



Winter 2024

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Abigail Salisbury

## REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE 34TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

### WORKING FOR YOU

In February, I took the oath of office to begin my first term representing our district. I am deeply honored to be a voice for our community in Harrisburg and to advocate for the kinds of programs and policies that can make life better for residents.

In the pages to follow, you'll find updates about legislation I have introduced, details about the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program expansion, news about grant funding coming back to our district, and much more. Please remember that if you need assistance with any state-related matter, my talented staff and I are here to help. Check out the back page to learn more about the services my office can provide!



*In March, I led a House Democratic Policy Committee roundtable discussion in Swissvale with small business owners and elected officials to address ways we can help small business owners overcome barriers to growth. As we toured the borough, we discussed how infrastructure investments will be key to projects like transforming unused storefronts into viable business locations.*



**2023-2024  
Committee  
Assignments**

- Appropriations
- Commerce
- Committee on Committees
- Environmental Resources & Energy
- Liquor Control
- Local Government




123B East Wing | P.O. Box 202034 | Harrisburg, PA 17120-2034  
(717) 783-1914

501 Braddock Ave., Suite #105 | Braddock, PA 15104-1856  
(412) 273-3400 | Fax: (412) 273-3434

[www.RepSalisbury.com](http://www.RepSalisbury.com)  
[RepSalisbury@pahouse.net](mailto:RepSalisbury@pahouse.net)

 @RepASalisbury  
 @RepSalisbury

# EMPOWERING PENNSYLVANIA'S CHARITABLE NONPROFITS

Nonprofit organizations can be such powerful tools for progress, and I have been working hard to make sure they have the resources they need to thrive.

Earlier this year, I joined forces with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to launch the Pennsylvania Charitable Nonprofit Caucus – a bicameral, bipartisan group to support and promote Pennsylvania's thousands of charitable nonprofit organizations.

As Democratic House chair of the caucus, I am collaborating with members to ensure that our nonprofits have the legislative support they need to thrive. You can learn more about the caucus by visiting [www.pahouse.com/PCNC](http://www.pahouse.com/PCNC).

To further strengthen our nonprofits, I have introduced legislation that would help cut the red tape these organizations face so that they can do what they do best – help people in need.



## HELPING THE HELPERS: SUCCESSFUL SYMPOSIUM SUPPORTS OUR NONPROFITS



Representatives from more than 150 organizations turned out for the Nonprofit Symposium I hosted in October! Participants received tips on how to work with elected officials, got a legal update, and learned how to maximize state grant opportunities.

We advocated to get the 2023-24 state grant directory updated and printed, and we have distributed nearly 400 copies so far!

If you or your organization needs a copy of this important resource, please don't hesitate to contact me or my staff.

## SUPPORTING OUR SENIORS

Passing legislation I co-sponsored to expand the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program was a priority for me. The program – which is key to helping seniors on fixed incomes and residents with disabilities remain in their homes – had not been updated in more than 17 years.

The new law, signed by the governor and set to take effect in the new year, will:

- Increase the eligibility income cap from \$35,000 to \$45,000 for homeowners.
- Increase the income cap from \$15,000 to \$45,000 for renters.

- Automatically increase the cap to grow with inflation, beginning in claim year 2024.
- Increase the maximum rebate from \$650 to \$1,000.

It's estimated that once the new law takes effect, an additional 16,500 Allegheny County residents will qualify for rebates.

If you need assistance filing for your rebate, please contact my office at (412) 273-3400.

