

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Spike Lukens (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 3 -- Italo Cappabianca marked the beginning of his sixth term representing the 2nd Legislative District in the state House by taking the oath of office in ceremonies at the state Capitol this week.

Cappabianca, a Democratic member of the House since 1979, was sworn in by state Supreme Court Justice Stephen K. Zappala.

The event marked the opening of the 173rd Session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

##s1

op15/1/3/89/cappabianca/swear

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Spike Lukens (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Feb. 1 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, has been reappointed chairman of the Subcommittee on Small Business of the House Business and Commerce Committee.

The committee, formed in 1980, is responsible for the development and review of legislative proposals concerning small businesses in the Commonwealth, Cappabianca said. The state currently has approximately 200,000 small businesses.

"I consider this committee and its work with small business a vital part of our Commonwealth's economy," said Cappabianca. "Small businesses provide over one-half of the state's economic output and are an important source of major innovations which create new markets and improve our quality of life, so it's important the House continue to maintain a central focus for them in the legislative process."

Cappabianca said his position as subcommittee chairman has given him an opportunity to play a major role in developing legislation benefitting small businesses.

Gov. Robert P. Casey this week signed into a law a bill, sponsored by Cappabianca, creating the Office of Small Business Advocate to represent the interests of small businesses before state and federal regulatory agencies.

Cappabianca also served as chairman of a select state House committee which studied the business activities of nonprofit organizations. In addition to finding a clear indication that small businesses are being hurt by nonprofits' commercial activities, the work of the committee resulted in a series of legislative proposals requiring more accountability for nonprofit groups.

(more)

In announcing Cappabianca's appointment, House Business and Commerce Committee Chairman Fred Taylor said, "In view of the excellent job which you have done as chairman of this subcommittee in past sessions, I am hereby appointing you chairman of this special subcommittee for the 1989-90 legislative session. I look forward to the excellent work and recommendations which your subcommittee has always provided to the Business and Commerce Committee."

###s1

op15/2/1/89/cappabianca/subcommittee

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Spike Lukens (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Feb. 8-- Gov. Robert P. Casey last week signed into law historic legislation (H.B. 265) creating the Office of Small Business Advocate, according to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, the bill's prime sponsor.

"This bill is certainly a big step for small businesses because it gives them the voice they need before state and federal regulatory agencies, and it also sends out a signal that Pennsylvania cares about the concerns of small businesses," said Cappabianca. "Personally, seeing the Governor put his signature on the bill was a proud moment for me because it culminated six years of work I have put into this legislation."

The advocate will represent the interests of small businesses before the state Public Utility Commission and federal regulatory agencies such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Communications Commission, said Cappabianca.

Under the legislation, the Small Business Advocate will be appointed by the Governor and would be subject to confirmation by the state Senate. While the office would be set up within the Department of Commerce, the advocate would be "100 percent independent" in selecting which cases the office will be involved in, Cappabianca said.

The General Assembly will appropriate \$250,000 from the General Fund to start the office, Cappabianca said. The funds will be repaid in the next fiscal year through an assessment on utility companies, and the continuing operation of the office will be funded through the assessment.

Pennsylvania will become only the second state after in the nation, after Illinois, to have such an office, Cappabianca said.

###s1

op15/2/1/89/cappabianca/bill

PHOTO CAPTION (For Erie newspapers): State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, left, and Commerce Secretary Raymond Christmas, right, join Gov. Robert P. Casey at a bill-signing ceremony for House Bill 265, which creates the Office of Small Business Advocate.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Robert J. Billstone (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, August 17 -- The state Department of Environmental Resources has made available applications for the new Pennsylvania Conservation Corps, according to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie.

Cappabianca said applications will be accepted from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31.

"The Conservation Corps is goal-oriented. It's aimed at helping young people develop job skills while providing a program for the completion of public works project," he explained.

The program provides minimum wage jobs to unemployed workers age 18 to 25 for six months with the possibility of an additional six months of work. State agencies where the workers will be placed are the Pennsylvania Game, Fish and Historical and Museum commissions.

The state Department of Environmental Resources also will be placing workers. Some local agencies may be eligible for corps employees.

Interested persons can obtain applications from Cappabianca's district office at 1216 W. 26th Street, Erie.

Applications are also available from the local State Job Service office or by contacting Ralph A. Romeo, director, Office of Program Planning and Development, Department of Environmental Resources, P.O. Box 1467, Harrisburg, Pa. 17120, or by calling (717) 787-2316.

Positions will be available immediately.

###rjb

op15/8/14/89/cappa/jobs

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Robert J. Billstone (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Sept. 7 -- The City of Erie will receive a \$110,000 grant from the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for an Enterprise Zone project, Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, announced today.

A total of \$30,000 will be used for demolition expenses in the Enterprise Zone and \$43,000 is set aside for salary and administrative costs associated with the project. A \$20,000 line item amount will provide revolving loan funds and \$6,000 is being earmarked for promotional and publication activities.

Erie's Enterprise Zone encompasses approximately two square miles in the northwest central portion of the city. It is bounded by Peach Street on the east, Pittsburgh Avenue on the west, 11th Street on the north and 19th, 20th and 21st streets on the south.

Also as part of the DCA grant, \$10,000 will be used to finance a potential engineering and marketing feasibility study of the Union Depot Building.

"This is great news for the City of Erie," Cappabianca said. "State funding of this sort enables economically troubled cities like ours to begin projects that would've normally been part of a long-term plan. But now with the money in place, we can get moving on developing the city's Enterprise Zone."

###rjb

op15/9/7/89/cappa/funds

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes or Tom Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Sept. 29 -- The City of Erie has been awarded a \$198,364 grant to defray costs of implementing a curbside recycling and leaf composting program, State Rep. Bernard Dombrowski, D-Erie, and State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, announced today.

The legislators said the grant, which comes from the state Department of Environmental Resources, was authorized by Act 101, the landmark recycling legislation.

"I'm glad to see Erie have the financial backing to begin a program so important to the future of the area," said Dombrowski.

Cappabianca echoed those sentiments: "Recycling is one of the most important programs that our state will be implementing in the near future."

The aim of the legislation is to reduce Pennsylvania's reliance on landfills by cutting the volume of solid waste by 25 percent. The legislation also allows the state to award grants to local municipalities to help them achieve that goal.

The law will require nearly eight million Pennsylvanians in more than 400 communities to recycle their wastes.

The grants are funded by a \$2 fee for each ton of waste paid by landfills and resource recovery facilities.

###tpb

op9/9/29/89/dombrowski/recycle

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Boyle

(717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Oct. 5 -- State Rep. Bernard Dombrowski, D-Erie, and State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, announced today the awarding of a \$150,000 grant to improve facilities at the Erie Zoo.

The grant was part of \$7.48 million in Recreational Improvement and Rehabilitation Act grants for park and recreation improvements awarded to 172 municipalities across Pennsylvania.

"This grant will ensure that the Erie Zoo will remain a vibrant part of the city," said Dombrowski.

Cappabianca echoed those sentiments, saying "I'm glad to see the zoo receive the money to allow its continued success."

RIRA is intended to improve the quality of life for state residents by providing municipalities with grant funds to meet the recreation, park and community center needs of their communities. The program also helps meet the recreational needs of special population groups such as senior citizens, minorities, lower income and the disabled.

###tpb

op9/10/5/89/dombrowski/rira

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
601 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Thomas P. Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Nov. 2 -- Erie City School District has received \$45,248 from Governor Casey's PENNFREE program to initiate expanded drug education programs, state Reps. Bernard Dombrowski and Italo Cappabianca, both D-Erie, announced today.

The funds are part of \$3 million allocated to 118 Pennsylvania school districts to be used over the next two years to help develop an effective drug and alcohol curriculum for the elementary grades.

