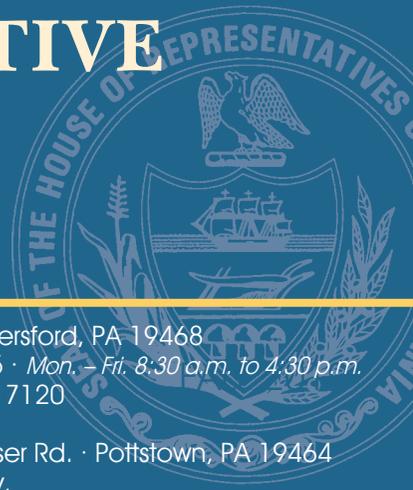




STATE REPRESENTATIVE Joe Ciresi

146th Legislative District



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Open Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
Office hours may vary; please call (484) 200-8265 to confirm hours

Spring 2021

Email: RepCiresi@pahouse.com · Website: www.RepCiresi.com

   Follow me on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @RepCiresi

Dear Neighbors,

As the weather warms and we continue working together to safely get through the pandemic, I figured it was a perfect time to reach out with some news and bits of information I hope you find useful.

So, my staff and I have compiled this Spring 2021 newsletter.

In it, you will find updates on the following:

- Committee & leadership assignments
- My legislation
- Regional rail service
- Hazardous waste collection
- New Department of Revenue online filing option
- SEPTA Senior ID
- REAL ID
- Grants for our district
- Help with various services, including SNAP and Pennie
- Upcoming events

And, of course, if you glance around this front page, you'll also read an exciting update about my district office.

We're all a bit (or a lot) worn down from the last 15 months, so I'm hoping to focus on some helpful and positive information in this newsletter.

But know that, no matter what, my staff and I are here for you and are happy and willing to help connect you to state resources that exist to make your life easier.

Thanks for reading, everybody. Here's to a happy and healthy spring and summer!



District Operations Update

Due to health and safety protocols necessary because of COVID-19, our ability to connect face-to-face with you has been diminished over the past year. But now that a large proportion of the adult population has been fully vaccinated, we are pleased to announce that my Royersford District Office will be open for walk-in services once again starting May 25. You will no longer need an appointment to speak with my staff about state-related programs and services. So, please visit us at Park Towne Plaza, 301 N. Lewis Road, Suite 140C, Royersford, PA 19468. We missed you!

Note: Our Pottstown Satellite Office at the TriCounty Active Adult Center remains closed until further notice.



New Committee and Leadership Assignments

For my second term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, I was appointed to new committees and leadership roles and am honored to receive leadership roles in the House. As a former 12-year school board member and with many of my bills focused on education reform, I am particularly pleased to have been appointed to the House Education Committee, as well as reappointed to the House Commerce and House Tourism & Recreational Development committees, and appointed to the House Gaming Oversight Committee.

I was also appointed Vice Chair of the House Democratic Policy Committee, the Democratic Chairman of the Subcommittee on Arts and Entertainment, and a member of the Special Education Funding Commission.

As part of my constant efforts to find common ground and work beyond Harrisburg partisan gridlock, I was also one of the founding members of the PA One Caucus earlier this year, a group of 16 bipartisan legislators pushing for institutional reforms and bridging across the partisan divide. I also serve as a Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Film Caucus and the Litter Caucus.

I look forward to using these committee assignments and appointments to continue working on your behalf, fighting for the issues that matter for you and your family.

Regional Rail Service

Like so many of you, when I am rolling at a crawl on Route 422, I cannot help but think about alternatives.

Since taking office in 2019, I have held countless meetings, met with experts from around the world, commissioned a study, and just this past month, held a policy hearing about restoring passenger rail to western Montgomery County. This hearing can be viewed in its entirety on my website – www.RepCiresi.com.