# AROUND THE DISTRICT



*This summer, I attended a ribbon-cutting with wonderful staffers from Houze of Waxx (left), which provides resources for residents facing mental health challenges. During my visit to Rankin Christian Center (right), I talked with Rankin Mayor Joelisa McDonald and center Youth and Family Activity Coordinator Sterling Stone about the group's work to strengthen family and community bonds.*



*Our small business mixer in Wilkesburg this summer drew a terrific group of local entrepreneurs. I was even able to reunite with my small business mentoring group from 2016!*



*This summer, I attended the launch of the new electric vehicle charging stations in Swissvale, a project I introduced to the borough back when I was on council. On the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, I voted earlier this year to expand PA's EV infrastructure.*



*Our Braddock office open house in May drew a great turnout and provided a chance to chat one-on-one with neighbors about their ideas and priorities for our community.*



*This summer, I presented a check to Wilkesburg officials representing nearly \$487,000 in new funding to modernize the borough's traffic signal equipment.*



*At my recent Homewood town hall, we had a productive dialogue and shared strategies for empowering residents and boosting neighborhood resources.*



*Although our PA Pride stone-soup-style chili didn't win at the Braddock Library chili cookoff, we still had a great time!*



*In September, I spoke at the dedication of a plaque memorializing the powerful novel *Out of This Furnace*, about a Slovak family who settled in Braddock. I feel a strong connection to the book – when I read it as a high schooler in Erie County, I had no idea I would grow up to represent the community from the novel!*



*I was proud to stand with organized labor at the Pittsburgh Labor Day parade!*

# BEATING BLIGHT AND BOOSTING OUR COMMUNITIES

During my years on Swissvale Borough Council, residents often expressed frustration over blighted, vacant properties. Yet the law leaves us with few options to deal with neglectful property owners.

To change that, I introduced my first bill as state representative – legislation that would give officials a new tool for dealing with blight. My bill would allow municipalities to make vacant properties that have been severely blighted for five or more years subject to potential acquisition by land banks. The owners would be granted a set amount of time to make the repairs needed to reverse the decision and would have the right to appeal.

## GETTING GRANTS WHERE THEY'RE NEEDED

State grant funding can provide critical resources for communities. Unfortunately, those with the greatest need sometimes get shut out of those opportunities because they lack grant-writing capacity.

To help level the playing field, I introduced legislation that would create a Municipal Grant Assistance Program within

the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Municipalities could access free grant-writing services and training in writing future grant proposals.

Both bills have passed the House and are awaiting consideration in the state Senate.



# UNITING & STRENGTHENING OUR DISTRICT

## Bringing our leaders together for progress

Strong partnerships get things done. My local government town hall brought together leaders from our district's 13 municipalities to work together and develop a collective strategy for progress. It was a productive, empowering session, and I plan to organize more in the future.



## GETTING SPECIAL INTERESTS OUT OF POLITICS

In addition to my bills to fight blight and maximize grant resources for communities in need, I have introduced legislation that would ban lobbyists from running state candidates' political campaigns and then lobbying those same candidates once they are elected.



Earlier this year, I joined nurses at the state Capitol to rally support for the Patient Safety Act, legislation I co-sponsored that would set safer standards. The act passed with bipartisan support.



State services play a critical role in ensuring that people with disabilities live independent, productive lives. As a person with a disability, I was a keen participant in Rep. Dan Miller's Annual Disability Summit, which provided an overview of services and a look at the challenges many residents still face in terms of accessibility and inclusion.



I talked with PA Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding about urban agriculture. Our district has several urban agriculture programs, which provide an important mainstay against food insecurity.

# BRINGING YOUR TAX DOLLARS HOME

I'm excited to report that since the start of this year, our district has secured more than **\$8.2 million** in new funding for various building, transportation, and stormwater infrastructure projects. Some examples of funding are:

- More than \$2.4 million to bolster water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Nearly \$1.7 million to Wilkesburg Borough for demolition of multiple blighted properties, addition of roadway and sidewalk improvements, updates to traffic signal equipment, purchase of dump trucks, outdoor improvements to community center, and fresh produce to several borough public schools.
- Nearly \$1 million in tax credits to support affordable housing, community revitalization and human services.
- More than \$726,000 to Forest Hills Borough to rehabilitate several public stairways and associated sidewalks.
- More than \$684,000 to Edgewood Borough for multiple stormwater improvements and replacement of the Koenig Park Stairwell.
- Nearly \$600,000 to Swissvale Borough for road infrastructure improvements.
- More than \$356,000 to Wilkes Township for road improvements to Clugston Avenue and renovations to convert a former office building into a STEAM academy.
- Nearly \$278,000 to Rivers of Steel Heritage Corp. for enhancements to the Rivers of Steel: Carrie Blast Furnaces historical site and more than \$22,000 to bring more fresh produce to Propel Braddock Hills Elementary School.
- \$200,000 to Chalfant Borough to rehabilitate a community center.
- \$175,000 to Rankin Borough for updates to the municipal building.
- \$85,000 to Churchill Borough for installation of traffic warning signs and groundwork for repurposing of vacant industrial properties.

