



## CAPITOL UPDATE

# State Representative MARTY FLYNN

Representing the 113th Legislative District

Spring 2021

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## Thank you to all constituents in the 113th Legislative District for your encouragement, cooperation, and input during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

It has been a rough year for all of us, but now as some of the COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease up, many of us are finding ourselves fortunate that there is potential light at the end of the tunnel.

I am overwhelmed by the unquestionable strength and character of our community in the 113th Legislative District. I am forever grateful to the many people on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis. Our district has seen many acts of generosity and words of encouragement to all the dedicated doctors, nurses and support staff, grocery store and restaurant workers and all other essential employees who made sacrifices to help others.

So much has changed over this year in our neighborhoods and workplaces, and we can only hope that soon we will be attending our local baseball games, gathering at community functions, and dining out at our local restaurants.

The COVID-19 vaccination distribution plan is putting us one step closer to safety. Please be patient as the state continues to roll out this phased vaccine distribution.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping our neighbors and friends.

## Rep. Flynn selected chairman of Northeast Delegation

I have been selected to serve as chairman of the Northeast Democratic Delegation of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the 2021-2022 legislative term.

I was chosen by the delegation's 14 members. I am eager to move our delegation forward to ensure that the Northeast has a unified voice in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

In addition, state Rep. Maureen Madden of Monroe County was chosen to serve as vice chairwoman.

"We must use our delegation as an agent of change that will ultimately benefit our region, which is a diverse cross-section of rural and urban communities," Madden said.

"The Northeast is a vibrant region, and our delegation will strongly work together to make sure we are not overshadowed by the big cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh."

The Northeast Delegation includes members who represent Berks, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, and Northampton counties.



Committee Assignments: Appropriations • Consumer Affairs • Insurance • Professional Licensure

# More federal money coming to Lackawanna County

I am proud to have been able to work with our regional Pennsylvania Representatives & Senators, as well as Congressman Cartwright and Senator Casey to focus on bringing more revenue aid to our region.

While the painful steps that had to be taken to lessen the spread of COVID in our region sometimes seemed unnecessary, our state and federal governments had to take these actions to keep us safe – while also taking steps to provide some relief to our residents and businesses.

My office has led the region in assisting area residents and businesses in getting Unemployment Compensation & PUA relief to those in need, as well as supporting small businesses by providing grants and low-interest loans.

Just recently Cartwright announced that Lackawanna County is in line to receive an additional \$40 million in relief through the American Rescue Plan. Under the American Rescue Plan, the City of Scranton may receive nearly \$70 million, and South Abington Township, over \$800,000. Clarks Green should receive approximately \$140,000. The Scranton School District is earmarked for approximately \$36 million.

While nothing can change the negative effect that we all have endured during this time, I have worked morning, noon and night to maximize a fair share of revenue being allocated to our region, and I will continue to work with our other elected and appointed officials to continue that important revenue stream to Lackawanna County.

# DCNR opening more park campsites for trout anglers

An additional 16 state parks, including a park in Lackawanna County, will be open to accommodate trout anglers to usher in Spring this year.

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has announced that fishing enthusiasts will be able to stay overnight on April 2 for the new statewide trout opener the following day.

A total of 34 parks throughout the state will provide camping. The one-time change has been brought on by the pandemic-related changes to trout season.

Anglers will have more than 2,300 campsites to choose from for season opener.

Here is a list of campgrounds open for the first day of trout season, with the additional parks denoted with an asterisk(\*):

Caledonia, Franklin County; Chapman\*, Warren County; Clear Creek\*, Jefferson County; Colonel Denning, Cumberland County; Cowans Gap\*, Fulton County; Fowlers Hollow\*, Perry County; Frances Slocum, Luzerne County; French Creek, Berks County; Greenwood Furnace\*, Huntingdon County; Hickory Run\*, Carbon County; Hyner Run, Clinton County; Kettle Creek, Clinton County; Keystone, Westmoreland County; Kooser, Somerset County; **Lackawanna\***, **Lackawanna County**; Laurel Hill, Somerset County; Little Buffalo, Perry County; Little Pine, Lycoming County; Locust Lake, Schuylkill County; Lyman Run\*, Potter County; Ohiopyle\*, Fayette County; Ole Bull, Potter County; Parker Dam\*, Clearfield County; Penn Roosevelt, Centre County; Pine Grove Furnace, Cumberland County; Promised Land\*, Pike County; Raccoon Creek; Beaver County; R.B. Winter\*, Union County; Reeds Gap\*, Mifflin County; Ryerson Station, Greene County; Sinnemahoning, Cameron and Potter counties; Sizerville\*, Potter County; Trough Creek\*, Huntingdon County; and Worlds End\*, Sullivan County.

DCNR is offering a one-time waiver of the transfer cancellation fees so customers can make reservations for the new statewide trout opening weekend. The waiver is being offered to customers who have campsite reservations at the 17 campgrounds that are opening early and who are scheduled to arrive April 16 or 17 for the previously scheduled trout opener on Saturday, April 17.

