passed away last year at 35.

## Broadband expansion efforts



I remain committed to providing each of you with affordable, reliable broadband access.

Thanks to state support and the establishment of a partnership between West Virginia-based ClearFiber and nonprofit group KINBER, construction began to expand access through all of Greene and Washington counties, and part of Fayette County, providing service to over 2,000 homes.

KINBER, which is a nonprofit group that helps communities gain access to reliable, high speed internet services, worked with ClearFiber to bring new fiber infrastructure to the area through its partnership with Waynesburg University.

In addition, Windstream recently completed a project to expand and upgrade broadband to more than 5,000 homes and businesses in Greene County, including Carmichaels, Greensboro, Jefferson, Mount Morris and Rogersville.

Additional broadband expansion efforts will continue throughout our communities until affordable, reliable access to broadband is a reality. That includes work to increase broadband speeds for residents.

I've said it many times but it's still true: you can't compete if you can't connect. The current pandemic has shown that affordable broadband access is a vital necessity for our hospitals, our businesses and our schools. It's critical to the growth of our local businesses and economic development.

The interchange of State Route 43, also known as the Mon-Fayette Expressway, with U.S. Route 40, known as Exit 22, in Redstone Township, Fayette County, will be named the Pfc. Joseph Frank Duda Memorial Interchange. Duda served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. Duda was a member of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 3rd Marine Brigade, and the Fleet Marine Force aboard the USS Fuller. He died in the line of duty on Jan. 9, 1944.

The interchange of U.S. Route 40 with State Route 4035, also known as Market Street and Spring Street in Brownsville, Fayette County, will be designated as the Cpl. Denny Ray Easter Memorial Interchange. Easter joined the U.S. Army in 1970 and served in the Vietnam War as an infantryman with the 198th Light Infantry Brigade, 5th Battalion, 46th Infantry, B Company. On Jan. 31, 1971, he was killed in the line of duty in the Quang Tin province of South Vietnam at the age of 20.

## New vaping law

A new vaping law took effect earlier this year, which now allows law enforcement to issue a citation to anyone who possesses or uses tobacco or any type of vaping product inside a school building, on school grounds, or in a school-owned vehicle.

The use of these products poses some significant health and safety concerns, especially among our middle and high school students. While research continues into the overall health impacts of vaping, what we know right now is that it has serious and dangerous health consequences.

My office has created a special brochure, titled "Vaping

and E-Cigarette Information: What You Should Know." It includes resources for youngsters and adults, pictures of and information about vaping and e-cigarette devices, and a list of health dangers associated with vaping.

To get a copy or for more information, please call my Carmichaels office at 724-966-8953 or my Waynesburg office at 724-627-8683.



## Grant updates

I'm pleased to provide you with a brief update on several grants awarded in the district, including:

- **\$238,000** to the Southwest Corner Workforce Development and Westmoreland/Fayette Workforce Development boards to provide summer internships to help young adults gain vital workforce skills by providing them with their first work experience.
- **\$30,000** to Waynesburg University as part of the "It's On Us" campaign to raise awareness of and prevent campus sexual assaults.
- PAsmart grants in the amount of **\$35,000** each for the Albert Gallatin, Bethlehem Center, Brownsville Area and Carmichaels Area school districts toward advancing science and technology education.
- **\$50,000** to Jackson Farms in Redstone Township, Fayette County, from the state's Dairy Investment Program to purchase equipment to expand its product offerings.
- **\$265,000** from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to promote and support a variety of school safety efforts.



## Assistance with energy costs

The newly established LIHEAP Recovery Crisis Program offers grants to help those who are having trouble paying their utility bills due to COVID-19.

The program provides up to \$800 for households that have had their utility service shut off, or who are in jeopardy of being without utility service.

To qualify, a person's income can be no greater than \$18,735 yearly. This limit increases by \$6,630 for each additional person in the household.

This grant program will run through Aug. 31, 2020.

Applications and more information can be found by visiting [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us) or by calling 1-877-395-8930.



# Keep your pets safe this summer

With summer officially here, it's important that pet owners take proper precautions to keep their furry friends safe. When the temperatures and humidity begin to rise, it can also adversely affect our pets, especially if they don't have adequate shelter or water while they're outside.

While many of us know that it's unsafe to leave our pets alone in a parked vehicle,

too many times we still hear news of pets who are kept inside vehicles or those who are neglected outside who end up becoming very sick or worse.

Please follow these tips to keep your pet healthy, comfortable and safe during these hot, humid months of summer:

- **Never leave your pet in a parked vehicle**, even for a minute or even with the air conditioner running. On an 85-degree day, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach over 100 degrees within 10 minutes. In 30 minutes, temperatures can rise to 120 degrees, which can cause your pet to suffer irreversible organ damage or die.
- **Watch the humidity** – if humidity is too high, it's more difficult for your pet to cool themselves through panting, and their body temperature could quickly skyrocket to dangerous levels.
- **Remember the state's tethering law**, which prohibits having a dog tethered outside for more than 30 minutes when the temperature is greater than 90 degrees.
- **Ensure your pet has plenty of water** while outside and add ice to your pet's water when possible. Tree shade or tarps are best to protect your pet from the heat, versus a doghouse or other type of enclosure, because they are less likely to obstruct air flow.
- **Limit exercising** with your pet on hot, humid days, and adjust the intensity and duration of your workouts. For example, on very hot days, limit exercise to early morning or evening hours.
- **Watch for signs of heatstroke** in your pet: heavy panting, glazed eyes, difficulty breathing, excessive thirst, fever, dizziness, vomiting, a deep red or purple tongue. Animals who are very young, very old, are overweight or who have heart or respiratory disease are most at risk for heat stroke.

If you witness a pet alone in a vehicle on a hot, humid day, contact law enforcement immediately. The Motor Vehicle Extreme Heat Protection Act allows police and humane officers to remove unattended pets from vehicles that they believe are in imminent danger.



Rep. Pam Snyder with her  
"granddog" Nala.



## My office can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Birth and death certificates
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Requests for literature of all kinds – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property tax/rent rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies



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