

Representative Tangretti's Economic Plan for the 57<sup>th</sup> District

Quality of Life Assets

**ANNOUNCING my INTENTION to Seek Re-election  
Excitement and Enthusiasm**

The legislative process is demanding and requires perseverance, patience and tenacity. It also requires the ability to work successfully with the other side of the aisle on legislative matters. It requires relationships to be developed and nurtured. It is where one's word is the most important character trait and where dialogue and compromise pave the way for success.

It calls for trust among colleagues but also trust from the people of the 57<sup>th</sup> district. I have always attempted to conduct the affairs of my office in an open and above board manner. My records have always been open to the press and I'm happy to recount for you today the article that appeared in the Trib a few years ago attesting to that practice.

I believe that our part of the state and region is poised to take full advantage of its potential. We are in a position to enhance our job creating capabilities by using our natural indigenous qualities to attract new employers and ensure the viability of those already here. And it's going to take someone with knowledge and experience and the temperament to press that advantage.

We have been fortunate to have the vision and foresight of the County Commissioners for the past twenty years, in conjunction with the Legislature, to put together a string of industrial parks that is the envy of many of our neighboring counties. These parks have been successful by anyone's estimation. But there is a growing body of research concerning economic development trends and reasons for location decisions which ~~places~~ <sup>SAYS</sup> industrial-based concerns ~~below~~ <sup>MUST be complemented</sup> personal, quality of life issues for the owners and their employees. Entrepreneurs and their high tech and bio tech employees for example, who quite frankly can locate anywhere in the country, are making these decisions based upon what a region is like to live and play in as well as work in. As a result, we must enhance our existing system of available industrial parks with approaches that at first blush do not appear to promote job creation.

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That is why I'm so enthusiastic about our future. We have in place or can put into place many of those quality of life assets that make our district attractive. And I'm excited and enthusiastic because my efforts to improve the economic development possibilities through quality of life issues coincide with economic stimulus tools espoused by Governor Rendell.

Here are the principal categories of what those quality of life factors are:

Community Revitalization

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Study

I have been working for a number of years on historic tax credit bills for restoration of residential and commercial properties that will have a dramatic effect on the revitalization of our cities and boroughs. Having alternative housing availability within walking distance of a commercial shopping district, churches and cultural amenities is a life style that is desired by many people. Recreational, cultural and historic amenities of a community are very important to new employers and their employees. A companion bill will provide the same kind of tax incentives for commercial developers of historic properties. The Rendell administration has embraced these proposals and has added them to the economic stimulus package they have proposed.

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MAIN ST.

The Greensburg Train Station is an example of a building that was historically preserved and one which I was able to help with through the State Capital Redevelopment Assistance Funds. These funds helped to restore the Palace Theater and Stark Hotel building as well, which I think we all agree has added to the attractiveness of this city. These are the kinds of projects that for a relatively small investment can be very attractive to potential employers/employees.

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Public Safety

Without the benefit of a strong public safety network of police and volunteer fire companies, we could not draw the attention of prospective homeowners and businesses. I supported the Governor's \$25 million grant program earmarked for Volunteer Fire Companies included in the budget, but it is not enough. We need to do more. I have been working for a number of years on several bills that would provide a dedicated source of funding for municipal police departments.

Gov Randall  
Gby comm:  
Ed Hinkel

### Tourism

Related to this revitalization is tourism, particularly historic tourism. Tourism is the second largest industry in our state. The historic tax credits therefore have a dual purpose in that historic districts not only provide a residential and commercial alternative but provide a core location or site for enhancement of the historic tourism experience.

With the Seven Years War 250<sup>th</sup> year anniversary now being recognized, and with western Pennsylvania having historical prominence at sites concerning that anniversary, we have the ability to hit the ground running with this signature event.

Our district includes or finds us in the vicinity of these venues as well as other sites of historic significance which can only embellish and improve the economic development opportunities through historic tourism.

The Rendell administration has targeted the tourism industry for special consideration for assistance under the economic stimulus package as well.

Everyone recognizes its importance to our economy.

### Green Space

Our district is not necessarily unique but does offer some special characteristics. It can very well be classified as urban, suburban and rural. In addition to the boroughs and beautiful city of Greensburg, we have significant green space as well as farming communities within the borders of our 2<sup>nd</sup> class townships of the 57<sup>th</sup> district. And since farming is the number one industry in the state the administration has designated farming along with tourism for special assistance. We must do all we can to support our family farms and keep them viable. Given the recent news accounts of hepatitis A and Mad Cow Disease, both attributed to imports from other countries, we should do all we can to assist our family farms.

