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Rep. Tom Tangretti
D-Westmoreland



Pennsylvania
House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

**Plan offers relief for budget-strapped
school districts, state government**

Harrisburg, Feb. 10 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said extending the 30-and-out early retirement option for teachers and state workers in Pennsylvania would save school districts and state agencies millions of dollars in the next two years, and allow them to forgo painful budget cuts that could negatively impact many Pennsylvania students and residents.

Tangretti participated in a Capitol news conference today announcing the introduction of legislation that would provide early-retirement windows in fiscal years 2003-04 and 2004-05 for teachers and state employees with at least 30 years of service instead of the usual requirement of 35 years.

Tangretti said the measure, which has been introduced in both the House and Senate, has strong bipartisan support.

"Republicans and Democrats in the General Assembly realize that an early-retirement option cannot simply be seen as a giveaway to teachers and state workers," Tangretti said. "There are very sound financial reasons for offering an early-retirement option at this time, not least of which is to avoid serious damage to many of our school districts' and state budgets."

Tangretti said while early-retirement plans usually end up costing as much as they save in the long run, they do offer short-term cash flow relief to school districts and state agencies that can replace long-tenured, highly paid employees with younger employees requiring lower salaries and benefits.

"The eventual costs of the program over the next two years can be spread out over decades, but many school districts in Pennsylvania need those cash savings now," he said.

Tangretti said the House legislation (H.B. 130) has 67 co-sponsors, both Democratic and Republican. A Senate version of the bill (S.B. 56) garnered similar bipartisan support.

"The state and most of its school districts are facing a budget crisis," he said. "In the search for solutions, we have to drop old partisan notions and consider all solutions to the crisis that can provide schools and state government with relief."

"These bills, and the support they've gained so far, reflect a bipartisan, creative and realistic approach to the problem," he said.

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**Rep. Tom Tangretti
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**Pennsylvania
House of Representatives**

**Tangretti bill offers doctors affordable,
available med-mal coverage**

Harrisburg, March 3 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, reintroduced legislation that would provide state-sponsored primary and catastrophic medical malpractice insurance for physicians, hospitals and other health-care providers in Pennsylvania.

Tangretti said instead of phasing out the public CAT fund, which provides catastrophic coverage for physicians, a similar state-administered fund should be used to provide both primary and catastrophic coverage.

"Medical malpractice reform efforts so far in Pennsylvania have addressed issues like tort reform, physician accountability and jury award caps," he said. "These are important issues, but I believe the key issue is the instability of the private insurance market."

"The past three malpractice insurance crises have been sparked by volatility in the that market," he said. "Poor management and irresponsible business practices by insurance companies during good economic times leads to bankruptcies, market constriction and skyrocketing premiums during poor economic times.

"If we want to provide long-term, stable and affordable coverage for our physicians, this is the issue we must address."

Tangretti's bill (H.B. 458) would establish a state agency or authority to operate an insurance fund offering primary and catastrophic malpractice coverage and to process malpractice claims. Since the fund would not be responsible for generating profits, producing dividends or meeting private-market projections, costs and premiums would be kept to a minimum.

"One analysis of this type of plan shows it would be the quickest and most effective way to reduce premiums for doctors, offering an immediate rate reduction of between 20 percent and 40 percent," Tangretti said.

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"In addition, it would augment, or perhaps replace if conditions warrant it, the private malpractice providers that, regardless of other reform measures that we take, will most assuredly present us with another round of bankruptcies and skyrocketing premiums the next time the economy goes sour.

"If continuing to provide access to quality health-care for all our residents, and keeping doctors and hospitals open in Pennsylvania so they can do that, truly are priorities for the General Assembly, than passing legislation that would prevent the private insurance market from crippling those efforts every decade or so should be a welcome proposal."

Tangretti introduced similar legislation (H.B. 2645) during the previous legislative session. The House Insurance Committee held hearings on the legislation, but did not take action on the bill.

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**Pennsylvania
House of Representatives**

**Tangretti reacts to governor's line-item
veto of state budget**

Harrisburg, March 20 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said today's action by Gov. Ed Rendell on the 2003-04 state budget will reopen the process and allow for the careful consideration and public input on the budget that should have occurred in the first place.