"This program goes to the future of the drug crisis-- educating our youth," said Dombrowski. "I will continue to support efforts to fight the drug crisis at all levels."

"The City of Erie, like communities across the state, need to make their children aware of the problems of drug abuse," said Cappabianca. "I'm glad to see money going to the ensure a bright future for the state's children."

PENNFREE is an initiative by Governor Casey to put an additional \$90 million into Pennsylvania's anti-drug programs, with focuses on education, treatment and law enforcement.

Dombrowski said that by the start of the 1990-91 school year, participating schools will provide comprehensive drug education to every child in every classroom in every grade.

The elementary school programs will consist of:

- Involving uniformed police in classroom instruction.
- Special training for elementary teachers on the latest drug and alcohol teaching techniques.
- Coordination of school drug education programs with local community-based prevention efforts.
- Parental involvement through local education programs for parents and parent advisory councils.

Cappabianca noted that Pennsylvania is the first major state to require that all school students receive some form of drug education. The PENNFREE funds are in addition to nearly \$7.9 million in federal funds the Commonwealth distributed to all Pennsylvania school districts this year for school-based drug education.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

Harrisburg, Nov. 3 -- A bill introduced in the House by state Rep. Italo Cappabianca would accord special status to funeral processions under the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code.

This week, the measure received approval by the House Transportation Committee and may soon be put to a vote by the full House.

The measure (H.B. 1956) is designed to prevent accidents involving funeral processions such as those which occur when a line of funeral vehicles proceeds through a traffic light or stop sign.

Cappabianca said a recent accident involving a funeral in his district prompted his desire to introduce the bill.

"The law isn't very clear in this area," said the Erie Democrat. "Many people think funeral processions already have certain highway privileges, but they don't.

"Drivers who are in a funeral motorcade can be charged with violations even though they are innocently trying to keep their position in an orderly procession."

The bill would permit all vehicles in a funeral procession to pass through an intersection if the light changes as long as the lead vehicle entered the intersection on green, and it would allow full passage through a stop sign following a complete stop by the lead vehicle.

The bill also would prevent other drivers from cutting into a funeral motorcade, except for emergency vehicles operated by police, ambulance or fire personnel.

Cars in a funeral procession would have to display lighted head lamps, emergency flashers and a flag or other insignia designating the funeral caravan.

###

op3/11/3/89/Cappabianca/funral

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

Harrisburg, Nov. 14 -- The city of Erie will receive a \$42,915 state reimbursement for the city's business enterprise zone and plans to use the funds to improve the zone's security and remove old trolley lines from a portion of W. 18th St., according to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca.

The state reimbursement will make up for property tax incentives offered by the city to attract business to the enterprise zone.

Planned improvements include better lighting, security fencing and increased police patrols in the area of the zone and the removal of buried trolley tracks and ties on W. 18th St., between Liberty and Cascade Sts.

The street will be repaved to a smooth surface, a project that will resolve complaints about noise and vehicular damage resulting from the street's "washboard" surface, Cappabianca reported.

"These improvements will help to make the enterprise zone even more attractive to business and to individuals who visit or drive by the area," said Cappabianca.

"The city and its residents ultimately benefit from the increased business activity the enterprise zone generates and the jobs that are created by the companies that are operating there."

###

op3/11/14/89/Cappabianca/Zone

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Dec. 6 -- The City of Erie Municipal Authority is expected to receive a \$337,500 PENNVEST loan to construct the Millcreek Tube Dry Weather overflow abatement system, state Reps. Bernard Dombrowski and Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, announced today.

Presently, sewer overflows in the Millcreek Tube system result in the periodic discharge of raw sewage to Mill Creek which discharges to Presque Isle Bay. This project will improve the hydraulics of the existing sewer overflows and will significantly reduce the overflows.

"I'm glad to see the City of Erie receive this loan to allow them to eliminate the discharges," said Dombrowski. "I believe this will go a long way towards improving the environment of the area."

"The loan will allow the city to better comply with the Clean Streams Law," echoed Cappabianca. "I'm always glad when the state can help a municipality to improve the environment for its current and future residents."

Pennvest -- the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Improvement Authority, implemented last year -- is a \$2.5 billion, 20-year program to upgrade Pennsylvania's aging water and sewer systems and build new ones. Statewide, projects totalling \$71.26 million are expected to be approved later this week, including \$31.47 million for drinking water projects; \$38.4 million for wastewater projects; \$785,700 for advanced drinking water projects; and \$604,300 for advanced wastewater funding.

###tpb

op9/12/89/erie city/pennvest

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

Harrisburg, Dec. 11 -- A bill introduced by state Rep. Italo Cappabianca to give special status to funeral processions was passed unanimously by the House and will be forwarded to the Senate for consideration.

The measure (H.B. 1956) is designed to prevent accidents involving funeral processions, such as those which occur when a line of funeral vehicles proceeds through a traffic light or stop sign.

The bill would permit all vehicles in a funeral procession to pass through an intersection when the light changes as long as the lead vehicle entered the intersection on green, and it would allow full passage through a stop sign following a complete stop by the lead vehicle.

The measure also would prevent other drivers from cutting into a funeral motorcade, except for police, ambulance or fire personnel in emergency vehicles.

Cars in a funeral procession would have to display lighted head lamps, emergency flashers and a flag or other insignia designating the funeral caravan.

Cappabianca said he introduced the legislation to help prevent accidents by clarifying the "rules of the road" as they apply to funeral motorcades.

"There are all too many accidents occurring because people don't really know the rights and responsibilities of funeral processions," Cappabianca said. "We can start by clarifying the law, and that will make drivers in the motorcades and those encountering them aware of what they may and may not do in those situations."

###

op3/12/11/89/Cappabianca/funr1

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 1 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, has been named chairman of the House Committee on Committees, a 15-member legislative panel that assigns House members to the chamber's 21 standing committees.

Cappabianca's appointment was made by House Speaker Robert W. O'Donnell, who wrote to the Erie legislator, "I am confident that you will continue the high caliber of leadership which you have demonstrated during your service in the House."

An 11-year veteran of the House from Erie's 2nd legislative district, Cappabianca also serves as vice chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Small Business, and as a member of the committees on Business and Commerce, Liquor Control and Professional Licensure.

###

op3/3/1/90/Cappabianca/chair

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: REP. ITALO S. CAPPABIANCA

PHONE: (814) 453-7639

DATE: APRIL 11, 1990

Erie - State Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca officially announced his candidacy today for a seventh term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from Erie's 2nd Legislative District.

Cappabianca, a Democrat who is Vice Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, says the City of Erie stands to benefit from his growing seniority as a legislator.

"At the present time," said Cappabianca, "I'm among the senior members of the House Democratic Caucus. During the coming General Assembly Session, I'll have many more opportunities to further Erie's interests in economic and environmental issues and other priority legislative matters.

"With the retirement of Rep. Bernard Dombrowski, after a distinguished career of two decades, the City's need for continuity in Harrisburg is readily apparent."

Cappabianca said he seeks to expand his influence with the House Appropriations Committee, a position that has enabled him to increase Erie's share of recent state budget allocations, including:

-- Funds for the \$28 million Bayfront Highway, the first phase of which will be completed later this year.

-- \$5 million for restoration of the Flagship Niagara and to provide for its permanent berth on Lake Erie.

-- An approximate five-fold increase in annual state appropriations to the Erie Port Authority, now totaling \$1.5 million a year.

"Proper development of Erie's lake shore and Presque Isle Bay has enormous potential for the City's economy and its quality of life. I'm committed, as I have always been, to achieving that potential," said Cappabianca.

He said he is currently working to obtain a \$100,000 state grant to remove garbage and debris from the banks overlooking the Bayfront Highway. In addition, he notes his successful sponsorship of legislation authorizing the sale of state property that will expedite completion of the Perry's Landing project.