We must continue to fund the farmland preservation program to the fullest extent possible to preserve that farming property well into the future.

One of the ways that we can most effectively assist our farmers however, is through property tax reform, which has been an elusive goal for many administrations, but has been the Rendell administration's priority and will, I believe, be in place very shortly.

What better way to attract "new age" workers than the preservation of green space? The recreational opportunities become enhanced and the native beauty of our county makes it a wonderful place to live and play.

### Education

I think everyone can agree that without education there can be no economic development.

We are blessed in our district to have wonderful public and private educational opportunities for our elementary, secondary and post-secondary students. The four public school districts along with the diocese of Greensburg and **Charlstream Schools** and **Private Schools such as**

school system that serve this legislative district have records of achievement of which we can all be extremely proud. Graduation and post secondary education rates are some of the best in the state which attest to the quality of these institutions.

In terms of higher education we have two of the finest institutions in the state and have very close to one of the best, if not the best, Community College in the commonwealth. Seton Hill University is nationally ranked and recognized as one of the finest private universities in the country. And the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg is as good a branch campus as any that belongs to a university system. These educational treasures must be helped as much as we can.

We are currently working with Seton Hill University and the city to assist them with their downtown project which is a further boost to the economic vitality of our district; combining several of the assets of our community into one package: education, community revitalization and tourism.

First and foremost, our public education system must have the needed resources to continue its fine work but without the continued burden of the antiquated system of property tax as its primary revenue source. Property taxes are regressive and very unfair particularly to those on fixed incomes. High property

*Frank Castle*

*Dr. Robert  
Muller in  
Harrisburg  
Command.  
Mayor  
Eisman  
Mr. Boyle*

*Property  
tax*

taxes also reverse any goodwill built with a prospective employer who is looking to relocate. Or perhaps more to the point, high property taxes might tip the scales of an existing employer toward moving out of our area.

I also support the educational improvement tax credits that have been a great help to our private school system. It is less controversial than vouchers but works as effectively in getting much needed help to those private schools without taking direct tax dollars from the public school system.

Governor Rendell has made property tax reform a primary goal by promoting gaming revenue as a substitute source of funding. I wholeheartedly endorse this concept and believe that we will pass it in the near future. I think it's time we stop paying for West Virginia's property taxes by exporting our gaming enthusiasts to West Virginia and keep these revenues here in Pennsylvania.

We must continue to fund the University of Pittsburgh and our community college at appropriate levels as well by adding additional dollars to PHEAA and educational institutional grants, directly aiding qualifying students.

*assurances*



## Transportation

No one can argue that without quality transportation no prospective employer will give us a second look. We are fortunate to have the terminus of the Pennsylvania turnpike and Interstate 70 located at the southern portion of the district as well as the Amos K. Hutchinson bypass and the upgrades to Route 22 which are just about completed. They will provide a network across the district in both east/west and north/south directions that not too many districts can boast about. But I would submit that much remains to be done; particularly for some of our most traveled and dangerous roads that are located in the central part of the district.

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District

But nothing causes more consternation for me as a legislator than this: the transportation needs of our district far outweigh the available dollars. We have been working very hard on the transportation priorities for the upcoming Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). And I believe that we have found a creative way to take care of the number one safety concern in the district, Route 136 from Willow Crossing Road to the turnpike. As result of many conversations with Penndot and the chairman of the transportation committee, Penndot has agreed to include the \$3.2 million project in the TIP's first four-year segment by separating the project into two phases! The first phase will be engineering,

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property acquisition and construction on the four major intersections since they will be the most time consuming and expensive. This will allow the project to go forward. The second phase, the remaining engineering and paving, will follow hopefully shortly thereafter. I am very happy that we were able to get this done.

We have other needs, including the completion of the Center Avenue project in New Stanton and the reconstruction of Route 119 in Youngwood. We will continue to fight for those dollars necessary to finish these projects in a reasonable time.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the major congestion problem that we have: Route 30 from the North Huntingdon Township line to Westmoreland Mall. Although the 57<sup>th</sup> district ends at the city of Greensburg's eastern border many of us shop and make use of the commercial corridor there.

The development of the new Walmart Plaza at the Greengate site on top of the relatively new Lowes and Home Depot Plazas has made the trip to either the east or west end of the district challenging. We have been working with PennDOT and the developers at Walmart, as well as the Gabriel Brothers plaza to ameliorate this potential traffic nightmare. I believe that PennDOT has committed to doing

everything it can to expedite the project highway needs, especially on Greengate Road.

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I think there is another component to transportation that has to be considered, public transportation. As a member of the Westmoreland County Transit Authority I believe we have a very important asset in the bus system that has been developed over the years. But I think all members of the authority agree that it's time to look beyond buses.