Rendell signed the budget bill (H.B. 648) passed by the House and Senate with record speed during the past month, but announced that he had line-item vetoed the entire basic education subsidy contained in the budget.

"I believe we need to allow the budget process to work," Tangretti said. "I voted against the budget bill in February not just because of the devastating cuts it would have made to education and other countless state and local programs, but also because the public – the people that would be affected by those cuts – was entirely shut out of the process.

"It is my hope that this decision by the governor will not only force the General Assembly to carefully reconsider the education portion of the budget, but in light of current events and the incomplete state revenue picture, reconsider other portions of the budget, as well, this time with thorough hearings, comprehensive debate and substantial public input."

Tangretti pointed out that the legislature's swift passage of the budget forced the governor to sign it before Pennsylvania's true revenue picture becomes clear. The fiscal year does not end until June 30, and as much as 25 percent of the state's revenues are collected during the next four months.

"That means the budget that was passed, and signed in part by the governor today, is based on numbers that may not reflect fiscal reality, and the governor made that point today," he said. "It's essential that we reopen this budget process and carefully consider it in the responsible way the people of Pennsylvania expect us to.

"I look forward to the opportunity that today's action will give me to be a part of that process on behalf of my constituents, and to work with the governor and other legislators to carefully consider and create a real budget plan that works for all Pennsylvanians."

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Pennsylvania
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**Tangretti bill aimed at boosting
fast-growing Pa. companies**

Harrisburg, May 12 – Legislation that has been introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, would provide \$250 million in state bond funding to help attract private capital for Pennsylvania businesses involved in high-growth industries.

“Pennsylvania has always been an incubator for innovation and new technologies,” Tangretti said. “Using state funding to leverage private investment in the start-up companies that fuel this innovation is a strategy that other states are using successfully to keep these industries growing and producing jobs in their states.”

Tangretti, who is House Democratic subcommittee chairman on Economic Development, said the \$250 million in state bond funding contained in his legislation (H.B. 1320) would initially leverage an equal amount in private capital, providing half a billion dollars in equity to help biotech, biomedicine and other fast-growing companies succeed in Pennsylvania. He noted that many of these companies are located in southwestern Pennsylvania.

“We can’t keep letting the innovative technologies and products we create benefit other states,” Tangretti said. “Our past economic development strategies have not succeeded in keeping these kinds of companies, and the good-paying jobs they provide, in our region and our state.

Tangretti said as the program grows, it is expected to eventually produce \$4 in private capital for high-growth companies for every \$1 the state invests.

“Making the state a true partner in these companies will reap significant rewards for Pennsylvania, its workers and its taxpayers,” he said.

Tangretti’s Growth Sector Program legislation represents a portion of the economic development strategy contained in Gov. Ed Rendell’s Plan for a New Pennsylvania.

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“Representative Tangretti comes from a region of Pennsylvania that has historically been a leader in manufacturing and technology,” Rendell said. “That, coupled with his experience in economic development issues in the House makes him the right person to develop what I believe will be a key program in a new and much more successful economic development and job-growth strategy for Pennsylvania.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Residents may register complaints about Super Bowl halftime show

Tangretti offers link to FCC complaint form on his Web site

HARRISBURG, Feb. 4 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said residents who were outraged or disturbed by the offensive halftime show at this year's Super Bowl may register an official complaint or comment with the Federal Communications Commission by visiting his legislative Web site at www.pahouse.com/tangretti.

The Super Bowl halftime show, which was produced by MTV and featured musical numbers by several well-known performers, included crude and sexually explicit dancing and lyrics, disrespect for the American flag, and ended with popular singer Janet Jackson exposing her breast. The halftime show was seen by millions of viewers, Tangretti said, including many young children.

"The show was inappropriate for halftime of the Super Bowl and for network broadcast," Tangretti said. "It crossed every line of decency. It is outrageous that families cannot even sit down to watch the biggest football game of the year without being banged over the head with gratuitous sex and vulgarity.

"Many people I have talked to are upset and want the FCC to do something about this incident, and make sure similar incidents never happen in the future."