Along with his Vice Chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee, Cappabianca serves on the Business and Commerce, Liquor Control and Professional Licensure Committees. He has also served as Chairman of a Special House Committee on Non-Profit Organizations that has sought to limit unfair competition to small businesses by non-profits.

Cappabianca authored the legislation that established the state's Office of Small Business Advocate to represent the interests of small business in rate cases and other matters pending before the Public Utility Commission.

"Because of its innovative programs to promote jobs and business,

Pennsylvania is now recognized as a leader in economic development among the states," Cappabianca observed, "but it wasn't too long ago that business was ready to write the state off. I'm proud to have helped develop the legislation and the programs that have turned that situation around."

In the current session, Cappabianca has helped sponsor the state's tough new Ethics Law for public officials; the new auto insurance reform law designed to reduce motorists' rates by 10 to 20 percent; and a bill known as the Medicare Overcharge Measure (M.O.M.) to limit Medicare charges to the elderly, among other major bills he has co-sponsored.

Earlier this year, he was named Chairman of the House Committee on Committees which is responsible for assigning all 203 House Members to the Chamber's 24 Standing Committees.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
601 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, April 25 -- Acting on a request from Erie's city council, state Reps. Italo S. Cappabianca and Bernard J. Dombrowski have jointly sponsored legislation to permit members of scuba rescue teams to use flashing lights on their privately owned vehicles when responding to an emergency.

Fire and police personnel, ambulance and rescue squads, and county emergency management coordinators are currently given that authorization by state law.

"More than any other city in the state, Erie depends on organized scuba teams. Their ability to respond quickly to an emergency is often a critical, life-and-death matter," said Cappabianca.

"I'm glad the city council brought this matter to our attention, and I'm confident that when our legislative colleagues become aware of this omission it will be promptly corrected with the passage of this bill."

###

op3/4/25/90/Cappabianca/scuba

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G01 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

Harrisburg, May 16 -- Applicants for professional and occupational licenses in Pennsylvania would have to show that their tax records are clean under a proposal soon to be introduced in the House by state Rep. Italo Cappabianca.

"A 'tax clearance program' such as I am proposing could raise millions of dollars in state revenues through the recovery of delinquent taxes," said Cappabianca, D-Erie.

His legislation would require those applying for an initial permit or the renewal of an existing professional or occupational license to undergo a determination of their tax status by the Department of Revenue.

An applicant owing back taxes would be denied a license until the delinquent taxes are paid or the applicant has agreed to a deferred payment plan.

"I'd expect a very high rate of compliance -- much more than enough to justify the costs of the program," said Cappabianca. "After all, if someone's business or professional livelihood is at stake they're going to make sure their tax debt is paid."

Cappabianca said a similar provision is contained in the state Liquor Code and yielded more than \$8 million in delinquent tax collections to the state from February 1988 to July 1989. In addition, he noted, the program has made liquor licensees more conscious of the need to pay their taxes on time.

"It's also a matter of fairness," said Cappabianca. "Why should liquor licensees be singled out for selective tax enforcement and not other businesses licensed by the state?"

According to the Erie lawmaker, six states have established tax clearance programs that match business and occupational licenses with tax data to determine applicants' liabilities and eligibility for licensing.

###

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Sept. 16 -- Almost nine out of 10 women who responded to a recent poll in Erie's Second Legislative District said they support a family and medical leave law such as the one recently passed by Congress.

According to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca who conducted the mail survey in his legislative district, 89.3 percent said they favor a plan of limited unpaid employment leave for the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a close family member who is seriously ill. Only 5.4 percent were opposed to family leave.

More than 400 people responded to the survey which was contained in a newsletter on women's issues and sent to female voters of the district.

Congress has passed the family leave bill and sent it to President Bush. Its provisions for unpaid leave would apply to those who work for companies with 50 or fewer employees.

An almost identical bill, co-sponsored by the Erie legislator, was approved by the Pennsylvania House early last year but has seen no further action in the state Senate.

Cappabianca said his survey results on family leave match those of every other survey he has seen on the issue, leading him to conclude that a veto by President Bush would be politically costly.

Bush has threatened to veto the Congressional bill despite bipartisan support for the proposal among members of the Pennsylvania delegation.

"I think it would hurt him badly with Pennsylvania women voters in November," said Cappabianca, "and may even cost him the state. A veto would not only fly in the face of overwhelming public support, it would cripple the credibility of the president's claim on family values."

In other findings reported from Cappabianca's poll, 79.5 percent of respondents believe sexual harassment "is a problem today," and 80.3 percent report experiencing gender bias in the workplace.

-more-

Eight out of 10 respondents (82.2 percent) believe the state should make financial incentives available to women who want to start or expand their own businesses, and 87.9 percent believe child care is a problem for working families.

A nearly equal number (88.8 percent) say mothers of young children are combining work and motherhood for the simple reason that families need the income. In addition, other motivations for working mothers include "personal fulfillment" (31 percent) and "career needs" (23.6 percent).

Women of the Second Legislative District also have multiple concerns with problems affecting young people in the district. Among the issues considered to be problems affecting youth in the district, respondents included teen pregnancy (76.2 percent), drinking (75 percent), drug use (78.1 percent), crime (80.5 percent) and youth homelessness (31.9 percent).

###jb

R:women.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 22 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, today urged the state Senate and the state's electorate to support a bill that would reform the way judges are disciplined.

"The public has the right to know about such action," Cappabianca said.

The bill (H.B. 1), introduced by House Majority Leader H. William DeWeese, would amend the state constitution to establish an open procedure for disciplining judges and promises to speed the process, Cappabianca said.

"Judges are public officials just like legislators, members of congress, mayors, council members and even celebrities and should face the same scrutiny," Cappabianca said. "The Bill of Rights protects the people's right to know about their government and their officials. I'm surprised we haven't passed this kind of reform sooner."

The Senate now must approve the measure before Gov. Casey can sign it. The bill should reach Casey's desk quickly because the Senate last year approved an identical version. The legislature must approve the measure over two consecutive sessions to meet requirements for amending the state constitution. Gov. Casey has said he will sign the measure.

Voters will have the final say. The constitution requires voters to approve any amendment by casting ballots on a statewide referendum. That referendum will appear on the May 21 primary ballot if the bill is enacted by Feb. 6.

Currently, a nine-member Judicial Inquiry and Review Board oversees judicial disciplinary action. The state Supreme Court can take subsequent action. H.B. 1 bill would replace the JIRB with a Judicial Conduct Board, a Court of Judicial Discipline and an appellate review by the Supreme Court, or, in cases involving a Supreme Court justice, a special panel of judges, Cappabianca said.

-more-

He said the conduct board would consist of 11 members, five of whom would be legal professionals, five non-lawyers and one district justice appointed by the Supreme Court.

The board would investigate judicial conduct complaints and determine if probable cause exists for the filing of formal charges with the Court of Judicial Discipline, Cappabianca said.

He said the official under investigation may respond to any complaint. The bill also would have the Supreme Court set financial disclosure requirements for all judges and judicial officials.

"The changes will lift the cloak of secrecy that now covers the majority of judicial discipline cases," Cappabianca said. "No public official should have anything to hide."

###ct

r:Caprefm.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 30 -- Erie will use a \$2.95 million state Pennvest loan approved today to improve the city's Chestnut Street water treatment plant, state Reps. Italo Cappabianca and Kenneth Kruszewski, both D-Erie, announced.

They said the project will improve water quality in the Presque Isle Bay by stopping a discharge of backwash sewage.

The Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority board, which oversees the Pennvest program, approved the loan. The loan will have a 4 percent interest rate over 20 years. Pennvest is designed to provide \$2.5 billion in low-cost funding over 25 years to improve antiquated sewer and water systems statewide.