To learn more, visit my webpage at [www.RepSalisbury.com](http://www.RepSalisbury.com) and click on the News tab.

## BUDGETING FOR OUR FUTURE

I voted yes on the 2023-24 state spending plan because it invests wisely and makes public education a priority. The \$45 billion plan includes a record \$567 million increase in basic education funding – the largest basic education increase in state history.

The new budget also allocates \$46.5 million to implement universal free school breakfasts statewide, which will ensure that no student has to start the day with an empty stomach.

Here at home, all our school districts will see across-the-board increases in basic and special education funding. Here's a look at those figures:

- Basic + special education funding totals for 2023-24 budget and increase from last year:
- Pittsburgh School District: \$207.8 million in new funding – \$9.4 million (4.7%) increase.
- Wilkesburg School District: \$14.9 million in new funding – \$818,100 (5.8%) increase.
- Woodland Hills School District: \$27.8 million in new funding – \$2.1 million (8.3%) increase.

In addition to public education, the new budget also strengthens resources for public safety and violence prevention. Among other things, the budget allocates \$40 million for the state's successful Violence Intervention and Prevention program. The new spending plan also prioritizes funding for important programs benefitting working families and seniors, all without adding any new tax burden on residents.

## STANDING FOR JUSTICE – AND AGAINST HATE



I was proud to stand with my colleagues as we rallied for passage of the Fairness Act. The bill, which I co-sponsored, would outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in PA, bringing long-overdue protections to LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians. It passed the House in May and is now awaiting consideration in the state Senate.



I was also thrilled to see the House pass anti-hate crime legislation I co-sponsored that would better protect ALL Pennsylvanians from the scourge of hate-based crimes. The legislation would not create crimes, but merely enhance sentencing for crimes already committed. Although Pennsylvania has enhanced sentencing for hate crimes, the definition doesn't include crimes against people for their LGBTQ+ or disability status. The legislation would broaden the definition to include these categories.

The legislation would also provide law enforcement with the training they need to properly investigate, identify and report hate crimes, and require postsecondary schools to offer online and anonymous hate crime reporting options. Both bills passed the House in late October and are now with the state Senate.



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501 Braddock Ave., Suite #105  
Braddock, PA 15104-1856  
(412) 273-3400

lpo.km.0124



*It's always exciting to welcome civic and community-minded students to the Capitol. This year included visits from students at the Western PA School for the Deaf and student members of H.O.O.P. – Helping Out Our People – which works on issues related to the devastating effects of gun violence.*



*On the PA Animal Caucus, I collaborate with colleagues to ensure the safe and humane treatment of our four-legged friends. This fall, I was honored to receive the Habitat Regeneration award from Humane Action Pittsburgh and beyond excited to meet fellow awardees Carole and Howard Baskin!*

## HELPING YOU HERE AT HOME

State Representative Abigail Salisbury

**District Office Services**

*I'm ready to work for you!*

- Property Tax/Rent Rebate
- PRT (Port Authority) Senior Bus Passes
- Various PennDOT Services including Drivers License Renewal, Vehicle Registrations, Disability Placards & more
- Free Notary

**My District Office is Now Open!**


 501 Braddock Ave.  
Braddock, PA 15024  
 (412) 273-3400  
 #AbigailSalisbury  
 @AbigailSalisbury

This is a reminder that my office can help with a wide range of state-related matters, including obtaining a Senior ConnectCard, filing for a rebate under the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, obtaining drug prescription help under PACENET or home heating assistance, resolving problems with various state agencies – and much more! We can also provide copies of the 2023-24 state grant directory! Call us at (412) 273-3400.