

# HARRISBURG REPORT

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from

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# KENNETH E. BRANDT

House Republican Policy Chairman  
P.O. Box 89, Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Since the opening of the new two-year session in January, the Pennsylvania General Assembly has been busy establishing priorities for new laws, regulations and state policy. The new session enables lawmakers to concentrate on issues that are most important to constituents.

I'm sending this **newsletter** and **questionnaire** in an effort to obtain your input on the most important issues facing the legislature today. This newsletter is also designed to keep you up to date on Harrisburg happenings and services available to residents of northwest Lancaster County.

Also listed here are important publications and forms that are available at your one-stop, state help centers in Columbia and Elizabethtown. Feel free to call on the well-trained staff of those offices to assist you in dealing with any questions or problems related to state government.

If you have comments or suggestions regarding legislation being considered by the state House, feel free to contact me or either district office. As chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee, I'm closely involved in the consideration of legislation of vital importance to our area.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you. Please don't forget to fill out and return the enclosed questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Brandt  
98th Legislative District

## STATE TAX REDUCTION ALMOST CERTAIN

Thanks to an improving economy and responsible spending by the Thornburgh Administration, a surplus is expected in Pennsylvania's budget at the end of the current fiscal year (June 30).

That surplus and stable economic forecasts will almost certainly result in a state personal income tax reduction effective July 1. A reduction of the income tax as originally proposed by Governor Thornburgh, has strong support in the General Assembly.

The tax cut would mean an annual savings for Pennsylvania taxpayers, but it means even more to the cause of limiting government spending.

The state constitution requires a balanced budget, so the best way to reduce (or limit) government spending is to reduce taxes collected by government. And limiting government spending today is important to preventing tax hikes in the future. If we fail to "keep a lid" on government spending, we face even greater problems if the economy experiences a downturn.

Therefore, the planned tax cut will be as beneficial to the government's effort to exercise fiscal responsibility as it is for the taxpayer's pocketbook.

## RAINY DAY VS. SUNNY DAY FUND

In addition to a tax cut, the governor has proposed that part of the surplus revenues be set aside for a "rainy day" fund designed to prevent or reduce tax hikes in the future. He called for creation of the fund to avoid tax hikes and service cuts during recessionary times "when our people are in the weakest position to cope with either."

Meanwhile, some have proposed an alternative to the governor's rainy day fund - a "sunny day" fund which would be used to attract new business to the state. Those behind the sunny day fund suggested that the money could be used to attract the General Motor's Saturn plant to Pennsylvania, but competition among states for the plant is so intense and GM is so large that the value of such an incentive is dubious.

While virtually no one in the General Assembly opposes attempts to attract new business to Pennsylvania, opponents of the sunny day fund proposal say the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority, the Ben Franklin Partnership Fund, the Economic Development Bond Issue and other state programs are better ways to attract business than by "throwing money" at the issue.

The legislature is very likely to agree on the issue of a state income tax reduction, but agreement on what to do with any additional surplus funds will not be easily reached.



## AUTO SAFETY: Seat Belts vs. Air Bags

Are seat belt laws essential to the public welfare or a violation of our liberty and right to privacy?

Unfortunately, as difficult as it is to address this debate, there are other questions that must be answered before the Pennsylvania General Assembly can consider mandatory seat belt proposals.

Does the federal government have the right to pressure states into passing seat belt laws by threatening to require air bags if they don't? Are seat belt laws enforceable? Do air bags really work? How much do they add to the costs of a new car? What do they cost to maintain or replace if triggered accidentally?

If states representing two-thirds of our nation's population don't enact mandatory seat belt laws by April, 1989, the U.S. Transportation Department will require that air bags be placed in new cars. So far, five states (representing 20 percent of the U.S. population) have enacted seat belt laws. That figure is likely to increase soon, as 32 more states consider such laws. So far, eight state legislatures have rejected them.