Our vision of restoring service that ceased in 1981 is alive and well. Efforts are underway in Reading, Phoenixville, and other regions of the state involving stakeholders such as SEPTA, Amtrak, county and regional planners, and PennDOT. The regional vice president of Norfolk Southern said during our hearing that the freight operator is open to cooperating to

restore service – if funding is secured and their freight business is protected.

More updates will be forthcoming in the months ahead. Thank you for your support.



I hosted a Policy Hearing in April where we discussed how the expansion of passenger rail service would boost the PA economy.

REAL ID Enforcement

The Department of Homeland Security recently announced the extension of the REAL ID full enforcement date by 19 months – from Oct. 1, 2021, to May 3, 2023 – because of circumstances resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This means that beginning May 3, 2023, every air traveler 18 or older will need a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license or ID card, a state-issued enhanced driver’s license or another TSA-acceptable form of ID at airport security checkpoints for domestic air travel.

My office can help answer any questions you have about REAL ID document requirements and assist in requesting expedited Pennsylvania birth certificates through the state.

Learn more about REAL ID at www.pa.gov/REAL-ID.

The federal REAL ID Act has been extended in Pennsylvania until May 3, 2023

The best thing you can do to prepare for REAL ID is to get your documents together:

- ✓ Proof of identity
- ✓ Social Security card
- ✓ Two current, physical proofs of PA residency
- ✓ Proof of all legal name changes

Visit PENNDOT.GOV/REALID

SEPTA Senior ID

One of the most popular services my staff provides for our seniors is back! Residents aged 65 or older are eligible to travel for free on all SEPTA service lines within Pennsylvania. My district office processes applications and takes photos for SEPTA Key Senior ID cards. Applicants simply need to present a form of identification with a date of birth on it, such as a Pennsylvania driver's license or non-driver ID, U.S. Passport, or birth certificate. Call or email us to schedule a 10-minute appointment, or just stop by our Royersford District Office.

Issuance of the SEPTA Key Senior ID cards was halted in 2020 due to a SEPTA technical issue.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all SEPTA Key Senior ID cards that were scheduled to expire in 2020 or 2021 have been automatically renewed until the end of calendar year 2022.

HEADED TO PHILLY FOR THE "BIG GAME"?

Visit our office to get your free
Senior SEPTA ID.
No appointment necessary.

WORKING FOR YOU: Introducing Legislation

As legislators, we introduce, debate and pass legislation. That's the essence of what we do – or should be doing – in Harrisburg. At the time of this writing, I've introduced 25 bills on a wide range of topics this year and am working on many more on various issues, including fair funding for education, insurance consumer protections, charter school reform, and maintaining abandoned cemeteries.

This newsletter provides updates on just a few of the bills I have been working on during my time at the Capitol. You can always reach out to my office to find more information on these and other bills and resolutions, as well as ideas YOU might have for legislation.



In early March, I joined Governor Tom Wolf and business and industry leaders to outline a plan to give \$145 million in state funding to affected businesses in the hospitality industry.

Supporting Businesses Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many small businesses in our community have been hit hard by the past year of operating under the COVID-19 pandemic, and they deserve our continued support as we move toward returning to normal. This is why I have introduced H.B. 537 and H.B. 538 to provide grants to small retail, personal care, restaurant and catering businesses. Too often, grant money ends up in the hands of large corporations. We need to make sure the local mom and pop establishments get the support they need. I was pleased to see H.B. 537 be adopted unanimously by the House Commerce Committee in early May, and my hope is to see it come up for a full vote in the House chamber soon.

Dept. of Revenue Filing

The Pennsylvania Department of Revenue has a web service called "My Path" that allows taxpayers to make payments, file state tax returns, apply for Property Tax/Rent Rebates, track payments, submit questions and much more.

No account registration is required! All you need to do is visit www.mypath.pa.gov for more information.

Sign Up for ReadyMontco Alerts

ReadyMontco is the most direct way of receiving timely, official information during a disaster, severe weather or other emergency. This free service by the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety lets you customize which alerts you want to receive and how by phone, text or email. Register today at www.ReadyMontco.org.