Tangretti said the FCC is investigating the halftime show, and may impose fines and/or other penalties on CBS, which aired the Super Bowl, and others involved with the halftime show.

Local residents can register a formal complaint or comment about the Super Bowl halftime show broadcast by visiting Tangretti's Web site and clicking on the "FCC Complaint" link. Residents also may obtain more information or file a complaint by visiting the FCC's Web site directly at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html>, or calling toll free (888) CALL-FCC.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti touts historic tax credits, other quality-of-life programs to turn Pa.'s economy around

HARRISBURG, Feb. 11 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, told members of the state House Appropriations Committee today that a program to provide tax credits for the refurbishment and reuse of historic homes and commercial buildings in older communities, as well as other revitalization and environmental programs in Gov. Ed Rendell's proposed 2004-05 budget plan, are essential for laying the foundation of a new prosperity in Pennsylvania.

"The governor's package offers a promise for Pennsylvania's future by taking bold steps to improve our schools, clean up our environment, revitalize our communities and build our economy," Tangretti told the committee. "It is these quality-of-life-issues which I believe are the key to returning Pennsylvania to prosperity."

Tangretti testified today as part of budget hearings that kicked off last week concerning Rendell's proposal, which the governor unveiled during a Feb. 3 speech to a joint session of the General Assembly. Over the next several weeks, the House and Senate Appropriations committees will hear testimony on the proposed budget from state lawmakers, state and local agencies, universities and other groups that receive state funding. Testimony on the budget will also be taken across the state during the spring.

In his remarks, Tangretti urged Appropriations Committee members to consider Rendell's proposals carefully in light of a comprehensive Brookings Institution Report on Pennsylvania that was recently released. The report, titled "Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania," lays out a variety of reasons for why Pennsylvania's economy grew more slowly than the rest of the nation's during the economic boom of the mid 1990s, and why it has fallen faster than the rest of the nation's during the recent economic downturn.

Tangretti said the report reveals that unlike many states, Pennsylvania has not matched its economic development, revitalization and education strategies with current economic trends. For instance, while many states have focused on improving schools, parks, housing and commercial districts in older communities to take advantage of these areas' already-established infrastructure and transportation networks, Pennsylvania has not.

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Instead, Pennsylvania has continued to sprawl, leaving older communities and the resources they have to offer behind.

According to the Brookings Institution Report, Pennsylvania's population grew by just 2.5 percent in the 15 years between 1982 and 1997, but the amount of land it used up by urbanization in that time period grew by 47 percent.

"Pennsylvania is hollowing out," Tangretti said, "Development [is] occurring in the outer areas, leaving behind our older communities. As a result, the population of these older communities has been steadily declining for the past several decades. Today, they contain an increasing share of seniors, single parents, minorities and lower-income households."

These communities, he said, which are home to a majority of the state's population, are acting as drag on the state's economy and ability to recover. The current financial problems of Pittsburgh, he said, are a good case in point. As people and industry flee cities and boroughs, their tax base declines, their financial problems become worse, and their residents, schools and remaining commercial areas need more state assistance.

"Without an infusion of incentives and quality-of-life changes, these communities will continue to languish," he said.

Tangretti said Rendell's budget proposal includes many initiatives that could turn the trend around, including a focus on education, economic development, infrastructure and transportation upgrades, revitalization and environmental improvement in these older communities.

One of the proposals Rendell included in his budget is Tangretti's Historic Tax Preservation Credits legislation. The measure would provide a menu of state tax credits to buyers and sellers of historic homes and homes in historic neighborhoods when they are refurbished and used again for single-family housing. A companion bill would provide similar tax incentives for the restoration and use of commercial properties in downtown areas of the state's established cities and boroughs.

"This program would help bring people, jobs and vitality back to these areas," Tangretti said. "Our proposed Historic Tax Credit Program and other programs like it have worked in other states and it can work in Pennsylvania.

"Bold strategies, such as the Historic Tax Credit Program and others proposed by Governor Rendell in his 2004-05 budget, will once again put Pennsylvania back on the road to prosperity."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti urges state to consider hybrid vehicles for fleet

HARRISBURG, Feb. 20 – The House State Government Committee this week heard testimony on legislation co-sponsored by state Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, that would require the state to begin purchasing and leasing hybrid electric vehicles for its fleet.

