



State Representative
Paul Friel
 26th Legislative District

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SUMMER 2024

DEAR NEIGHBOR,

Welcome to another edition of my newsletter.

I hope that Summer 2024 is going well for you. I'm writing to you amid the ongoing work of developing and passing legislation that will make our communities stronger. We are also working on the 2024-2025 state budget, which is critical for funding our schools, infrastructure, human services and a variety of other state government functions.

I'm proud to report that my office has been busy locally, too, aiding in district projects important to you, holding community-engaging events, and generally enjoying and promoting all that is good here in Chester County.

My office is also here to assist you with state related services and to discuss policy issues or other concerns.

You can contact my office by emailing RepFriel@pahouse.net or calling (610) 427-8782. We can help with any matter of state government business – from providing letters of support for grant applications to replacing a handicap placard. If you need help with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – we're here to deliver it!

My staff and I work hard to make our office's state-related services easily accessible to all constituents. My district office hours are 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We're located in Pottstown at 68 Glocker Way.

In service,



Visit My District Office

My team and I are excited to serve you at our district office, located at 68 Glocker Way, Pottstown, PA 19465. We are open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Stop in, say hello, and find out how we can help cut through the red tape for you!

In addition to the services listed below, other popular requests we help fulfill include birth/death certificate copies, disability placard applications, issues with state roads, PA income tax problems, and more.

District Office Services
I'm ready to work for you!

- Property Tax/Rent Rebate
- SEPTA Senior Key Cards
- PennDOT/Vital Records
- Assistance with Unemployment

I also encourage you to stop in for help at any of these locations during our Mobile Office hours:

Spring City Library
 Every 1st Monday from
 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Phoenixville Area Senior Center
 Every 2nd Monday from
 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Phoenixville Recreation Center
 Every Tuesday from
 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Historic Elverson Train Station
 Every Thursday from
 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

SECURING LOCAL GRANTS AND FUNDING



Grant for North Coventry Township Police

I had the privilege this spring to present a state Department of Community & Economic Development grant of **\$146,125** to the North Coventry Township Police Department for a new vehicle, license plate readers and tasers.

Equipping police officers with high-quality effective tools means better protection for both officers and the people they serve.

"We would like to thank Representative Paul Friel and his office for their support that they gave toward this grant," said North Coventry Police Department Chief Matthew Deichert. "The department will use these funds to purchase equipment that will help officers with their daily assignments and investigations with the focus on keeping our community a safe place to live and work."

More Than \$2.2 Million Awarded For Local Infrastructure Projects

Following up on advocacy from my office, the Commonwealth Financing Authority awarded our communities grants this year to help fund eight projects in the 26th District that concern local water supply systems, sewer systems and stormwater management.

Municipal Authority of the Borough of Elverson

Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade & Expansion Project: **\$1,000,000**
Sanitary Sewer Collection System Rehabilitation Project: **\$156,627**

Phoenixville Borough

Phoenixville Water Treatment Plant - High Service Pump Project: **\$313,066**

South Coventry Township

Ridglea Wastewater System - Influent Screen Replacement Project: **\$72,580**
Ridglea Water System - Storage Tank Repair & Rehabilitation Project: **\$68,324**

East Pikeland Township

Meadow Lane Sewer Extension: **\$182,200**

North Coventry Municipal Authority

South Pottstown Area Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation Project: **\$212,193**
South Pottstown Area Water Service Line Replacement Project: **\$211,629**

Grant Funding For Our Schools

I also advocated this spring for state grants awarded by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to support programs that will reduce violence and boost mental health support across Chester County schools.

The following school districts in the 26th Legislative District received grants:

Formula-Based School Safety and Security Meritorious Grants, provided to all Pennsylvania school districts for physical security enhancements and/or mental and behavioral health needs:

- Owen J. Roberts SD: **\$45,000**
- Phoenixville Area SD: **\$45,000**
- Spring-Ford Area SD: **\$45,000**
- Twin Valley SD: **\$40,000**

Noncompetitive School Mental Health Grants, to help fund school-based mental health and behavioral health supports, including counselors and resources for students:

- Owen J. Roberts SD: **\$167,471**
- Phoenixville Area SD: **\$153,893**
- Spring-Ford Area SD: **\$197,295**
- Twin Valley SD: **\$139,686**

The State Of Our Roads Is A Top Priority For Us!

We continue to work with PennDOT to fix, repave, and patch our roads.

I'm glad to report that the contract for the design and engineering of the St. Peter's rebuild project has been awarded. PennDOT is also making headway repairing and resurfacing a number of our area roads.

Additionally, if you see a pothole that needs to be filled, you can easily report it using the form on my website: www.RepFriel.com, and we will follow up with PennDOT directly.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Food processing residue in PA - HB 2393

I'm proud to have spearheaded legislation that seeks to change the way that Pennsylvania handles food processing residue by addressing the hazards this waste can cause for PA's rural and agricultural communities and putting appropriate guardrails in place.