Those who argue in favor of mandatory seat belt laws say they not only save lives of those who may not otherwise use them, but they benefit society as a whole. They would reduce insurance death and injury payments, which could lead to reduced (or stable) insurance premiums. Government would not have to pay out as much in welfare, Social Security or other support programs to families whose primary "bread-winner" dies or is injured in a crash.

Those opposed to seat belts acknowledge their safety value in most circumstances, but resent government intrusion into what they see as a "personal choice." Some say that seat belts are uncomfortable (especially for shorter people), others contend that they could even be dangerous in the event of an auto catching on fire or sinking in a river or lake.

In any case, Pennsylvania lawmakers may wait before deciding this issue. As we move closer to the 1989 deadline set by the federal government, the real issue will become whether seat belts or air bags are best.

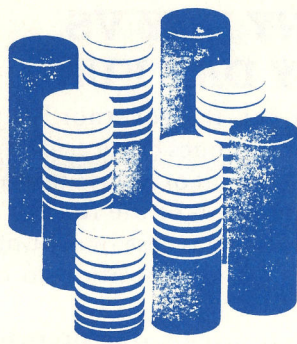
## Road Improvement Projects:



**Columbia Construction Underway** - Rep. Brandt (center) discusses Third Street (Route 441) reconstruction with Columbia officials (l to r) Sylvester "Bud" Devine, Gary Myers, Jack Leahy and John Hinkle.



**Officials Inspect Bridge Reconstruction** - The reconstruction of a bridge along Route 743 outside of Elizabethtown is inspected by (l to r) West Donegal Township Supervisor Jack Lawson, Elizabethtown Mayor Dan Mader, local businessman Dave Newcomer and Rep. Brandt. Funds for the construction are part of a 6-year, \$1.4 billion bridge revitalization program adopted by the General Assembly in 1982.



## GAMBLING: The Controversy Continues

It's been a few months since the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the Governor approved legislation that put an end to the short life of tavern gambling in the state. The barroom card tournaments had been allowed under an amendment added to legislation enacted last session. When the loophole allowing tavern gambling was discovered, efforts immediately began to close it and the gambling section was repealed.

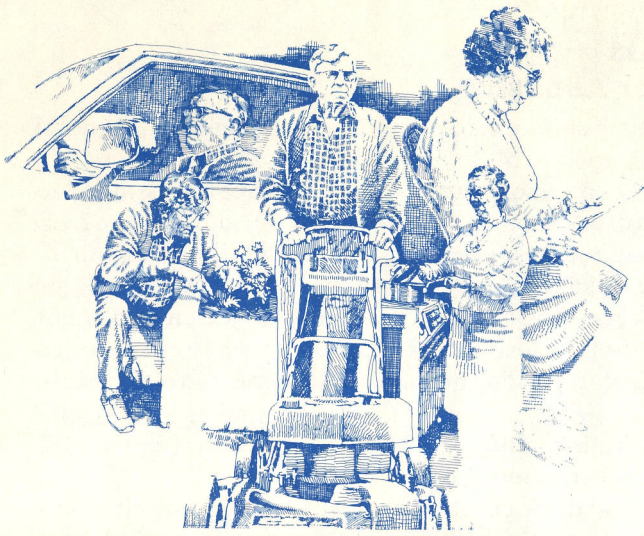
Debate and consideration of the repeal measure seemed to raise even more questions about gambling and its future in Pennsylvania. Currently, the state runs various lottery games for the benefit of senior citizens and allows horse racing, harness racing and bingo. There is no effort in the legislature to eliminate those forms of gambling, but efforts **are** underway to **add** to the list.

Opponents of gambling say any new forms would eventually lead to casino-type gambling. They point out that such gambling can be addictive and harmful to people and an invitation for involvement by organized crime.

Those in favor of different forms of gambling tend to point to buses leaving Pennsylvania towns and cities for Atlantic City and express concerns that the state is losing recreational revenues to New Jersey. Some actively support casino gambling proposals, some push for electronic gambling machines (video bingo, poker or blackjack) in taverns and others say small games of chance often practiced by private clubs and fraternal groups should be legal.