"The city will benefit in two ways from this action," Cappabianca said. "It will save millions of dollars over the loan's term because of the low-interest rate. That's what's great about Pennvest. It finances needed projects at less cost than what municipalities can otherwise do.

"The treatment plant serves almost 51,000 homes and 142,900 people the area," Cappabianca added. "Discharging the sewage backwash had a bad environmental impact on the bay. The improvements will allow for a cleaner and healthier use of the area and keep the park open."

Kruszewski said the project involves constructing backwash water recycling and sludge handling facilities and an operations and administration building for the impending authority.

He said the total project cost will exceed \$3.7 million and will include \$763,000 from the city.

"This project must be done because the city has a consent order and agreement with the Department of Environmental Resources to stop the discharge," Kruszewski added.

He said construction should begin by July and finish within a year.

###ct

r:CapPvst.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 31 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, today urged state Senate leadership to schedule a vote on the Family and Medical Leave bill as soon as possible.

"If Republicans in the GOP-controlled Senate feel similarly to their House brethren -- that families don't deserve unpaid leave for child care and family medical emergencies and companies should be protected from offering such benefits, they ought to stand up and be counted on such a stance," Cappabianca said.

Republicans control the Senate by a 26-24 margin. Republican Senate leadership last year declined to schedule debate or vote on the bill before the last session ended, although the House had approved it in September. Republicans controlled the Senate last year by a 27-23 margin.

The House on Wednesday backed and sent the identical bill to the Senate by a 106-87 margin. The vote was largely along party lines with six Republicans supporting the measure.

Cappabianca and the bill's prime sponsor, state Rep. Kevin Blaum, D-Luzerne, expressed confidence the bill would receive Senate approval and go before Gov. Robert P. Casey, who said he supports the measure.

The bill would provide employees up to 12 weeks unpaid leave in a year for childbirth, adoption or to care for a seriously ill close family member, Cappabianca said. He said employees also would receive 12 weeks temporary medical leave for their sickness or injury. Employers could limit combined family and medical leave to 18 weeks over two years.

"This bill is the very least guarantee that can be granted to families for emergencies," Cappabianca said. "No one should be forced into a position of having to choose between family and work responsibilities. The family should win out every time."

-more-

Cappabianca said the bill also includes protections for employers. Those protections limit worker eligibility to those on the job for at least one year.

The protections also would limit time off for spouses working for the same firm, block an employee on leave from taking another job or attending school full-time, and require employees to give reasonable notice of intended leave so a company can find a temporary replacement, Cappabianca said.

Employers also would benefit by having lower costs for hiring and training replacement workers while holding on to skilled and experienced employees, he added.

Initially after taking effect, the bill would exempt businesses with 50 or fewer employees. After three years that exemption would apply only to companies with 20 or fewer employees.

###ct

r:Capleve.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Feb. 19 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca announced today that state residents serving in the Middle East and their immediate families are eligible for numerous state and federal benefits and financial protections.

Cappabianca, D-Erie, and other House Democrats received updated information on the benefits from a special House Democratic Caucus briefing last week. Cappabianca will have the information compiled into a pamphlet that he will make available in his district office, 1216 West 26th Street, Erie.

"There are an estimated 4,000 to 8,000 state residents in the National Guard and reserves and many more in the other services in the Gulf region who would benefit from this information," Cappabianca said. "These protections will help them and their families deal with creditors and others while they live on a reduced salary."

Cappabianca, chairman of the House Federal-State Relations Committee, said 65 National Guard and reserve units from throughout the state, including at least two from Erie, have been put on alert because of the conflict.

Among the information that Cappabianca said soldiers and their families should know is that:

-- federal and state laws protect all active service members from losing their homes or jobs while on active or combat duty. Employers must give unpaid leave and rehire all service personnel at their prior full-time position, pay and seniority. Federal and state labor agencies have authority to enforce all provisions.

-- federal and state laws protect service personnel from accumulating bad credit because of lower earnings due to active service. Troops must make arrangements to stay current on all bills, but lenders and other debt holders cannot foreclose on a loan, terminate any lease, repossess any property or discontinue service without a court order.

-more-

-- federal law allows active service personnel to petition the court through legal representation to lower all interest rates to 6 percent yearly if their duty makes them unable to pay current rates.

He added that a new state law provides other protections that include:

-- unpaid military leave for students, so their service won't hurt their educational standing, scholarships, earned credits or grants while on duty. The law also requires schools to refund tuition and other fees paid before a student's active duty.

-- mandate state, county and municipal governments to give up to 15 days of paid military leave.

-- authorization for the state Department of Military Affairs to offer group life insurance policies for guard and reserve members at cost. Employers also must continue to keep health plans in effect for 30 days after a guard or reserve member's activation. Families of guard or reserve members previously had no coverage during that time until a federal military health plan took effect 30 days after duty begins.

"Anyone who needs more information can pick up a pamphlet at my office within the next few weeks," Cappabianca said.

###ct

r:Capmilt.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 11 -- The Federal-State Relations Committee today approved its first bill of the year to create a commission to plan a bicentennial celebration of the Bill of Rights' adoption.

"This bill should become the ninth enacted into law after being referred to the committee," Committee Chairman Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, said. "I expect other substantial legislation to make its way through the committee as my staff and I organize it to be a more active Capitol force.

"Since its 1975 creation, the committee has acted on 30 bills, eight of which have become law," Cappabianca added. "I am working to get more bills through the committee, such as reapportionment, and offer more legislation that will smooth relations between the federal and state governments. The committee also will serve as a clearinghouse for information on federal and state matters."

Majority Whip Ivan Itkin, D-Allegheny introduced the legislation (H.B. 494). The seven-member commission would plan activities to observe the final approval of the 10 constitutional amendments forming the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights was enacted formally on Dec. 15, 1791 when Virginia became the 11th state to ratify the document.

The legislation also would help public agencies and private groups work together on such activities and encourage local governments to organize events marking the Bill of Rights' bicentennial. In addition, the commission must publicize and distribute a calendar of Bill of Rights' projects and events by Sept. 1 and file a report with the governor, the state Senate and House by June 30, 1993.

The bill also would set aside \$150,000 for the commission's expenses. The commission would consist of two state senators, two House members, the state Historical and Museum Commission executive director and two citizens, one appointed by the Senate president pro tempore and one by the House speaker.

###ct

r:Capbill.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 13 -- State House Federal-State Relations Committee Chairman Italo Cappabianca today announced the committee will travel to Washington, D.C., next month to meet with the state's congressional delegation.

Cappabianca, D-Erie, said he scheduled the April 25 meeting to establish communication lines with Pennsylvania's congressional members and senators. The committee and delegation also will discuss mutual interests such as congressional reapportionment, federal mandates, federal funding, grants and budgeting.

"I suspect reapportionment will be a top topic because the legislature will soon tackle it," Cappabianca said. "Years that state lawmakers handle reapportionment are key times when those in Congress have an interest in paying attention to their state counterparts.

"Congress yearly tells states what to do by approving mandates," Cappabianca added. "Reapportionment is the only time we may have to influence Congress' action and maybe get our members to realize how mandates put the tax burden for programs on the states because Congress lacks the intestinal fortitude to provide funding."

He said he hopes the meeting will lead to a working relationship. In the past, the committee had little contact with congressional members. Stronger ties will help the committee remain informed of pending federal legislation affecting Pennsylvania, which the state House can do something about, Cappabianca said.

"As far as we can tell, this will be the first such meeting between the delegation and the committee, or at least the first in several years," he added. "We need to develop ties so we can work with and lobby delegation members whenever necessary and receive the delegations help whenever possible."

He added the meeting is part of his effort to make the committee more active than it was in the past.

###ct

r:Capcong.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Cameron Texter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 14 -- The state House Federal-State Relations Committee will work with a Rutgers law professor on a report showing the cost and effect federal mandates approved last year will have on Pennsylvania, committee Chairman Italo Cappabianca announced today.