Food processing residue, also known as FPR, is the leftover product created by commercial food processing. Food processing residues can include vegetable peelings, raw meat scraps, and liquid-like cleaning wastewater that includes blood, fat, hair and feathers, and a variety of other vegetable and animal byproducts and chemicals used to process them.

While FPR can be used to fertilize the soil, it can create numerous problems if care is not taken. For example, some areas of Pennsylvania have seen groundwater contamination. Many other areas find themselves dealing with consistent, noxious odors. Compounding the issue, surrounding states have heavily restricted or banned the use of FPR, making Pennsylvania a target for cheaply offloading the commercial waste.

This bill – a bipartisan legislative solution to the problem – is the result of working with lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, the departments of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, affected community members, farmers, conservation experts and industry stakeholders.

To improve control over FPR, this bill would amend the Solid Waste Management Act to:

Food Processing Residue

FPR must be used responsibly, contributing to the sustainability of our food supply, enhancing the health of our soil, preserving the quality of our groundwater and preventing odor and other quality of life problems for our communities.

PAUL FRIEL

- Differentiate between sources of FPR and use a classification system to guide safe storage, handling, and application requirements of FPR material.
- Require FPR that is sourced from animal products or animal product waste to be processed by a digester or another means before allowing it to be stored on farms or used as FPR.
- Require documentation of the makeup of FPR and nutrients provided prior to being applied to farmland.
- Require the nutrient levels of FPR to be included with any application plan before being applied to farmland.

Beginning Farmer Tax Credit - HB 2414

Introduced June 12, 2024, Referred to House Finance Committee

I'm proud to have introduced a bill to update and expand Pennsylvania's Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program to attract and keep new farmers.

The program was originally established to encourage farmers and landowners to work with beginning farmers to help them get a start. However, since its passage in 2020, fewer than 50 applicants have been certified as beginning farmers under the program.

It's clear that Pennsylvania must provide better on-ramps for beginning farmers, including for family members, and that's where this bill comes in.

My bill would update the program so that new farmers could share credits with the selling landowners, and it increases the maximum tax credit per farm from \$32,000 to \$50,000. The credit would also be changed to give holders the option to carry the credit over three years if it's not fully used in the year it was awarded and allows for a limited refund if credit remains after that.

Sale of Net Operating Losses - HB 2226

Hearing Held, Passed the House Finance Committee, June 12, 2024

Start-up businesses, especially technology and biotechnology businesses, face significant challenges when entering the marketplace and often require several rounds of funding to reach maturity. These companies often have a need to raise capital to scale and bring innovations to the marketplace.

Pennsylvania is fortunate to be home to many of these new and exciting ventures. However, competition for capital can often result in the relocation of the business to other states with more favorable capital markets or operating and tax policy conditions.

With this in mind, HB 2226 would allow these early-stage businesses to sell their net operating losses and unused research and development tax credits to unrelated companies, converting their losses to capital. My bill will permit monies received from these sales to be used to help these start-ups take root and flourish here in Pennsylvania, investing in high-paying jobs and making the commonwealth more attractive to investment.

Study on School District Property Tax Revenue - HB 350

Referred to House Finance, March 25, 2024

This spring I proposed a resolution to study school district funding disparities and property taxes from a regional perspective. I believe that our decades-long problem of inequitable school funding calls for some creative problem solving - not only at the state level, but also at the regional level.

This resolution would direct the Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a statewide study that would collect data on every school district's property tax revenue, determine total revenue if school districts pooled property tax revenue at the intermediate unit level, and evaluate if distributing those funds based on the number of students in each school district would provide more equitable and efficient education funding.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

TAP 529 Tax Credit - HB 1745

Passed in House; Passed Senate Finance on June 5, 2024

Today, student loan debt is higher than credit card debt and auto loans, totaling \$1.77 trillion.

As students and families face these rising costs, plans that encourage saving for college are one approach that can help students attain a higher education and avoid burdensome debt.

This bipartisan legislation, which I developed with Rep. Kristin Marcell (R- Bucks), would

create a credit for employer contributions to 529 tuition savings accounts. Any employer that contributes to an account owned by an employee under the Tuition Account Program would be able to claim a tax credit against the employer's state tax liability.

The amount of the tax credit would be equal to 25% of an employer's aggregate contributions made to accounts owned by employees during the tax year. The total amount of contributions that an employer may make to accounts owned by employees would not exceed \$500 per employee during the tax year.

The TAP 529 Tax Credit will...

Incentivize businesses to contribute to college savings accounts.

Improve college affordability for PA students and their families.