Anglers have until March 30 to utilize this waiver. Site transfer is available on a first-come basis by calling 888-PA-PARKS or by visiting <http://www.dcnr.pa.gov>.

In addition, the single Statewide Mentored Youth Trout Day will occur Saturday, March 27, and a single Statewide Opening Day of trout season will occur Saturday, April 3.

Pennsylvania has 121 state parks and 20 forest districts that are open year-round.

State park visitors are reminded that COVID-19 measures remain in place. Masks must be worn in park and forest offices, in any other indoor public space including restrooms, during both indoor and outdoor special events and gatherings, and outdoors when visitors are unable to social distance.

Finally, with Daylight Saving Time upon us, it's a good idea to check the batteries in your smoke alarms to ensure they are fully functional to save lives.

Have a happy and safe Spring season.





## Flynn supports Wolf plan to provide \$145M in grants to hospitality industry

In keeping with my commitment to help small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, I joined Gov. Tom Wolf and business industry leaders outlining a plan to give \$145 million in state funding to affected businesses in the hospitality industry because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lackawanna County will receive \$2.3 million and Metroaction through the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce will distribute the funding. The program information is available at [www.metroaction.org/grants](http://www.metroaction.org/grants) or by calling 570-342-7711, extension 15.

The very roots of my strong work ethic came from the hospitality industry. As a young man, I worked as a busboy, waiter, and bartender, and eventually I owned my own tavern and restaurant. I know too well the hard work that these men and women put into the hospitality industry every day.

These grants are above and beyond the previous grants and low-interest loans that have been made available here in Pennsylvania. I will continue to work with the governor to help our businesses.

A business is eligible if:

- It has a North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) designation within the Accommodation subsector (721) or Food Services and Drinking Places subsector (722) and where accommodations, food or drink is served to or provided for the public, with or without charge.
- It has fewer than 300 full-time equivalent employees.
- It has a maximum tangible net worth of not more than \$15 million.
- It was in operation on Feb. 15, 2020 and remains in operation and does not intend to permanently cease operations within one year of the date of application.
- COVID-19 has had an adverse economic impact on the eligible applicant which makes the grant request necessary to support the ongoing operations of the eligible applicant.

Priority will be given to applicants that:

- Have not received a loan or grant issued under the authority of the commonwealth or the

commonwealth's political subdivisions or by the federal government.

- Were subject to closure by the governor's disaster declaration or can demonstrate one of the following:
  - A reduction in gross receipts of 50% or more for the period beginning after March 31, 2020, and ending before Dec. 31, 2020, in comparison to the period beginning after March 31, 2019, and ending before Dec. 31, 2019.
  - If the eligible applicant was not in operation during the entire comparison period, but was in operation on Feb. 15, 2020, a monthly average reduction in gross receipts of 50% or more for the period beginning after March 31, 2020, and ending before Dec. 31, 2020, in comparison to the period beginning after Jan. 1, 2020, and ending before April 1, 2020.

The program guidelines are on the Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development website <http://dced.pa.gov>.

## My Office Can Help With

- PACE (pharmaceutical assistance for qualified senior citizens)
- Voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate forms (for qualified seniors)
- Obtaining birth or death certificates
- Information regarding PHEAA (PA Higher Education Assistance Agency)
- Requests for state informational materials
- CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)
- PennDOT problems or questions — including disability license plates and placards
- Questions or problems with any state agency
- LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) application assistance

# Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program continues

Older adults and disabled residents in Lackawanna County can apply for rebates on property taxes or rent paid in 2020.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is available to people age 65 or older, widows and widowers age 50 or older, and people with disabilities age 18 or older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded.

The maximum rebate is \$650 but supplemental rebates for certain qualifying homeowners can increase rebates to \$975.

The Pennsylvania departments of Aging and Revenue recently announced a new online filing option for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program. Residents can now submit their applications electronically by visiting <https://mypath.pa.gov>.

Applicants still have the option of filing a paper application if they wish to do so, but the electronic application is a new feature available to people who are looking to apply online.

State officials launched the online application because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to remind residents that free assistance to fill out their forms is available at my office drive-thru location at Jay's Commons, 409 North Main Avenue in Scranton. The drive-thru service is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a first-come basis. No appointment is necessary.

Residents should bring their 2020 income statements and their 2020 rent certificate or real estate tax receipt.

The program offers the following rebates to homeowners with these incomes:

- \$0 to \$8,000 - \$650
- \$8,001 to \$5,000 - \$500
- \$15,001 to \$18,000 - \$300
- \$18,001 to \$35,000 - \$250

## Patriot Resource Center to open at former Scranton State School for the Deaf

I am so proud to have been able to work with our local veterans in providing additional services to our men and women who have sacrificed so much for our country and our community.

I was thrilled to be able to participate in the announcement of the sale of the former Scranton State School for the Deaf/Marywood South Campus to the Jared Yoder Foundation.