Furthermore, he said the committee and National Conference of State Legislatures' officials will meet next week on how the 1990 congressional and Bush administration budget agreement will impact states.

The meeting also will focus on a proposal President Bush unveiled in his State of the Union address to channel federal Community Development Block Grant funding directly to states rather than municipalities, Cappabianca, D-Erie, added.

"The report and the meetings are part of my efforts to establish an aggressive agenda for the committee," Cappabianca said. "I want the committee to function as a clearinghouse for information on how federal activities will affect the state politically, economically and otherwise. I also want it to act legislatively to meet any necessary federal mandates or any other needs."

Cappabianca said the committee will make its staff and some resources available to John Pittenger of Lancaster, a former Rutgers Law School dean, former state education secretary and state legislator. Pittenger approached the committee about helping him on a project researching major legislation the 101st Congress approved last year that will require some form of General Assembly action or state spending.

"Appropriations Chairman Dwight Evans and I also plan to schedule public hearings on the financial impact of federal mandates and other matters," Cappabianca said. "The report will be great reference."

Pittenger said he plans to examine the Clean Air Act, the 1990-91 federal budget, education for handicapped legislation, a drug-free schools law and other areas.

-more-

"I see this project giving us strong information that we can present to our delegation and the media to show how much is out of our hands and how much spending and taxes Congress and the president are forcing us to make for programs they create," Cappabianca said.

"Many of the programs federally mandated or started get only 7 percent of funding from the feds and 93 percent of funding from us," he added. "That means the federal government might provide 7 cents to every 93 cents we must set aside for a program it forces on us. That's not right or fair. The president and Congress should have the intestinal fortitude to pay for any program they create."

Cappabianca added that he has invited all House committee chairmen and staff to next week's NCSL meeting. That meeting will take place at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 20 in Room 22, Capitol Annex Building.

NCSL staff will show how cuts both Bush and Congress agreed to make over the next five years through the Federal Budget Enforcement Act will affect Pennsylvania programs, Cappabianca said. He said the staff also will review the possible impact of giving federal block grant funding in one lump sum to states instead of distributing it to municipalities that apply for the program.

###ct

r:CapFeds.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Mary Hicks (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, April 12 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, chairman of the Federal-State Relations committee, lauded yesterday's joint hearing of the Federal-State Relations and Appropriations committees as "a step in the right direction".

"I'm pleased with the first joint meeting of the two committees," Cappabianca said. "Appropriations chairman Dwight Evans and I plan to continue this type of cooperation in order to gauge the impact of the federal budget on Pennsylvania."

Cappabianca noted that "In times of budget shortfalls, it takes cooperation from the state and our members in Congress to ascertain what is the best plan of action for the Commonwealth."

Cappabianca, Evans and the members of the Federal-State Relations committee will be meeting with the Pennsylvania Congressional delegation April 25th in Washington. Cappabianca called the Washington meeting "an opportunity to get better acquainted with our members in Congress, so that we can all work toward the common good of the taxpayers of Pennsylvania."

Supplying testimony at yesterday's hearing were Martha Fabricius, policy specialist from the National Conference of State Legislatures; John White, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; Howard Yerusolim, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation; and Philip Jehle, Director of Governor Casey's Washington office.

###mh

a-hearng.02

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Mary Hicks (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, April 30 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca praised the joint meeting of the House Federal-State relations committee and the Pennsylvania Congressional delegation, held last week in Washington, D.C.

Calling committee members 'stewards of goodwill,' Cappabianca said that "the meeting was an important step toward a closer working relationship with the members of Pennsylvania's congressional delegation."

Cappabianca expressed concerns that Congress is shifting burdens to the states by mandating certain programs, some of which are unfunded, leaving the states with the financial dilemma of finding alternative sources of revenue. The states can opt to fund a program, but if they choose to reject it, the result may be a potential loss of federal funding.

"This meeting opened up the dialogue between Harrisburg and Washington to ensure that Pennsylvania receives its fair share of federal monies down the road," Cappabianca said.

"We want to continue to work in this endeavor to guarantee that Pennsylvania receives its proportionate share of federal dollars without the strings that are often attached to it. Moreover, the states should be given the option to accept or reject any mandated program without being penalized by losing federal dollars."

On hand for the discussion at the luncheon meeting were Sen. Arlen Specter, Rep. Joe McDade, the dean of the Pennsylvania delegation, and several other members of the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation. State Rep. Dwight Evans, Appropriations Committee chairman, and some of his staff also attended the luncheon.

Cappabianca said that a good working relationship with Pennsylvania's leaders in Washington is vital and invited the congressional delegation to Harrisburg in a continued effort to develop a better interrelationship between the federal and state lawmakers.

"Because Pennsylvania's congressmen and legislators serve the same constituents, it is vital that we all work together for the betterment of the Commonwealth," Cappabianca said.

Cappabianca noted that the Federal-State Relations Committee would continue to track the federal mandates and determine their fiscal impact upon the Commonwealth.

###mh

r:a-fedst.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Pamela Landis (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, May 19 -- State Reps. Tom Scrimenti and Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, today announced they have joined the newly formed Northwest Caucus of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Scrimenti was elected secretary of the caucus.

The caucus is comprised of 11 Democratic legislators who represent districts in the northwest region of the state.

"We are most interested in promoting the needs and the concerns of people living in northwest Pennsylvania," Scrimenti said. "There are times when our needs are different from the needs of the people who live in Philadelphia or another region of the state."

Cappabianca said it is important to work together on regional issues. "Our problems don't stop at the county borders," he said.

The goal of the caucus is to make sure northwestern Pennsylvania is not ignored and its needs overlooked in Harrisburg, Scrimenti said.

"By acting together, more people will hear us," Cappabianca said.

###pl

r:nwcauc1.004

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Aug. 4 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca said the House today approved a \$13.98 billion General Fund budget for 1991-92 that cuts \$210 million in government spending and creates nearly \$200 million in savings.

The agreement, when approved by the Senate and the governor, ends a more than monthlong impasse over the spending priorities needed for the Commonwealth both to meet its short-term needs and prepare for the future.

The budget provides the largest dollar increase ever to basic education, provides larger percentage reimbursements to counties for children and youth funding, increases funding for the State System of Higher Education and state-related universities and invests in rural Pennsylvania.

"This budget will wipe out the deficit which was caused by the national recession and puts Pennsylvania on a solid financial foundation for the future," said Cappabianca.

"Along with the very considerable revenue falloff, it was a difficult budget to resolve because so much of our required spending is in areas that we have little control over, such as corrections and Medicaid."

Cappabianca noted that less than one-third of the budget growth is in discretionary state spending. Pennsylvania is one of 31 states ending 1990-91 with a deficit. Tax receipts, according to Gov. Casey, were down 1.8 percent from last year.

Overall, the plan calls for raising \$2.86 billion in revenue through increases in business and personal income taxes, expanding the sales tax base and extending it to various business and professional services and increasing the cigarette tax.

-more-

Students at all levels came out big winners in the spending plan, according to Cappabianca. Basic education, through the Equalized Subsidy for Basic Education, will receive \$2.95 billion, a \$199 million increase. Small schools most in need of increased funding will receive a special equity supplement and the formula includes a two-tiered program to assist small districts.

Special education received \$508 million, including \$108 million in new funds for a 27 percent increase. The spending plan also includes provisions to bring special education costs under control.

Appropriations for the State System of Higher Education and for the state-related universities will increase 2.5 percent while funding for state-aided schools was restored to 1990-91 levels. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency received \$14.4 million for programs that help students pay for college, its fifth consecutive 10 percent increase.