The legislature may have ended tavern card tournaments, but the debate about gambling in general is likely to continue for some time.





## PRESCRIPTION ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY EXPANDED

Following the General Assembly's passage of a special amendment last session, a greater number of Pennsylvanians age 65 and over are now eligible for the state's prescription assistance (PACE) program.

Under the PACE program, eligible senior citizens pay only the first \$4 of the cost of each prescription, while the remainder is paid from state lottery proceeds.

Effective earlier this year, income eligibility guidelines were expanded to include those earning less than \$12,000 (single) or \$15,000 (married) annually. (The previous limits were \$9,000 and \$12,000 respectively.)

Applications for the PACE program are available through the district offices in Columbia and Elizabethtown. If you're not sure if you're eligible, call one of the offices.

## CLEANING UP LITTER ALONG OUR HIGHWAYS

For years, the Pennsylvania legislature has debated (usually in committee) the merits of "bottle bills" - proposals designed to encourage recycling by placing a mandatory 5¢ deposit on beverage bottles and cans.

Such measures have been introduced again this year and have the backing of many farm organizations and are opposed by groups representing bottlers, bottle manufacturers and food retailers.

Those who favor a bottle bill say there's no better way to remove bottles and cans from the landscape than by giving them cash value. This would make people less likely to throw beverage containers by the wayside and would offer incentives for people to collect bottles and cans along the road.

Those opposed to the bottle bill say it would be a hardship for bottle and can manufacturers, beverage bottlers and retailers in the form of lost business, job cuts, and costly handling of returnables (by retailers). They also claim mandatory deposits would increase prices and put consumers at an inconvenience.

The latest chapter of this debate is a compromise attempt being termed a "litter tax" proposal. This measure calls for a small tax on those who manufacture bottles, cans, styrofoam cups, certain paper items and other materials that are often deposited along our highways. Revenues from this tax would be used to fund local cleanup programs around the state.

The idea behind this proposal is a solution which would clean up Pennsylvania's landscape without hurting bottlers, glass workers, retailers and others who oppose the bottle bill. The measure deserves close study and serious consideration.

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**Anniversary Noted** - Rep. Brandt presents a commemorative House citation to Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Devine of Columbia on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary earlier this year. Mr. Devine is a retired railroad employee and a member of the Columbia Borough Council. The couple was married on January 21, 1935.



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## CLEANING UP THE CHESAPEAKE

Legislation to make Pennsylvania a full member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission has been unanimously approved by the state House and awaits action by the Senate.

Maryland and Virginia established the commission in 1980 to deal with problems affecting the bay. In recent years, there has been increased concern about pollution of the bay waters and all parties have agreed that since a large portion of the Chesapeake's watershed (the Susquehanna River) lies in Pennsylvania, that it too should be part of the commission.

It's important that our state be a part of the commission to allow intergovernmental cooperation in finding and implementing solutions to problems of the bay.

The preservation of the Chesapeake is vital to environmental, recreational and economic interests. A Chesapeake Bay Commission representing all three states will ensure progress toward this important goal.



## THE LCB Continue, Reform or Abolish?

Amid an atmosphere of controversy, debate and heated public exchanges, the Pennsylvania General Assembly this year **must** decide on the fate of the state Liquor Control Board (LCB).

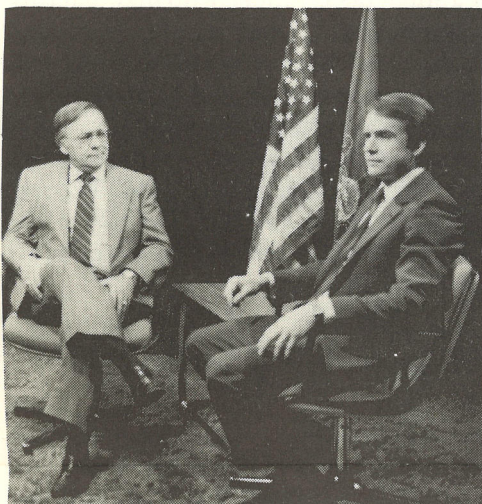
The LCB, which handles both marketing of liquor and enforcement of liquor laws in the state is scheduled to "sunset" at the end of the year if not continued by the legislature. According to the state's Sunset Act, the LCB and 74 other state agencies must be reviewed by the General Assembly every ten years and either continued, reformed or terminated. The LCB is among 28 boards and agencies up for sunset review in 1985.

