



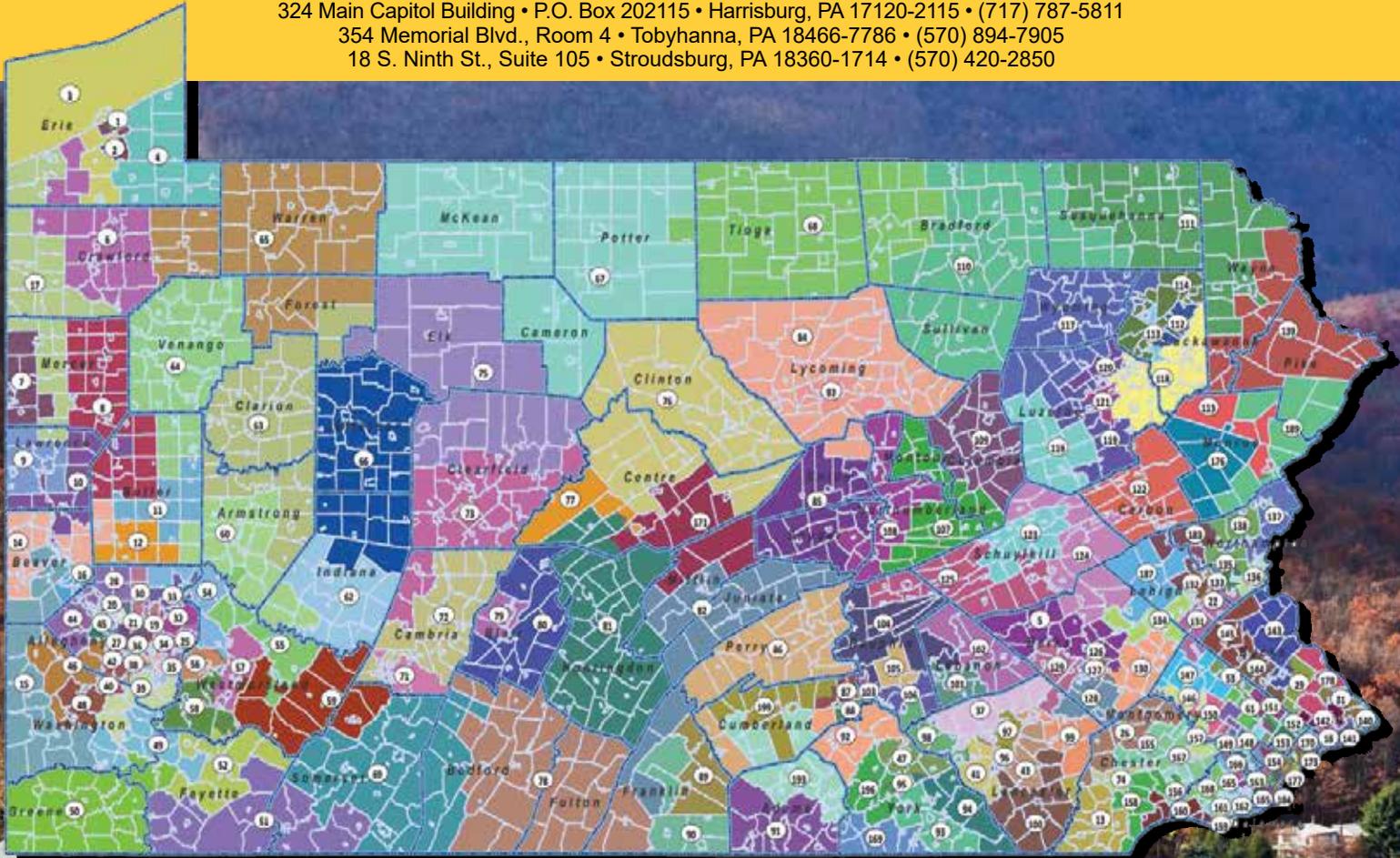
# CAPITOL UPDATE

# State Representative MAUREEN MADDEN

Representing the 115th Legislative District

Fall 2021

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## Redistricting 101

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

# How Does Redistricting Work?



“The people of Pennsylvania deserve to choose their leaders, not the reverse,”

Rep. Maureen Madden stated during a House State Government Committee public hearing.

