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State Representative

# TIM BRIGGS

## 149th Legislative District

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### Dear friends and neighbors,

Since first being elected, I have been a progressive voice in the House of Representatives and will always advocate for commonsense solutions to complicated matters. It has been a difficult few years in our country, and Harrisburg is no different. As we come out of the pandemic, we are facing the challenges of workforce shortages, supply chain issues, and the rising cost of almost everything. Much of this newsletter will discuss matters around our 2022/2023 budget and some of the priorities I had advocated for. Unlike previous budgets, this year we were facing a massive surplus which was related to a healthy recovery and revenue overestimations, as well as one-time federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan of 2021 "ARPA." I advocated for a balanced approach between making smart investments in programs and correcting previous accounting gimmicks, as well as making a significant deposit into our Rainy-Day fund to responsibly set us up for future strength.

Also, this year is a redistricting year. After decades of partisan gerrymandering by Harrisburg Republicans, I have made advocating for and supporting fair districts a priority, including the creation of an independent commission to draw the lines. While the commission didn't get enacted this year, we were able to get the state Supreme Court to approve a more reasonable map. The remapping also brought changes to the 149th Legislative District, which you can find on the updated map (back page).

Much of my effort has been focused on my work as the Democratic Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. I will be sending out a newsletter specifically on the work of the committee in the coming weeks. I will always prioritize issues that will move Pennsylvania forward, whether that be protecting our democracy, investing in education and legislation that protects the most vulnerable citizens and our environment, or creating an economy for the 21st century.

I continue to struggle against the extreme right of the Republican party in Harrisburg and their attacks on our core institutions. I always try to find a middle ground, but it has become increasingly more difficult when facts are disregarded. As we continue to find our new normal, we must come together and

focus on areas that need our immediate attention, such as workforce enrichment, healthcare delivery, mental health services, and keeping our communities safe.

I will continue to keep constituent services as my top priority and am always happy to try and assist you with whatever state-related challenge you may be facing. We can assist with free notary services, unclaimed property, SEPTA senior ID card, property tax rebates, and so much more. Please call the office or make an appointment to stop by.

Sincerely,



# Education funding and level up

Enhancing public education and the fair funding distribution formula have been my top priorities. The biggest win in this year's budget is the historic increase in funding for public education, from Pre-K to higher education. Through the collective efforts of my colleagues and I, basic education funding saw a \$750 million increase, of which \$525 million will be distributed through the Fair Funding Formula.

To equitably fund the state's most underfunded schools, \$225 million has been allocated to the Level Up program. Level Up is not a fix-all for the inadequacy and inequity of Pennsylvania's funding system, but it is a major step toward a more level playing field for Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students. The Level Up funding in this year's budget is another overdue payment that will help to propel our most inequitably funded school districts toward adequacy.

Other investments in our schools include a special education funding increase of almost \$100 million, a \$60 million investment in Pre-K, and \$19 million towards Head Start programs. While Education Tax Credits (EITC and OSTC) saw a 45% increase in funding, the oversight language is unacceptable. We also have yet to reach an agreement on any needed charter reforms.



## The 2022/23 Budget Increases Funding for Schools in our Community

Lower Merion SD \$700,000 (8.8% ↑)	Norristown Area SD \$5.5 Million (20% ↑)
Upper Merion Area SD \$650,000 (13% ↑)	



# Higher education support

**The 2022-23 PA Budget**

Helps PA students pay for college by increasing financial aid through grants and scholarships

- ✓ Attracts talent for high demand jobs
- ✓ Grows our economy



For too long, the commonwealth has turned its back on our students pursuing higher education, especially our state-owned institutions. I attended community college, West Chester University, and Temple Law School at a time when the state was making appropriate investments in higher education. Without state assistance, I wouldn't have been able to afford a higher education without being crushed by student loans. Higher education investments can mean the difference between students pursuing education after high school or opting out due to the financial strain it puts

on them and their families. I am especially proud of my appointment to the Board of Governors for our State System of Higher Education, and the work that we have been able to do reforming our State System while advocating for a major investment to help keep tuition reasonable.