In Children and Youth funding, the state will begin reimbursing counties adequately for service mandates made through the 1980s. The budget increases funding by nearly \$58 million and will phase in increased support. By fiscal year 1993-94, the state will reimburse counties 95 percent of their approved needs-based budgets. It also will reimburse 100 percent of adoption services and increase reimbursements for institutional services and foster family and community residential programs.

Funding for the Family Preservation Program was increased to \$6.65 million. Studies suggest that these programs help keep families together and can save as much as \$2 in foster care or other services for every dollar invested.

Additionally, \$9.4 million in new money is allocated for children with special medical needs, targeted at children now in hospitals who could be served by group homes or other residential programs at less expense. It also focuses on special foster care for children with special medical needs and infants born addicted or whose parents are substance-addicted.

To continue cost-containment efforts, a special advisory committee will review Children and Youth programs and issue a report by Dec. 31, 1992.

In other human services programs, the Human Services Development Fund was restored and increased to \$45 million. This fund supports various community services including programs for the elderly, teens and victims of family abuse and rape.

House Democrats were successful in including in the final budget package the first comprehensive package dedicated solely for rural Pennsylvania, which has the nation's largest rural population. The package includes a loan forgiveness program to encourage and support young physicians who practice in rural Pennsylvania as well as linking rural physicians through computers to sophisticated diagnostic information available at urban teaching hospitals.

In addition, the \$8.4 million appropriated for the rural agenda, and line items within various departments also addresses problems of upgrading infrastructure, agricultural preservation, marketing and expansion.

On the revenue side, the budget package increases the personal income tax rate to 2.8 percent and includes a special three-tenths of 1 percent surtax to be dropped June 30, 1992. These changes will generate \$1.4 billion. The poverty exemption also is increased to give working Pennsylvanians a tax break.

Among other tax changes, the Corporate Net Income Tax is increased from 8.5 percent to 10.5 percent. A temporary 1.75 percent surcharge is added to the base, which will be removed when economic conditions allow. The changes will generate \$601 million.

The Capital Stock and Franchise Tax will increase from 9 mills to 10.5 mills and it includes a temporary 1.75 mill surcharge. The manufacturer's exemption is retained. The amount of the exemption is cut to \$50,000 and the minimum is increased to \$300. An additional .5 mill will continue to fund hazardous waste and a new .25 mills is designated for the Lottery Fund. The changes should bring in \$307 million.

The sales tax is extended to various business and professional services, including credit reporting and collection services, building cleaning, maintenance and exterminators, lobbying services, personnel supply services and computer and data processing services. This reflects the state's shift from a manufacturing to a service economy to bring in \$119 million.

The sales tax base also is expanded to include lawn care services, storage, long distance phone calls, intrastate phone calls and household paper and cleaning products, except toilet paper, disposable diapers and feminine hygiene products. Numerous other loopholes are closed. The many changes are designed to bring in \$170 million.

The cigarette tax will increase to 13 cents. Of that, 2 cents will cover children of working parents who have no health insurance and another 2 cents will be used for farmland preservation efforts. This change will generate \$108 million in revenues.

###jb

r:budpas.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Aug. 30 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie, said today he will support a resolution introduced in the state House that calls for a complete review of the Commonwealth's current budget procedures to find ways of improving the process.

Cappabianca has informed the resolution's author, Rep. Thomas Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, that he intends to co-sponsor the resolution and join a growing movement among legislators to bring the measure up for passage when the House resumes its voting sessions in October.

The resolution would establish a select committee of House members to undertake a complete review of the annual budget process and to recommend changes and improvements.

"The legislature's never made a systematic study of the budget process to see how it can be improved," said Cappabianca. "Every year, there's a lot of grumbling and griping about the process, but that's as far as it goes.

"After our latest experience, it's time to move beyond the complaining stage. We need to take a close look at how the process itself contributes to our budget problems and how we can avoid repeating this year's agonizing performance."

According to the resolution, the committee would concentrate its efforts on providing the means of promoting timely passage of the annual state budget with minimal disruption to state government services and obligations, achieving economies in state government operations, and examining methods of continuous funding for essential services.

-more-

The committee also is directed to review the impacts of tax concessions and other revenue loopholes, provide for the disposition of revenue surpluses to special funds for economic development and tax stability (the Sunny Day and Rainy Day funds), and look into establishing long-term limits on the growth of state expenditures.

The panel would be composed of nine members, five from the House majority party and four from the minority.

The resolution was introduced by Tangretti on Aug. 3, the day before the new state budget was passed. It was referred to the Rules Committee which is composed of the leaders of both parties in the House.

Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, has since been soliciting support and additional co-sponsors in the hope of demonstrating to House leaders that many legislators from both parties are committed to reforming the budget process.

###jb

R:budrefm.002

NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS: Attached is a copy of the resolution.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Oct. 10 -- A bill proposed by Erie Reps. Italo Cappabianca and Bernard Dombrowski to permit members of scuba rescue teams to use flashing lights on their private vehicles when responding to an emergency could pass the House next month.

The measure (H.B. 2489) recently was approved by the House Transportation Committee and is in line for a vote on the House floor, Cappabianca reports.

"Beginning November 12, there's a likelihood of at least two session weeks when the House and Senate will be voting bills on final passage," said Cappabianca. "I think we have a pretty good shot at passing the bill during that period."

Cappabianca said members of Erie's scuba rescue squads are following the bill's progress and have been asking him about its status. The measure was introduced in April at the request of Erie city council and was approved by the Transportation Committee last week.

Fire and police personnel, members of ambulance and rescue squads, and county emergency management coordinators already are permitted to use flashing lights on their vehicles when answering an emergency call.

###

R:10109001.02

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Oct. 30 -- Residents of the city of Erie will benefit from a \$2.49 million Pennvest loan awarded today for improvements to the city's water system, according to state Reps. Italo Cappabianca and Ken Kruszewski, both D-Erie.

The money will be used to clean plant intake lines and construct a treatment system to prevent the accumulation of zebra mussels. The system will be the first of its kind in Pennsylvania and will allow the continued use of the city's water for drinking purposes.

Both legislators applauded the loan and city water personnel for working toward improving the system. The project also will ensure continued water pressure for fire protection.

Pennvest -- the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority -- implemented in 1988, is a \$2.5 billion, 25-year program to upgrade Pennsylvania's aging water and sewer systems and build new ones.

###tpb/1991

r:coe.001

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Dec. 9 -- First-time homebuyers who don't have large enough down payments for conventional mortgages may qualify for a state mortgage program, state Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca said today.

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency has \$60 million in home mortgage loans available for first-time home buyers.

Cappabianca said the money is left over from several bond issues that the agency financed this year and is available on a first-come, first-served basis through participating lenders, including banks and mortgage companies.

Loans are available for approximately eight percent interest with a one point fee, plus \$300. The one-point fee recently was lowered from three points. On a \$50,000 mortgage, buyers can save about \$700 with this program.

Low down payment requirements -- as little as five percent of which two percent can be a family gift -- also make this program appealing, said the Erie legislator.

"About 1,200 middle-income families will be able to take advantage of this program," Cappabianca said, "So I urge those who are interested to check on their eligibility right away."

Certain income and price guidelines, for each county, do apply.

For more information contact the agency at 1-800-822-1174.

###jb

r:home.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 29 -- The House has approved a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would prohibit members of Congress from voting for their own pay increases and receiving the higher salaries in the same term.

The bill, in the form of a joint resolution, was passed unanimously and will be forwarded to the state Senate. Before reaching the House floor, the amendment received prior approval by the Committee on Federal-State Relations, chaired by Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca, D-Erie, a sponsor of the amendment.

Since 1987, Congress has voted itself nearly 65 percent in pay increases to a current salary of \$129,500, according to Cappabianca.

"Taxpayers have a right to expect that elected officials will exercise restraint when they are in positions to determine their own pay and that they'll be held accountable for the salary decisions they make," said Cappabianca.