“We must discuss the need for fair, compact, and contiguous federal and state districts and elections. Pennsylvanians deserve a meaningful election process that is not sullied by corruption and greed.”

## What is redistricting?

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census counts each resident in the United States. This information is used to determine how the population has changed. Once the data is collected, it is used to redraw state legislative and senatorial district boundaries and reapportion congressional seats. Pennsylvania had a 2.4% growth in population, 1% less than the last census reported. As a result, Pennsylvania will lose one congressional seat.

## Why do we do it?

Redistricting ensures that each district has an equal population. This process works to guarantee all districts are reflective and representative of the electorate. Redistricting determines political power—federal, state, and local alike. This process can either amplify or muffle the voices of marginalized communities. It can give them a fair shot at electing someone who represents their worldview or remove their seat at the table completely.

## Gerrymandering vs. Redistricting

Gerrymandering refers to the manipulation of district lines to protect or change political power.

Gerrymandering is a genuine problem with adverse consequences. It can result in issues like misrepresentation of the typical voter’s concerns, political polarization, the advantage of one group over another, and a lack of accountability from elected officials.

Redistricting is more about geography than it is about politics. Voters should be voting with people who live near them, rather than people who will ensure a particular political outcome.

There is limited framework in the state constitution around redistricting and gerrymandering. Article II, Section 17 of the PA Constitution mandates a five-member commission composed of the majority and minority leaders of the House and Senate, and another member of their choosing. Article II Section 16 contains language that requires compact and contiguous districts unless it is necessary to split them. However, there is much to be desired regarding keeping this commission from drawing maps that directly serve themselves. Nothing is stopping Pennsylvania or any other state from enacting a minimum standard of compactness that all states must observe while drawing congressional district lines.

## Amanda Holt and the Goals of 2020 Redistricting

Amanda Holt, a piano teacher from Allentown, fought against the political status quo in 2011 as she challenged the redistricting map that followed the 2010 census. This map is touted as one of the worst redistricting maps in Pennsylvania’s history due to its oddly shaped districts that chopped up counties and municipalities alike. How did Holt challenge this map? She drew her own and took it to the Supreme Court. Due to her efforts, the Supreme Court ruled that the 2011 redistricting map violated the commonwealth’s constitution. After this ruling, the Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) was tasked with establishing a new redistricting plan for Pennsylvania. This caused multiple delays, which precluded the use of the first map in the 2012 elections. The new redistricting map was finally approved by the Supreme Court in May 2013 and was used in the 2014 elections.

Holt also testified during this year’s redistricting process. According to her testimony to the State Government Committee on July 22 regarding redistricting, we should focus on just five basic criteria:

- Respect minorities—ensure the Voting Rights Act is followed, even if doing so divides a political subdivision.
- Equal population—as close as possible while consistently meeting state goals.
- Preserve political subdivision boundaries—limit or eliminate ability to divide boundaries.
- Contiguous—all districts are physically connected.
- Compact—not generally defined further. (Generally considered only after the other goals have been met.)