This year, we were able to increase PASSHE's base funding by \$75 million, as well as direct \$125 million in one-time federal American Rescue Plan funds to the system, in addition to over \$20 million more for PHEAA and over \$11 million for community colleges.



Last Fall, I visited a group of college students to discuss issues they continue to face on campuses. I was happy to see \$1 million included in this year's budget for the Hunger Free Campus initiative as well as an increase of \$250,000 for sexual assault prevention initiative on campuses.

The new budget provides increases in four key programs that will help students get the funding they need to be able to pursue higher education.

- State Grant Program - \$20.6 million increase – this helps eligible students afford the cost of higher education at an undergraduate level.
- Ready to Succeed Scholarships - \$18.4 million increase – provides financial aid awards to high-achieving students whose family's annual income does not exceed \$110,000.
- Act 101 - \$2.6 million increase – allocates funds to Pennsylvania postsecondary institutions that support services to academically and financially disadvantaged students to help them complete postsecondary education.
- PA Targeted Industry Scholarship Program - \$2.4 million increase – prepares students with the skills necessary to compete in high-demand jobs.

# Uniting States Against Plastic

Addressing the harm caused by our “throwaway” society continues to be a priority of mine. I am continuing my partnership with Penn Environment to raise awareness for a package of bills that we introduced known as Zero Waste PA.

Legislation in Zero Waste PA combats the environmental problems created by disposables including single-use plastics such as straws, plastic bags, Styrofoam takeout food containers, and electronic waste. The plan focuses on bolstering Pennsylvania’s recycling programs and prohibiting restaurants from using harmful food packaging.

I introduced House Bill 783 which would ban Styrofoam and other polystyrene containers. Styrofoam containers disintegrate into microscopic particles which eventually migrate to our waterways, poisoning aquatic wildlife that mistakes the small particles for food.

My advocacy and awareness campaigns happen locally as well as at the national level. Locally, I joined with colleagues and activists to once



again take water samples to demonstrate that even in our most pristine waterways, microplastics are evident. At the national level, I presented at the US PIRG’s Uniting States Against Plastic and outlined decisive steps we need to take to address our growing waste crisis and move to a circular, zero-waste economy.

# Litter Action Plan and Pick Up Pennsylvania

As part of my commitment to protect the environment and Pennsylvania’s natural beauty, I have partnered with Governor Wolf and other key stakeholders in the community on multiple eco-initiatives.

The first of these is Pennsylvania’s first-ever Statewide Litter Action Plan. The goal of Pennsylvania’s Litter Action Plan is to prevent littering through the development and implementation of a research-based plan of recommended actions that can be used statewide to change littering behavior over time. I also supported Gov. Wolf’s “Pick Up Pennsylvania” campaign which championed statewide community cleanups because I believe clean green spaces and waters support physical and mental health in addition to protecting the function of the ecosystem we depend on.

## Environment

There are several new programs and funding streams related to the environment and conservation included in this budget. Using \$765 million of the federal ARPA funds, we were able to make historic investments in state parks, forests, streams, open space, farms, and home energy efficiency.

## Conservation and Natural Resources

The State Parks and Outdoor Recreation program received \$100 million in the budget, a significant step in addressing the infrastructure needs of our recreational facilities. The funding is designed to fund rehabilitation, repair, and development of parks and forests. That will include grants for open space, protecting waterways, providing access to riverfronts, boosting local parks and recreation facilities, and for conservation and beautification projects.



The Clean Streams Fund was allotted an additional \$220 million to finance projects that help clean rivers and streams damaged by agricultural runoff, abandoned mine drainage, and storm water. A key target of this funding will be the Susquehanna River watershed that drains into the Chesapeake Bay, carrying pollution with it.

Water and sewer funding received \$320 million for drinking water, sewer projects, flood control, and dam repair. A key goal is to prevent storm runoff from polluting waterways and to upgrade older sewer systems that cause untreated waste to flow into waterways during storm.