\$3,943,162



in the following districts alone:

- Owen J. Roberts School District
- Spring-Ford School District
- Phoenixville School District
- Twin Valley School District

Independent Redistricting - HB 1776

Referred to House State Government, April 17, 2024

House Bill 1776 would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution by establishing an Independent Redistricting Commission to provide a nonpartisan process for redistricting in the commonwealth for state Senate, state House and Congressional districts.

This legislation describes an eleven-member commission that is free from legislative influence in both the selection of commission members and actions of the commission. It provides for a transparent redistricting process that includes public hearings, sharing of information about redistricting proposals, and equal access to all data and information for both the general public and commissioners.

The proposal includes prohibitions against favoring or disfavoring individual candidates or political parties. It also includes clearly prioritized measurable mapping standards.

School Funding and Cyber Charter Reform - HB 2370

Passed in House; Referred to Senate Education

I'm proud to report that I voted for historic school-funding reform in the state House.

The plan, if agreed to by the state Senate, would set a seven-year outlook for schools based on a formula that relies on bigger state investments – rather than local property tax hikes – and levels the playing field for all schools in the commonwealth without taking money from other districts.

The legislation is based on recommendations made by the Basic Education Funding Commission, which convened last year to address systemic funding disparities found by Commonwealth Court.

The bill, which received bipartisan support, also rejects politically charged voucher systems, delivers property tax relief where it's needed most, and addresses accountability and funding reform for cyber charter schools.

The fact is cyber charter schools are receiving the same amount of funding – in the form of mandated tuition payments from public schools – as brick-and-mortar charter schools. We need cyber charters to be partners with other public schools, not competitors for dollars taken from long-suffering homeowners.

This bill is not about taking away school choice from parents, nor is it about taking away funding from cyber charters schools. It simply levels the playing field and reimburses cyber charter schools appropriately.

Freedom to Read Act

Over the last several years we have seen heightened public focus on the nature of the books and other educational resources in our school libraries, with a significant increase in the frequency of book challenges and calls for the school-wide removal of educational resources and curriculum. This trend toward book challenges has placed a new burden on the affected school districts, often diverting time and energy that would otherwise be directed toward supporting and improving the education of students.

The political and cultural drivers of this phenomenon are complex, but we can all recognize two key values:

- Students have the right to access the widest possible range of age-appropriate books and other educational resources.
- Parents have the right to determine that their child should be excused from curriculum and educational resources that would violate their beliefs.

Additionally, we recognize that there must be an appeals process in an instance where there are calls for removal or restriction of a book or educational resource because the educational value or age appropriateness of the material is in question.

My legislation seeks to provide a more uniform and efficient process for those appeals, placing the responsibility for those reviews with a regional committee of instructional experts. This committee would include a cross section of qualified local teachers, librarians, principals, and administrators. This would allow for greater effectiveness of review, decrease hyper-politization, and relieve the administrative burden on local school districts.

AROUND TOWN

I've had the pleasure of hosting several events in the past few months. Take a look!



Veteran's Breakfast - Thank you to all the veterans who made it out to our breakfast!



Legislative Town Hall - We had an informative legislative update during my Town Hall. Thank you, everyone, for showing up with your sharp questions and discussion!



Shredding/E-waste - Remember our shredding and e-waste event from back in May? And remember how Sycamore International donated their services to our community free of charge? Well, they sent us the impact report: Together we prevented 10,021 pounds of CO2 emissions from going into the air and 11,214 pounds of waste from going in a landfill. Thank you, Sycamore!

Wiggins Shredding securely shredded 7,500 pounds of paper, ensuring that your information was kept safe from identity theft. Total number of people who attended our event: 450! Thank you all for your participation!



Paul Friel

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My office can help you with:

- ✓ Assistance getting and filling out state forms of all kinds
- ✓ Applying for state programs such as Property Tax/Rent Rebate and PACE
- ✓ Birth and death certificates
- ✓ SEPTA Key Senior ID cards (age 65+)
- ✓ Free notary service for most documents
- ✓ Filing unclaimed property applications
- ✓ Disability parking placards/plates
- ✓ Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) information
- ✓ Problems or questions about PennDOT, including car registrations, titles, and license applications
- ✓ Complaints about state road conditions
- ✓ Public benefit applications or issues, including SNAP and Medical Assistance
- ✓ Unemployment compensation questions
- ✓ Questions about utilities or the PUC
- ✓ Problems with Pennsylvania income taxes
- ✓ Tours of the State Capitol for individuals or groups
- ✓ Citations from the House of Representatives for outstanding local accomplishments and family milestones
- ✓ Consumer complaints
- ✓ PHEAA information
- ✓ Getting paper tax forms
- ✓ Issues with professional license applications

Contact my office by stopping in, calling at (610) 427-8782, or sending a message through my website at www.RepFriel.com for help with these or other issues.