The Eastern Corridor Study that recently was concluded, because of our insistence, includes a commuter rail line project from Greensburg to Pittsburgh utilizing unused rights of way that Norfolk Southern owns (the abandoned outer tracks). I am happy to report that the study has concluded that this is a very viable project and that it should go forward to the next level of study and design.

I believe rail commuter service to Pittsburgh will make this area as important economically as the South Hills has been with light rail and Cranberry has been with the HOV lanes. It can be a lightning rod for further economic development activity because of the desire of people to live here and commute easily to Pittsburgh and environs. We are working vigorously to ensure that this project stays on "track."

The environmental and stress level tradeoffs of the Parkway East “parking lot” every rush hour will be substantial if we can lure commuters to a comfortable, affordable, efficient and frequent train service. I believe this can and will be accomplished.

Governor Rendell, as the former mayor of Philadelphia, knows better than anyone the importance of public transportation and has promised to work for more transit funding in the future. This can only be a benefit to our transit needs.

### Quality Health Care

One of the most important needs of any community is quality health care; but it is especially important if you want your area to be considered as a viable choice of prospective employers.

We are fortunate to have the Westmoreland Regional Health System in our backyard. It has provided the physical and technological venue for some of the best healthcare practitioners in our area. But we have to help that institution and its professionals stay focused on medicine and not on external pressures.

We must provide all we can for our nurses who are the backbone of any healthcare system. The nurse-to-patient ratio and the mandatory overtime issue are of great concern. We must insist that they be given the time and resources they need to do their jobs.

I was very happy that we were able to restore the needed state funds for our hospitals that were cut out of the first budget. The hospitals who serve a large indigent population, those so called “disproportionate share” hospitals that were particularly hit hard. We must continue to fund our hospitals to the appropriate levels.

In addition, doctors should not have to be concerned about insurance premiums, which fluctuate widely every decade or so and cause a cataclysmic disruption to the system. The latest medical malpractice insurance crisis has led to a number of changes to the system which are starting to show results. But I think more needs to be done.

Over the last two years a number of legislative changes have been made to the judicial system, they are: a case must be tried in the county in which the incident occurred (disallows venue shopping); changes to the laws of joint and several liability (no longer can sue the “deep pocket” of the hospital unless at least

60% liable); periodic payments (rather than lump sum payment); provided \$400 million dollars for ten years to pay for 50% of high end specialists insurance premiums (from the motor cat fund); added \$0.25/pack of cigarettes to pay for 100% of premiums for the high end specialists and 50% for all other doctors. Between the two funding programs \$100 million dollars for surgeons, neurosurgeons, ob-gyns, and orthopedics and emergency room doctors' insurance MCARE premiums will be paid for the next two years. These measures and payments are already showing results.

Also, the Supreme Court has substantially reduced the incidence of frivolous lawsuits with the "certificate of merit" requirement (now must have physician verify that case has merit) and the adoption of the federal rule dealing with frivolous lawsuits (witnessed by the fact there are very few new federal medical malpractice lawsuits).

But I think two other things need to be done: the health consumer must have access, including on line access to health care professionals' medical malpractice records, in this way the consumer would have the ability to make an informed decision about whom their doctor will be (already implemented in 27 states); and we must have an alternative to the private med mal insurance system. I believe we should create an operating authority that will provide med mal insurance to doctors

and hospitals at reasonable rates and would be available at all times. Initial estimates suggest that an immediate premium savings of 20%-40% could be realized. (the state worker's compensation fund is a prime example how this can work).

Although this is not a direct economic development asset, the treatment of our senior citizens must be part of any caring community. That is why I was extremely proud to have been a part of the legislative process to increase the scope of the Pharmaceutical Assistance Contract for the Elderly Program (PACE) which will entitle an additional 100,000 seniors to be eligible for this model program.

### Summary

The overarching theme to my efforts to win re-election as in the past will be a focus on economic development in all relevant respects. We must provide the quality of life assets that entice potential employers. An area where good housing alternatives are available, communities that are attractive, vibrant and alluring; green spaces that not only provide a vista of beauty for recreational needs but also provide a work environment for our family farms; an invaluable education system that gives assurance to any parent about its quality; a transportation network that allows choices to be made about working and shopping and permit alternative

possibilities; and a health system that meets the needs of our population now and in the future. In short a place where anyone would want to live, work and play.

The various assets referred to above are of equal importance in my mind. All of these areas have individual advocates who can concentrate solely on those; but as a legislator I must be an advocate for all of them.

Recognition Staff - 0  
outreach efforts -  
opportunity for expression of opinions -