These programs will reduce maintenance backlogs in our state parks, preserve farmland, improve the quality of our rivers, and clean up abandoned mines – all while creating good-paying local jobs, stimulating tourism, reducing the risk of flooding, and improving the health of Pennsylvania families.

# Whole Home Repair Program

Home repairs can be incredibly challenging and too pricey for many homeowners. In a significant step forward in ensuring access to adequate housing, the Whole-Home Repair Program provides \$125 million in federal funding in the form of grants to homeowners and loans to landlords to make vital improvements to their properties. To ensure this funding reaches those most in need, only homeowners who make less than 80% of their area’s median income can apply, and landlords will need to meet a set of criteria to be eligible. Look for more information on this program in the coming weeks and months.

# There ought to be a law



Every year, one of the most meaningful activities that I have initiated is a fifth-grade essay contest for students in our area. It is the 13th year that I have partnered with local schools to call on our students to author an essay titled "There Ought To Be A Law." I am truly inspired to see the compassion and creativity that is our future. They cut through the politics that get in the way of policymaking and suggested real solutions to problems that face them and their communities.

## Winners

■ Sophia N. Campbell  
(Penn Valley Elementary)

■ Avery Lukens  
(Upper Merion Area Middle School)

■ Andrew Greiner  
(Penn Valley Elementary)

## Mental health in schools

What I found remarkably interesting in this year's "There Ought To Be A Law" responses was the outstanding number of essays regarding mental health. These young members of our community took the time to write about this subject because mental health issues affect all walks of life, from our youngest generation to our seniors. Mental health has long been a challenge, and the pandemic only highlighted how fragile our current system is. What I read inspired me and solidified my commitment to ensuring PA's mental health programs are properly funded.

Within this year's budget, we ensured schools had the appropriate resources to address our youth's mental health issues with a \$95 million allocation to the School Safety and Security Committee. The Ready to Learn Grant will provide \$100,000 for each school district, plus \$15 per student enrolled, and \$70,000 for each charter school, Intermediate Unit, and Area Career and Technical Center to improve mental health services.

## Property Tax/Rent Rebate expansion

Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate (PTRR) program allows Pennsylvanians aged 65 and older, widows and widowers aged 50 and older, and adults with disabilities to receive property tax rebates and rent relief. Our senior and disabled neighbors deserve all the assistance available to them.

Unfortunately, this program hasn't seen an increase since 2006. I joined the fight with Representative Samuelson to pass

HB 2560, which would use funds from the COVID-19 Response Restricted Account to create an appropriation. We were able to secure \$140 million in additional funding for supplemental payments to program-eligible individuals, equal to 70% of regular payments. Completing an additional application to receive these funds is not required. Please contact my office if you have questions or would like assistance to apply.

## Transportation

I have always made investing in our infrastructure a priority. You can't drive far in our community without coming across a road/bridge closure or a construction work zone. As our dated infrastructure begins to fail and roads and bridges become increasingly weathered by the effects of climate change, we need to ensure our infrastructure investments are properly addressing the issue. It's been ignored for far too long.

Using funds from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, more than 200 projects in Southeastern Pennsylvania, including repaving nearly 300 miles of roads and replacing 40 bridges, are anticipated to start and continue this year.

While we are on the subject of weathered infrastructure, I've been hearing reports of some bad potholes appearing on roads in our district. Potholes can cause costly damage to cars and even lead to accidents, and state and local road crews work hard to patch roads. My office can ensure potholes and problem areas are on the radar of the proper authorities for repair. If you come across a pothole in need of repair, let my office know by filling out the form on my website.



## Arts/film tax credit

I was honored to be asked to be the founding chair for the House Democrats of the Arts and Culture Caucus. It is a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators who advocate for policies that advance the arts and culture sectors. The Arts are an economic driver as well as an integral part of a meaningful society.

The caucus has long been an advocate of the Film Tax Credit. Bringing business to PA is what will boost our economy and fuel the job growth we need. A large contributor to our economic growth is PA's film industry. For too long, Pennsylvania was losing out on film productions to other states due to our program's limitations.