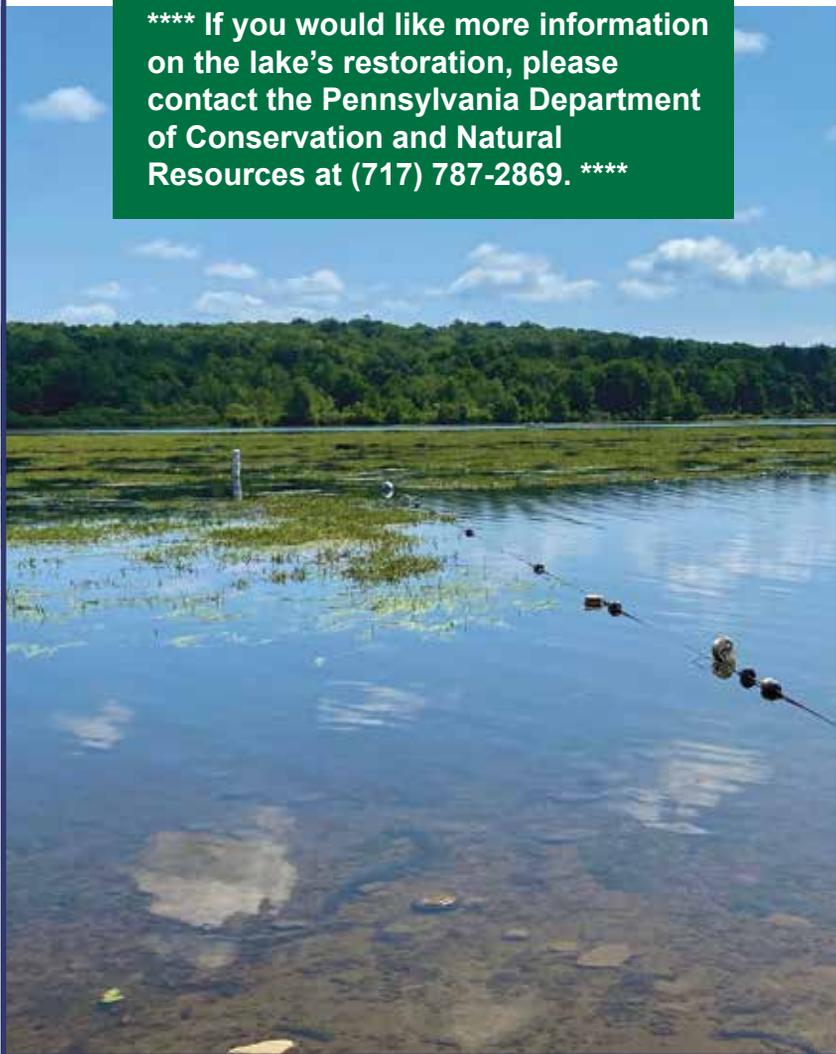
The House Republican majority is promising the most transparent redistricting process Pennsylvania has ever had, and Rep. Madden intends to hold them accountable to this promise. There will be a public hearing in the Northeast on Sept. 20. It will begin at 1 p.m. at the Sidney and Pauline Friedman Jewish Community Center in the Cohen Family Social Hall located at 613 SJ Strauss Lane in Kingston. If you would like to testify as part of the hearing, you can sign up by visiting <http://paredistricting.com/Nehearing>. The deadline to sign up to testify is Wednesday, Sept. 15, and the deadline to submit written testimony is Wednesday, Oct. 13. Public input on the map can be submitted on [www.paredistricting.com/input](http://www.paredistricting.com/input) via the new mapping tool. Please visit this website and make your voice heard.

# Invasive Plant Species at Gouldsboro State Park

At the Gouldsboro State Park, the presence of an unknown plant species is spreading across the lake. Representative Madden is aware of the public's concerns and has been in communication with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to clean up the lake.

In early August, DCNR's Aquatic Resource Specialist and the Park Manager conducted a field visit to review the conditions of the lake and determine the specific species of the plant. DCNR will hire a contractor to begin the suppression of the species. Since 2019, DCNR has applied targeted herbicide applications to suppress nuisance aquatic plant growth in primary recreation access areas (beach, fishing, mooring). Aquatic plants which are not in primary recreation access areas for the general public are not targeted for suppression. Leased and private cabin/cottage shorelines are not considered primary recreation access areas.

**\*\*\*\* If you would like more information on the lake's restoration, please contact the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources at (717) 787-2869. \*\*\*\***



## BROADBAND EXPANSION UPDATE

During this pandemic, one issue that has become blaringly evident is the the lack of internet access throughout our community.

As part of his Restore PA initiative, Governor Wolf has aimed to expand broadband. "An investment in broadband internet connectivity is an investment in our commonwealth's future and prosperity. The critical need for high-speed internet has become clear in light of our efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as more families work and learn from home, businesses operate online services and patients access medical care through telehealth," Wolf said.

This effort began in May 2019 when Representative Madden and members of the Wolf administration attended a Broadband Rally organized by residents of Price Township. Together with Blue Ridge Communication, they spearheaded the process to bring reliable internet connection to the community.