Over \$19 Million in State Grants Delivered

I continue to work for my constituents by seeking out and supporting state grants and other funding to help our residents, businesses, schools and local governments. Since taking office in January 2019, I am proud to have helped deliver over \$19.4 million in state grants to the 146th Legislative District, including these recent grant awards since my last newsletter update:

ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT

- **\$1 million** to rehabilitate the former Mercury building in downtown Pottstown and redevelop it into a boutique hotel and restaurant/lounge.
- **\$1 million** for the development of the Pottstown Sustainable Energy Park, a 174,000-ton-per-year biomass gasification facility to process clean commercial waste.
- **\$500,000** to repurpose 7,500 square feet of vacant space in downtown Pottstown to create a life sciences incubator.
- **\$428,000** for rehabilitation of the Royersford Trestle Bridge.

INFRASTRUCTURE & RECREATION

- **\$857,314** for sidewalks and intersection pedestrian safety improvements along Main Street in downtown Trappe.
- **\$225,000** for improvements to Limerick Community Park.

EDUCATION

- **\$255,071** in special education COVID-19 impact mitigation grants for Perkiomen Valley, Pottsgrove, Pottstown and Spring-Ford school districts.
- **\$186,487** in school safety grants for Perkiomen Valley, Spring-Ford and Pottsgrove school districts, Pope John Paul II High School and St. Aloysius Parish School.
- **\$82,495** in career and technical education equipment grants for Pottstown School District and the Western Montgomery Career and Technology Center.

ADDITIONAL GRANTS

- **\$560,000** in COVID-19 relief to over two dozen local businesses through a grant program I voted for and helped create.
- **\$292,939** in COVID-19 assistance for 10 fire companies and EMS providers.
- **\$1 million** for upgrades and expansion for the Laurel House Domestic Violence Shelter.



Members of the Limerick Fire Department are always willing to help residents keep themselves and their homes safe!



Meals on Wheels of Family Services Montco has an incredible network of volunteers. I joined Joe Fescenmyer for a shift earlier this year.

Hazardous Waste Collection

Did you know that Montgomery County will host several free hazardous waste collection events throughout 2021?

All events are by appointment only.
Register by visiting www.montcopa.org/recycling.

Please note that electronics (including televisions) and tires will not be accepted at these events.

Here are specific opportunities:

SATURDAY, JUNE 12

Temple University-Ambler Campus
Enter at 1431 E. Butler Pike, Ambler

SATURDAY, JUNE 19

Abington Junior High School
Enter at 2056 Susquehanna Road, Abington

SATURDAY, SEPT. 25

Spring -Ford 9th Grade Center
400 S. Lewis Road, Royersford



Rethinking Education for the Future

As legislators, we often pass individual, piecemeal changes and improvements. But the world around us is changing – from how we work to how our students learn. It’s time we look holistically at the entire education system and think about what we need it to look like. That is why I have introduced H.B. 806 to create an Education Reform Commission to look at everything from curriculum and CTE to equitable school funding and extracurriculars. This commission would be tasked with bringing together all stakeholders to project out Pennsylvania’s education needs over the next 25 years and propose reforms to prepare our state for the future.

I am thrilled to be serving on the House Education Committee.

Making It Easier for Pennsylvanians to Claim Their Own Money

Since I took office, my staff has helped hundreds of residents claim over \$650,000 in unclaimed property – money that is rightfully theirs that is held by the Pennsylvania Treasury until claimed by its rightful owner or heir. However, an inconsistency in Pennsylvania’s probate law prevents many types of relatives – including grandchildren and nephews/nieces – from being able to claim money as heirs using a simplified notarized affidavit process even when they’re the closest surviving relative,

resulting in additional time, expense and effort. Working with the PA Treasury, I introduced H.B. 81 to align Pennsylvania’s unclaimed property law to the existing intestate succession law, which would make it easier for more relatives to claim lower-value unclaimed properties and put money back into their hands. When possible, we should look to cut red tape and make it easier to interact with government.