We were able to include in this budget an expansion of the film production tax credit's cap from \$70 million to \$100 million, which will make Pennsylvania a more attractive place for television productions to film. There is also an incentive for local productions.

Since the inception of the Film Production Tax Credit Program, 509 productions have been approved/awarded tax credits. These film productions have directly injected \$3.3 billion into the state's economy; generated an estimated \$5.2 billion in total economic activity and \$785 million in total state and local taxes; and supported an estimated 30,650 full-time equivalent jobs.

Increasing the Film Industry Incentive will give us an advantage and encourage more projects to come to our state, which will have a large economic impact on the commonwealth.

## Arts and Culture recovery Grant



I also introduced HB2683 which would use a portion of the ARPA funds to create the Arts and Culture Stability and Recovery Fund. It wasn't the \$25 million we were advocating for, but I am pleased that we were able to secure \$15 million for what is being called the Cultural and Museum Preservation Grant Program. This will provide needed funds to nonprofit arts and culture organizations, local arts and culture districts, and arts and culture professionals in the commonwealth.

## Attack on Reproductive Rights

Since the Dobb's decision was handed down, there has been an influx of measures brought forth with the intention of removing Pennsylvanians' rights. Most notably, Senate Bill 106 which, among other things, is designed to restrict reproductive health care in PA, using the constitutional amendment process to circumvent the governor.

This legislation aims to amend our state constitution to "Not

Grant the Right to Taxpayer-Funded Abortion or Any Other Right Relating to Abortion." While taxpayer funds are already not used for abortion, many in the legislature believe this language would lead to the criminalization of abortions even in the cases of rape, incest, and when the health or life of the mother is at risk. Language to amend the constitution needs to pass two consecutive legislative sessions and then be placed on a ballot for the voters to decide.



This is the first time that a constitutional amendment is being passed to remove rights from Pennsylvanians, not add to them. I am committed to fighting this bill, as well as any other measure that will invade our citizen's privacy, restrict individual rights, and involve lawmakers in a person's personal medical decisions.





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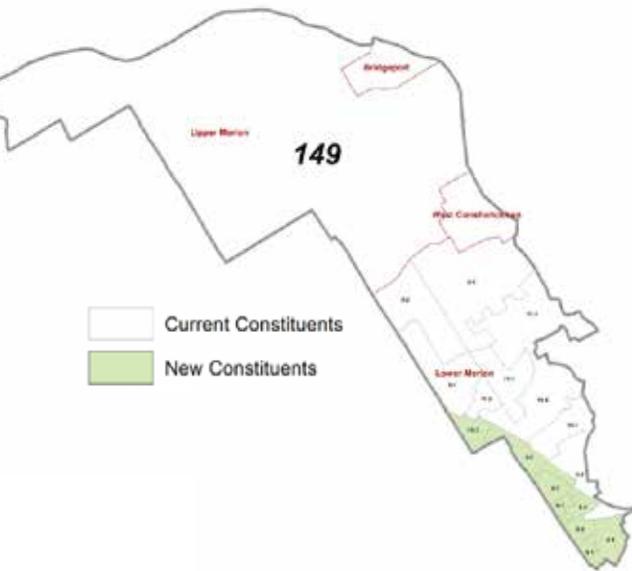
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## Welcome to the 149th Legislative District



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## My Office Can Help You With:

- Unclaimed property
  - SEPTA Senior Key Card
  - Car registrations, special tags, handicap placards, titles, and driver's license applications
  - Information on financial assistance for higher education
  - 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
  - Consumer complaints
  - Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
  - 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 and problems with insurance companies
  - Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
  - Property Tax/Rent Rebate questions
  - Questions about the state lottery
  - PACE prescription discount cards for senior citizens
  - Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
  - Liquor Control Board concerns
  - Information about federal, state and local government agencies
- Any issue with state government!**

### Notary services

**Free notary services are available for constituents at my district office!**  
**Appointments are required.**  
**Call (610) 768-3135.**