Monroe County Commissioner Sharon Laverdure stated, "With the first round of stimulus money, the Monroe County Commissioners provided \$300,000 on funding to continue the construction of running information lines to an area both unserved and underserved. Understanding that more work needs to be done, we are now using the second allocation and are in the process of moving forward by developing a public/private partnership to continue to address the needs of the underserved residents of our community."

Stroudsburg Mayor Tarah Probst has even gotten creative trying to improve Stroudsburg borough's spotty internet. Last Spring, Probst applied to a national contest for a hometown tech makeover and landed Stroudsburg in the top 10 for a chance at a \$3 million investment by a leading internet provider. Just for being in the top 10, Stroudsburg received a \$50,000 grant. "I applied for the grant in hopes of improving the quality of life for residents," Mayor Probst stated.

Representative Madden commented on the progress made so far stating, "Access to adequate broadband has evolved into a basic need that is essential to succeed in today's society. We need to ensure every household and business has access to high-speed internet."



# COVID-19 Rental Assistance

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is available for renters of residential properties who are at risk of eviction or utility shutoffs due to hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Landlords can apply for assistance on behalf of tenants. Households may be eligible for up to 12 months of assistance to cover past-due or future rental and/or utility payments. To be eligible, you must meet the income requirements shown in the table below:

# in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total Annualized Income	\$44,350	\$50,650	\$57,000	\$63,300	\$68,400	\$73,450	\$78,500	\$83,600

Pocono Mountains United Way (PMUW) is assisting all of those who need help applying. If you have any questions about the program and how to apply, please reach PMUW's ERAP hotline at (570) 243-6677 or visit [MonroeERAP.com](http://MonroeERAP.com). Don't hesitate-apply today!

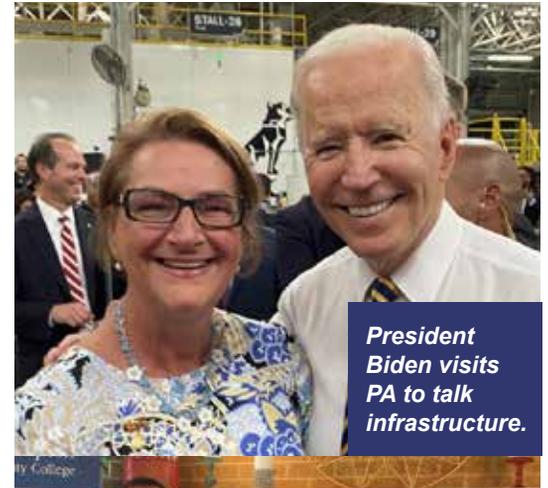
## Monroe County Vaccination Rate Below 50%

According to the PA Department of Health, over 11.8 million vaccinations have been distributed to date. Sixty-four percent of Pennsylvanians 18 or older are fully vaccinated. Despite this encouraging statistic, we are still averaging 2,082 new cases per day, 935 patients hospitalized and 226 patients in the ICU. While Pennsylvania is inching closer to the 70% vaccination rate, Monroe County remains woefully unvaccinated. Nearly 50% of Monroe County residents are completely unvaccinated. Representative Maureen Madden is urging residents to remain cautious when meeting others.

### Local vaccine clinics for August and September

- East Stroudsburg University – 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 31 at Flagler Metzgar Center. To schedule an appointment, visit [www.esu.edu/vaccine](http://www.esu.edu/vaccine).
- Northampton County Community College – 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 9.  
The clinic takes place at "Rock the Block" Student Event.
- East Stroudsburg LatinoFest – Noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 19 at East Stroudsburg University Rugby Field. (Walk-in clinic only)

Community drug stores continue to provide vaccines. Check their websites for vaccination schedules.



President Biden visits PA to talk infrastructure.



U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visits PA to discuss education with Rep. Madden and US Congresswoman Susan Wild (D-7th District).



Rep. Madden with Supervisor Jennifer Shukaitis.

Brady Armstrong achieves Eagle Scout rank.



Healing Garden ribbon cutting at the Monroe County Hospice House.



PA House Democratic Caucus Leader Joanna McClinton visits the Mountain Center.