If the proposed amendment is ratified and becomes part of the Constitution, Congressional pay raises will have to be approved and received in separate terms with an election in between.

"That way voters will have the opportunity to evaluate the raise as an election issue along with other considerations of the candidate's performance, as is the case now for Pennsylvania state legislators," Cappabianca observed.

Known as "the Madison amendment," it was first proposed by James Madison in 1789 to be part of the Bill of Rights but did not gain the required approval of 11 states at that time. Ten of the 12 amendments proposed by Madison were to become the Bill of Rights.

Thirty states, including Pennsylvania, have similar provisions in their constitutions governing salary increases for their own state legislators.

"The Pennsylvania Constitution is much closer to Madison's intent on the issue of legislative salaries than is the U.S. Constitution," Cappabianca pointed out.

-more-

As a joint legislative resolution, the bill must be approved by the Republican-controlled state Senate before being forwarded to Congress.

"Whether Pennsylvania becomes the 36th state to ratify the amendment is now up to the Senate since the House has clearly affirmed its decision," the Erie legislator said.

The joint resolution would add Pennsylvania's name to the list of other states that already have approved the amendment mandating that "no law varying the compensation for the services of the senators and representatives shall take effect until an election of representatives shall have intervened."

As of now, 35 of the 38 states needed for ratification have approved the revived Madison amendment.

###jb

r:madison.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 13 -- State Rep. Italo Cappabianca is urging older Pennsylvanians to keep up their support for the PACE Rescue Plan, a measure passed by the House to preserve the solvency of the state's prescription drug program for senior citizens.

"The House has approved the rescue plan, but the issue is by no means settled," said Cappabianca, noting the measure now moves to the state Senate for further action. The Erie lawmaker is one of the bill's leading sponsors.

"The pharmaceutical industry is staunchly opposed to it, and they'll be lobbying the Senate in full force to defeat the rescue effort. Senior citizens need to keep up the fight."

Senior citizen organizations from throughout Pennsylvania held a giant rally in the Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday to support the bill (H.B. 2442) just before it passed the House by a vote of 187-9.

The rally was sponsored by the PACE Rescue Coalition, a group that includes the Pennsylvania Council on Aging, the American Association of Retired Persons, the Pennsylvania State Council of Senior Citizens and many other representatives for older Pennsylvanians.

The legislation is the cornerstone of an effort to pump \$96 million into the lottery-funded PACE program through new lottery games and cost savings for the program. PACE covers the costs of prescribed drugs for nearly 400,000 low-income senior citizens who are required to pay a \$6 deductible for each prescription.

The current measure builds upon a law passed last year to control the rising costs of prescription drugs which are threatening the PACE program. It contains provisions to increase the discounts drug companies are required to provide the state, curb drug price increases that exceed the consumer price index, and encourage greater use of generic drugs which cost less than brand names.

-more-

Cappabianca said the state saved \$24 million from last year's Lottery Preservation Plan but pharmaceutical price increases since then have cost the program more than \$27 million.

The PACE Rescue Plan bill would:

-- require generic drug substitution unless a person has an adverse reaction to a generic drug or there is no appropriate generic equivalent.

-- increase rebates to the state on brand name and generic drugs. Manufacturers would be required to give PACE a 15 percent volume rebate on brand medications and an 11 percent rebate on generics. Current rebates are 12.5 and 10 percent, respectively.

-- require drug manufacturers who raise prices higher than the consumer price index to give PACE a higher "inflation" discount.

-- require the full cost of the prescription to be on the label of the prescription container.

-- direct the Department of Aging to educate senior citizen patients about the difference between brand name and generic drugs.

###jb

R:rescu.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, March 24 -- A pair of bills sponsored by state Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca to benefit the port of Erie have been passed by the House.

One of the measures (H.B. 992) would authorize the port authority to appoint and hire its own police officers, a power that is not provided under current law.

The officers would have the same law enforcement powers as municipal police, and their primary jurisdiction would be within the boundaries of properties owned or leased by the authority.

The second bill (H.B. 993) would enable the port authority to contract for loans using financial methods common to individuals, businesses and government agencies. The bill would allow the port to finance projects by using loan agreements, mortgages, security arrangements and other contracts which are standard financial tools but not currently authorized for port authorities of third class cities.

"These bills will remove antiquated and unnecessary legal restraints and give the port authority greater latitude to provide more efficient services to business and to the public," said Cappabianca, D-Erie.

"There's no reason the port should not have its own security force or be able to conduct its finances as other government agencies and businesses do. These changes will help the port move more rapidly toward its goals for modernization and renewal."

Both bills passed the House unanimously and were forwarded to the state Senate.

###jb

R:port.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, April 8 -- The House has passed and sent to the Senate a bill introduced by Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca that will permit certain scuba rescue personnel to use flashing lights on their private vehicles when responding to an emergency.

The measure was approved unanimously by the House, 194-0, and then referred to the Senate Transportation Committee for further consideration.

"Having a scuba rescue team in Erie, and one that is often called on a moment's notice to deal with imminent drownings and other emergencies, this is essential legislation," said Cappabianca.

"There've been all kinds of accidents and near-accidents involving rescuers responding to an emergency, and it's time they were equipped with the same precautionary safeguards as other emergency vehicles," said the lawmaker.

"It's for their sake, for the sake of other drivers and for the lives of the people who are urgently in need of rescue."

The bill would change the legal definition of "emergency vehicle" to include one that is privately owned by the commander or assistant commander of an organized scuba rescue team, enabling them to use flashing lights when responding to an emergency.

###jb

R:scuba.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Mary Hicks (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, April 23 -- At a news conference today in support of H.R. 1146, the State Food Purchase Program measure, state Rep. Italo Cappabianca today called upon his colleagues in the General Assembly to enact into law and support a program to "provide for the less fortunate in our state."

H.R. 1146 would legislate the establishment and administration of the State Food Purchase Program, and guarantee that Pennsylvania would have a program enacted into law that provides funds for the purchase and distribution of food products to program participants.

Cappabianca said that for the last eight years, there has been a line-item appropriation within the Department of Agriculture for an emergency food assistance program. The program was established in the early 1980's, when Pennsylvania was experiencing high unemployment and the need for a program to supplement food to the needy and indigent became apparent.

Cappabianca noted that it was the Democrats who were responsible for committing the first \$1 million to fund the food purchase program, and that funding for the program has increased from \$1 million to \$11 million proposed in this year's budget.

"We cannot afford to rely on a line-item appropriation funding for this program," Cappabianca said. "Pennsylvania's citizens deserve legislation that will mandate by law the state food purchase program and provide for those citizens who need our help."

This legislation has the support of the Pennsylvania Coalition on Food and Nutrition, the Association of National Food Banks, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches and the Pennsylvania Lutheran Coalition on Public Policy.

###mh

a-foodr.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, June 3 -- A bill sponsored by Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca affecting the City of Erie's retirement programs has passed the legislature and will soon be on its way to the governor for signing.

The House unanimously passed the bill today after agreeing to minor changes inserted by the state Senate, clearing the way for its final enactment into law.

The measure (H.B. 994) will allow the state's third class cities, including Erie, to provide cost-of-living pension increases for non-uniformed city retirees. Some pensioners have been retired from non-uniformed city jobs for 20 years or more and have never received an increase to offset inflation, Cappabianca said.

Cost-of-living pension increases are permitted under current law for those who retired from police, fire and other uniformed services in third class cities but not for retirees from regular city jobs.

"It's a form of second-class treatment that really should not have continued for as long as it has," said Cappabianca, D-2nd District. "At one time, the cost of living may have remained relatively stable for long periods. But in today's economy, people's retirement income can be virtually wiped out by inflation."

The measure also creates a position on all third class city retirement boards that would be filled by a retired employee. Currently, the law provides only for active employees on retirement boards.