Walking with Joe

We’ve all been bottled up inside our homes more than many of us wanted due to COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Now that we see COVID-19 vaccinations helping to significantly reduce transmission and the CDC is adjusting its guidance accordingly, I wanted to use the opportunity to try something new.

It’s called “Walking with Joe,” and you can join me for a walk around one of our wonderful communities, including Limerick Community Park and Pottstown Riverfront Walk. Various times are available, and it gives us a chance to chat, get to know each other better and, of course, get some exercise.

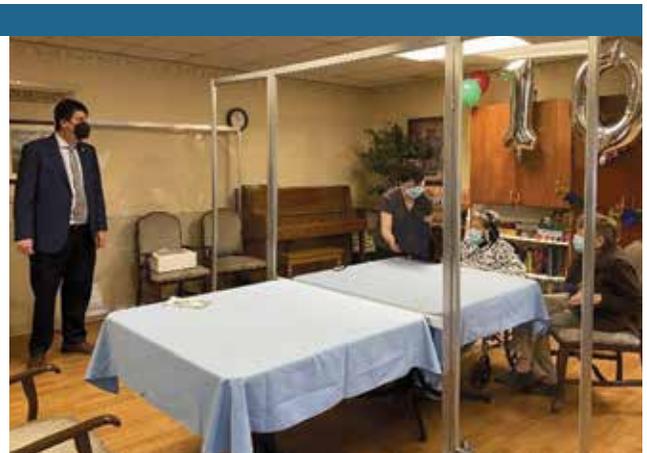
You can sign up through my website, www.RepCiresi.com.



Sarah, Joshua and their children took a “Walk with Joe” along the Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown.



From left to right, Alex Teplyakov, Sarah Calvin, Rep. Ciresi, Mindi Cherry and Pam Hacker offer assistance at a veterans event.



Dorothy “Dot” Cassell celebrated her 102nd birthday with a few friends at Sanatoga Court.



STATE REP. JOE CIRESI
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 Harrisburg, PA 17120-2146



LPO.KAF.0520

Upcoming Event

Check out this upcoming event that might interest you. Reach out to my office for more details!

Telephone Town Hall
Thursday, June 10 · 7 p.m.

You'll be able to talk live with me about any state government-related issues important to you when we connect for a Telephone Town Hall.

Stay up to date with Rep. Ciresi

I maintain an email list for residents who wish to receive periodic updates from me, including legislation updates, event announcements, traffic updates, state and local program information, and more. You can sign up on my website at www.RepCiresi.com

You also can follow me on social media, which is regularly updated with information from Harrisburg and events right here in Montgomery County.

   @RepCiresi ·  RepCiresi@pahouse.net

The Help Corner

*Check out the multiple ways my office can help.
 Below are a few specific programs I think are really beneficial.*

RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Residents of Montgomery County who lost income due to the pandemic are encouraged to apply for Emergency Rent and Utility assistance. There is no deadline to apply at this time.

Beginning the application process is as simple as texting your ZIP code to 898-211. You may also contact the following local organizations:

- Family Services (www.fsmontco.org)
- Pottstown Cluster (www.pottstowncluster.org)
- Pottstown YWCA (www.ywcatricountyarea.org)
- CADCOM (www.cadcom.org)
- ACLAMO (www.aclamo.org)

UNITED WAY 211

Visit www.pa211.org or text your ZIP code to 898-211 to connect to a resource specialist for free information on community programs and assistance.

SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps eligible Pennsylvanians buy food, and the benefits have been temporarily increased through June 30. Visit www.dhs.pa.gov and search "SNAP" for more information.

PENNIE

Pennie, Pennsylvania's health insurance marketplace, has opened a special enrollment period through Aug. 15 to allow people to enroll in healthcare coverage. If you need to purchase individual health insurance, visit www.pennie.com to shop plans or enroll, or call the Pennie hotline at 844-844-8040.