# Reforming Solitary Confinement

**STOP SOLITARY in PA:** 2 Days of Action was an event supporting the abolishment of solitary confinement in Pennsylvania. It was hosted by the Abolition Law Center and the Human Rights Coalition PA, where Representative Maureen Madden supported Representative Tina Davis, (D-Bucks), Representative Donna Bullock, (D-Phila) and Senator John Kane, (D-Chester/Delaware) who were promoting their legislation, H.B. 1037, against solitary confinement. Originally intended as a means of introspective reflection, the sentence has evolved into a harrowing and psychologically damaging practice. The bill would cap solitary confinement sentences at 15 days in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Additionally, it would prohibit its use on vulnerable populations, including those who have had a miscarriage/abortion; identify as LGBTQ+; those with mental, intellectual, developmental disabilities; and those younger than 21 or over the age of 55. Further, the legislation would stop the use of chemical agents, restraint chairs, and shackles.

The event centered around personal narratives, sharing stories of those who were wrongfully convicted or akin to those held in solitary confinement for years. Representative Madden met a former inmate, Cynthia Alvarado, who spent



240 days in solitary confinement. Ms. Alvarado was raped and suffered physical abuse during her time in solitary. Her human rights were violated; her dignity was stripped. She now devotes her time to advocating for the abolishment of solitary confinement and is a supporter of this legislation. House Bill 1037 would mitigate adverse outcomes for inmates who would surely suffer and potentially commit suicide in solitary confinement, saving thousands of lives.

## Workplace Freedom Act

Over the past century, working Pennsylvanians saw greater increases in their standard of living during periods of increased unionization. Despite this fact, corporate special interests are funding anti-worker campaigns to weaken unions. The result of these efforts has negatively impacted the wages, healthcare, workplace safety, and retirement of our teachers, police officers, firefighters, nurses, and countless other government workers who serve and protect us.

Economic gains for working Pennsylvanians did not come quickly or easily. Due to anti-worker efforts, economic gains have been rolled back with the goal to seemingly eliminate them for all. Across the board in every “right-to-work” state there are lower wages, higher medical costs, greater retirement insecurity, as well higher poverty, infant mortality, and workplace deaths. Collective bargaining gives workers a strong voice, empowering them to stand up for themselves and their right to fair wages, hours, and working conditions.

Representative Madden’s legislation strengthens collective bargaining. The proposed legislation would remove the wait time in establishing a union, therefore decreasing the ability of employers to intimidate their employees. Instead of waiting, a workplace may become a union if 50% of workers turn in a union card.

The “right to work” is a fallacy and distraction meant to divide working people and pay them less. If left unchecked, these anti-worker efforts will weaken our middle class and likely increase inequality. Only through strength in numbers have working Pennsylvanians ever found economic progress. Representative Madden is introducing the Workplace Freedom Act to strengthen unions and protect workers.



*Rep. Madden joined Rick Bloomingdale, President of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO at a state Capitol news conference on workers’ rights.*



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## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Extended

The PA Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program deadline has been extended to Dec. 31. You are eligible to apply if you are:

- Age 65 or older
- Under age 65, with a spouse 65 or older
- A widow/widower aged 50 to 64
- Permanently disabled aged 18 to 64

Homeowners must have a household income of \$35,000 or less, and renters a household income of \$15,000 or less. Please call one of Representative Madden's offices for more information.

If you have already applied and would like to know the status of your rebate, please visit [www.mypath.pa.gov](http://www.mypath.pa.gov), select "Where's My Rebate?", and enter the required information.

For additional help with the rebate process, please call one of Representative Madden's district offices in Stroudsburg (570) 420-2850 or Tobyhanna (570) 894-7905.



The Monroe County Assessment Office (MCAO) will be accepting Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion applications starting Sept. 1. If eligible, you could receive property tax relief for your primary residence. To apply, you must complete the application and provide two forms of approved identification reflecting your current address – PA driver's license or ID card, PA voter registration, Berkheimer tax document, paycheck stub or W-2 form and/or Monroe County license to carry a firearm. Please submit all documents to MCAO for approval. The deadline to file is March 1, 2022. For further assistance, call MCAO at (570) 517-3133 or Representative Madden's office.

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