This veterans facility will house "The Patriot Resource Center," which will be open to active military, all veterans and first responders. The facility will serve firefighters, emergency medical service workers and police officers.

It will also be the new home for the veterans group Valhalla Veterans Services and provide meeting and activity space for regional VFWs and American Legion groups.



The program offers the following rebates to renters with these incomes:

- \$0 to \$8,000 - \$650
- \$8,001 to \$15,000 - \$500

Applicants must reapply for rebates every year because rebates are based on annual income and property taxes or rent paid in each year. Spouses or personal representatives may file rebate claims on behalf of claimants who lived at least one day in 2020 and meet all eligibility criteria.

Rebates will be distributed beginning July 1, as required by law. The easiest way to check the status of your rebate is at <http://mypath.pa.gov/>

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program is one of five programs supported by the Pennsylvania Lottery. Since the program's 1971 inception, older and disabled adults have received more than \$6.9 billion in property tax and rent relief. The rebate program also receives funding from slots gaming.



# The American Recovery Plan is for all of us...

The \$1.9 trillion stimulus package that United States President Joe Biden signed into law includes close to \$50 billion in housing assistance to struggling renters, homeowners and people experiencing homelessness. The plan includes \$27 billion

in rent relief, \$10 billion in mortgage payment relief and \$5 billion to address homelessness.

In addition, financial relief is headed to households in our area.

For parents, the federal stimulus checks include

significant relief to parents with children – \$1,400 for each dependent, an increase in the child tax credit, and more money funneled through the tax credit to help parents pay for work-related child expenses.

Families earning less

than \$150,000 a year and individuals earning less than \$75,000 a year should get the full \$1,400 per person. Families earning up to \$160,000 per year and individuals earning up to \$80,000 per year will receive stimulus checks for smaller amounts.

***While more of our regional residents are receiving the vaccine – we cannot let our guard down. We must continue to be diligent and continue to use our good common sense.***

What's Changed...

If you have been fully vaccinated:

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- If you have been around someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless you have symptoms.
  - However, if you live in a group setting (like a correctional or detention facility or group home) and are around someone who has COVID-19, you should still stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if you do not have symptoms.

What Has Not Changed?

For now, if you have been fully vaccinated:

- You should still take steps to protect yourself and others in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from

others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.

- Take these precautions whenever you are:
  - In public.
  - Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household.
  - Visiting with an unvaccinated person who is at increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 or who lives with a person at increased risk.
- You should still avoid medium or large-sized gatherings.
- You should still delay domestic and international travel. If you do travel, you'll still need to follow CDC requirements and recommendations.
- You should still watch out for symptoms of COVID-19, especially if you've been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested and stay home and away from others.
- You will still need to follow guidance at your workplace.

What We Know and What We are Still Learning

- We know that COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing COVID-19 disease, especially

severe illness, and death.

- We are still learning how effective the vaccines are against variants of the virus that causes COVID-19. Early data show the vaccines may work against some variants but could be less effective against others.
- We know that other prevention steps help stop the spread of COVID-19, and that these steps are still important, even as vaccines are being distributed.
  - We are still learning how well COVID-19 vaccines keep people from spreading the disease.
  - Early data show that the vaccines may help keep people from spreading COVID-19, but we are learning more as more people get vaccinated.
- We are still learning how long COVID-19 vaccines can protect people.
- As we know more, CDC will continue to update recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

Until we know more about those questions, everyone — even people who've had their vaccines — should continue taking basic prevention steps when recommended.

***If you are looking for more information on Pennsylvania's Unemployment Compensation program on where to file and to check on your status, visit <http://pua.benefits.uc.gov>.***



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## Annual shredding event April 17

My office will host a free community shredding event Saturday, April 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at my district office parking lot located at Jay's Commons, 409 North Main Avenue in Scranton.

Common types of unwanted items that should be shredded include credit card statements, credit card applications, bank statements, canceled checks, income tax information and insurance records. All items will be shredded on-site. **All plastic, vinyl/leather, metal and material bindings, metal clips, etc. must be removed from your items.**

**NO Magazines, phone books, or newspapers will be accepted.**

Identity theft remains a serious concern and threat to people of all ages and economic backgrounds. I am hosting this event for my constituents to provide you with a safe place to dispose of unwanted documents properly and securely.

**There will be a three-bag limit. The shredding event is for personal materials and is not open to businesses.**



## GOV. WOLF EASING PA RESTRICTIONS ON APRIL 4TH (EASTER SUNDAY):

- Restaurants/bars can resume bar service.
- Alcohol can be sold without purchase of food.
- Indoor dining capacity increased to 75% (as long as restaurants "self-certify").
- Capacity for gyms, theaters, casinos, malls also increased to 75%.
- Indoor events will now be able to hold 25% of capacity.
- Outdoor events will now be able to hold 50% of capacity (including sports stadiums).

The governor says mask wearing and social distancing requirements still apply.