Another provision of the bill, proposed by Cappabianca, would offer employees of the Erie Water Department who transfer to the newly created city Water Authority the option to remain in the city pension system or join the separate program provided for authority employees.

###jb

R:pension.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, July 21 -- Ten community-based organizations serving the city of Erie are authorized to seek private sector donations by offering more than \$800,000 in business tax credits under Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Assistance Program, according to state Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca.

The tax credits are intended to encourage contributions from business and industry to programs run by local groups that benefit the Erie community, Cappabianca said.

Businesses can benefit from a corporate net income tax credit of up to 50 percent of the amount they contribute to approved non-profit agencies. The contributions may take the form of cash, technical assistance, real estate, on-the-job training or equipment and supplies.

No single company may receive more than \$250,000 a year in Neighborhood Assistance tax credits.

When combined with the federal deduction for charitable contributions, the state tax credits enable a business to invest in its community at a cost of about 25 cents on the dollar, Cappabianca observed.

"This is quite an incentive for businesses to make donations to the designated organizations. And there's the added advantage of knowing that the contributions and services directly benefit the local community and local people," he noted.

A list of the state-approved non-profit agencies and the designated tax credits they may offer businesses is as follows:

-- Bayfront NATO Inc., \$116,394 to continue to provide primary dental and health care services and youth development and educational services for 1,475 low-income residents.

-- Community Shelter Services Inc., \$62,500 to provide emergency shelter, meals and temporary housing to 690 homeless persons.

-- John F. Kennedy Center Inc., \$112,500 to provide primary health care services for 3,700 low-income residents; meals for 330 elderly residents and recreation activities for 230 low-income, at-risk youths.

-more-

-- Booker T. Washington Center Inc., \$110,000 to provide housing rehabilitation and counseling, emergency food services and financial aid as well as educational, recreational and youth development services.

-- Community of Caring, \$6,500 to provide meals, emergency food baskets and clothing for 700 homeless persons.

-- Community Country Day School, \$50,000 to construct a gymnasium to promote physical fitness for 300 low-income children receiving educational and rehabilitation services at the school.

-- Erie Infants and Youth Home Inc., \$80,000 to renovate the main facility into apartments to serve 12 mentally and physically disabled residents who will receive therapeutic, recreational and educational services.

-- Gifts for Kids Inc., \$25,321 to renovate the facility enabling it to provide free toys for 100,000 low-income children.

-- Gannon University, \$100,000 to provide individual scholarship assistance of up to \$1,000 for 200 low-income students.

-- Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania, \$165,000 to distribute donated food through 300 member agency food banks to 37,861 low-income residents.

###jb

R:nap.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Nov. 25 -- More than \$6.36 million would be authorized for several local projects as the result of legislation approved today by the state House, according to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie.

The projects include \$1.52 million for improvements to the Erie Municipal Airport and two grants for the Presque Isle State Park. The park grants authorize \$1.01 million and \$291,000 for beach nourishment and breakwaters.

Other local projects listed in the bill improve and rehabilitate area roadways. The bill includes: \$1.5 million for an engineering study on the East Side Access Road; \$1.06 million for reconstruction work on Peach Street from Kuntz Road to 26th Street; \$600,000 for intersection improvement at state route 20, 26th Street and Green Garden; \$375,000 for the widening to five lanes of Peninsula Drive from 12th Street to 25th Street.

"These projects would not only help rehabilitate our roads and airport, but also improve the infrastructure for the business community," said Cappabianca. "In addition, these projects would help create more construction jobs."

The measure (S.B. 1642) authorizes the spending of state funds, but does not allocate that actual funding be spent. The legislation authorizes more than 380 projects totalling more than \$1.9 billion statewide. The bill now goes to the state Senate for its concurrence on House amendments.

###tpb/1992 r:erie2.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Democratic Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Tom Boyle (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Nov. 25 -- Legislation authorizing the state to spend \$10 million on an Erie Baseball Stadium and \$2 million on the Discovery Square cultural and educational center was approved today, according to state Rep. Italo Cappabianca, D-Erie.

The \$10 million will be used for construction on a baseball stadium for the single "A" baseball team the Erie Sailors. The project would allow Erie to bring the city in compliance with standards established by the baseball league and, therefore, allow the team franchise to be able to stay in the city.

The total cost for the Discovery Square project is more than \$6 million and the \$2 million authorized under this bill would be the state's contribution toward the cost of construction. The project would bring three museums to one block in downtown Erie and would have a very strong impact on the local economy. The Erie Art Museum, Erie County Historical Society and the Experience Children's Museum all would share facilities and services.

"I worked to have both of these projects amended into the bill, and -- if funding is finally approved -- they would make a big difference to our region's economy," said Cappabianca. "Both the stadium and the arts and cultural center would bring more visitors to the Erie area. The projects would be a strong investment in the future of the City of Erie."

The measure (S.B. 1642) authorizes the spending of state funds, but does not allocate that actual funding be spent. The bill authorizes more than 380 projects totaling more than \$1.9 billion statewide. The bill now goes to the state Senate for its concurrence on House amendments.

###tpb/1992 r:erie.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-05, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Dec. 11 -- A bill passed by the House today would allow the state's third class cities, including Erie, to provide cost-of-living pension increases for non-uniformed city retirees, according to its prime sponsor, Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca.

The measure (H.B. 994) was approved unanimously, 203-0, and referred to the Senate. The Erie legislator said he is optimistic of its chances there because of the overwhelming support shown by the House and because the Senate earlier this year approved a similar measure.

Current law allows cost-of-living increases for those who retired from uniformed service in third class cities but not for their non-uniformed counterparts, a situation Cappabianca describes as "inherently unfair."

"Not to detract in any way from the service provided by police and fire personnel, but if anyone believes non-uniformed employees are somehow less essential or deserving, they could imagine what would happen to the city without them," said Cappabianca. "All the services we take for granted would come to a halt.

"Once the Senate concurs in the measure it will be the first time non-uniformed retirees from third class cities will be considered for cost-of-living increases to cover inflation," said Cappabianca.

"Some people have been retired for 20 years and never had an increase through all the price inflation that's occurred in that time."

The measure also creates a position on all third class city retirement boards that would be filled by a retired employee. Currently, the law provides only for active employees on retirement boards.

Another provision of the bill, proposed by Cappabianca, would offer employees of the Erie Water Department who transfer to the newly created city Water Authority the option to remain in the city pension system. It is one of the provisions of Cappabianca's bill that is not found in the measure passed earlier by the Senate and referred to a House committee.

###jb

R:pensions.002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Office of Legislative Information
G-01, South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0028

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Jim Barnes (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Dec. 21 – This year and for the foreseeable future, the state's homeless and hungry can look to a long-term source of food assistance from the state as a result of legislation signed by Gov. Casey and sponsored by Erie Rep. Italo S. Cappabianca.

The new law establishes permanent status for a state food program for the needy that has been operated on a year-to-year basis since it was begun in 1983.

With the governor's signature on Cappabianca's bill, the State Food Purchase Program can be terminated only by an act of the legislature. A critical funding source for volunteer food banks and soup kitchens for the hungry, the program supplies community agencies with about \$11 million a year in aid for food supplies and operating expenses.

"It's important to those who are helping the hungry in local communities to know they can regularly count on the state's assistance," said Cappabianca. "It helps them to better plan and allocate their limited resources, and it helps them attract donations of food and equipment, cash contributions and volunteers' time when people know the state's solidly behind the local effort."

The Erie lawmaker said the state's continuing problems with homelessness and hunger show no sign of letup and have persisted through cycles of improvement and decline in the state's economy.

"Though the numbers change, the basic needs are there in good times and in bad. That's an unfortunate fact, but one that calls for a corresponding commitment by the state."

##jb

R:food.002