Opponents of the LCB say it should be abolished or, at the very least, stripped of its liquor code enforcement responsibilities. It's impossible, they say, for the LCB to be both salesman and policeman when it comes to marketing liquor in the commonwealth. They call for transferring liquor code enforcement to the state attorney general or the state police.

Some say the state has no business in wholesale or retail marketing of liquor, either. They say the state should not be doing what private industry can do more efficiently and competitively.

Defenders of the LCB say it produces revenue for the state and does a better job at keeping liquor out of the hands of minors than private retailers would. They also point to the increasing number of self-service liquor stores as evidence that the LCB is being more responsive to consumers.

The issue of the LCB's future has been debated in the press and in campaigns for some time, but it's an issue that will require decisive action in the legislature this year.

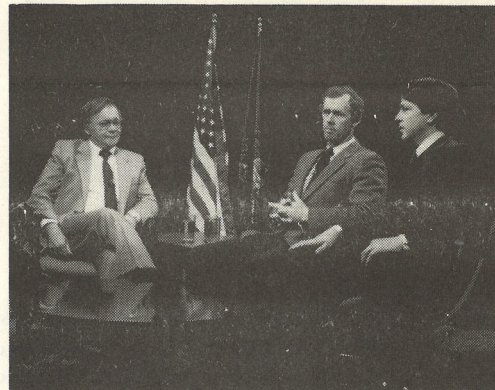


### CABLE T.V. REPORT

## Keeping Constituents Informed

**Legislative T.V. Reports** keep constituents updated on events in Harrisburg. Just after beginning his new term, Sen. Gibson Armstrong appeared on a cable T.V. report with Rep. Brandt (left) to discuss future legislative activity. Another Lancaster County lawmaker, Rep. Terry Scheetz (right, center) recently appeared on a program with Rep. Brandt and David McCorkle of the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association (right). The program covered opposing arguments of "bottle bill" proposals in the General Assembly.

The T.V. reports can be seen on Warner-Amex Cable channel 8 every Wednesday at 7 p.m.



## VIOLENT CRIME: Handling Young Offenders

Legislation has been introduced in the state House to crack down on dangerous juvenile offenders. According to a recent study by the University of Pennsylvania, a hard-core of 20 percent of all juvenile offenders commit 68 percent of serious juvenile crimes.

A package of legislation, which has strong support from the governor, would establish a separate category of "dangerous juvenile offenders" for those between the ages of 15 and 18 who are charged - for the second time - with murder, rape, arson, first-degree robbery or assault with a deadly weapon. Hearings for such offenders would be open to the public, their names listed on a state-wide registry, and they would bear the burden of proof on whether they should be tried in juvenile or adult court.

The legislation would also require that any juvenile convicted of a felony in adult court be tried in adult court for all subsequent offenses.

Opponents of the measure say it's important to be tough on hardened criminals of any age, but they say this proposal is misdirected. They claim the greatest need is for intelligent programs to prevent children from going astray in the first place. The state's greatest concentration of efforts should be placed on straightening out a potential young offender beforehand, they say, and this would be much less costly than dealing with one who has fallen into criminal ways.

Supporters of the legislation point to a growing need to protect society from young thugs who terrorize citizens of all ages. They claim that the problem of violent crime by juveniles has accounted for much of the fear that causes innocent citizens to want to arm themselves. The only way to restore confidence in the judicial system is by showing that violent crime won't be tolerated at any age, they say.