Tangretti said hybrid electric vehicles, which run on a combination of gasoline and electricity, are more fuel-efficient, cheaper and cleaner for the environment. The legislation he is co-sponsoring (H.B. 1946) would require the state Department of General Services, which purchases, leases and maintains the state's fleet of vehicles, to make at least 10 percent of its annual leases and purchases hybrid electric vehicles beginning in 2007.

"These vehicles are better for our environment and better for our budget," Tangretti said. "By taking the lead in purchasing and using these vehicles, the state could save money, help the environment, and demonstrate their cost-effectiveness to private businesses and consumers."

Tangretti said hybrid electric vehicles use an electric motor to power the wheels. The electric motor is powered by a separate 10 to 20 horsepower gasoline engine, which feeds a generator and the vehicle's batteries. The gasoline engine is designed to run at just one speed for maximum efficiency. Hybrid electric vehicles also make use of the energy created by braking – energy that's wasted in a traditional gas-only vehicles.

"These aren't cars that plug into the wall and only travel about 100 miles before a re-charge," Tangretti said. "These are full-size, full-performance vehicles. You fill them up at the same gas station as traditional vehicles, they run with the same power and speed as traditional vehicles, and they are serviced the same – and are covered by the same warranties – as traditional vehicles."

Tangretti said the bill would not require the state to move to hybrid electric vehicles until 2007 because currently only foreign manufacturers like Honda and Toyota make these vehicles. However, he said, all three American automobile manufacturers plan to introduce a full line of hybrid electric vehicles by 2007.

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"Of course, we want the state to be purchasing and leasing American-made vehicles," he said. "Part of the reason for this program is not just to save the state money and help our environment, but also to help the American auto industry and the thousands of Pennsylvania workers who have jobs connected to that industry."

Tangretti said state's vehicle fleet currently contains about 40,000 automobiles, trucks and other vehicles, including everything from the snowplows that PennDOT uses to clean the highways, to the four-wheel drive vehicles used by the Game Commission and the economy cars driven by employees of various state agencies.

"Increasing the fuel efficiency of a vehicle by just 10 miles per gallon saves about \$250 in fuel costs over the course of a year," Tangretti said. "That means making 10 percent of the state's vehicle fleet hybrid-electric could save the state literally millions of dollars each year.

"This is a step that makes sense, and one the state should take advantage of as soon as it is available."

Tangretti said the House State Government Committee will hold additional hearings on the legislation in coming months.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti wants more oversight of pharmacy benefits managers

HARRISBURG, Feb. 24 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, is co-sponsoring legislation that would improve state regulation and oversight of pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs), companies that are designed to save money for patients and employers by helping private health insurance plans negotiate better prices for prescription drugs.

Instead, Tangretti said, critics of PBMs say of these companies have actually cost American consumers more than \$4 billion in the past two years.

"It's clear to me that in some cases, PBMs operating in Pennsylvania are improving their profits at the expense of patients," Tangretti said. "This is possible because the state lacks the oversight power necessary to ensure these companies are doing what they are supposed to be doing – making prescriptions costs cheaper for patients."

At a recent hearing before the state House Insurance Committee, Tangretti and other members of the committee heard testimony that pharmacy benefits managers are not always using their bulk purchasing power to negotiate discounted drug rates and passing those savings on to health plans and their consumers.

Instead, PBMs sometimes use their purchasing power to pressure doctors to switch patients to more expensive medications, negotiate kickback arrangements with large pharmaceutical companies, hide the value of the discounts they do negotiate and cheat patients by underfilling prescriptions or repackaging prescriptions into smaller, costlier doses.

Tangretti said PBMs also have been accused of steering doctors and health plans toward their own mail-order pharmacies.

The legislation Tangretti is co-sponsoring would require pharmacy benefits managers to obtain a certificate from the state before operating in Pennsylvania, divulge their relationships with their own in-house drug distributors or distributors linked to them, and make public any rebate and incentive arrangements they have with pharmaceutical companies. The regulations would be administered by the state Insurance Department and the state Board of Pharmacy.

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Tangretti said the need for the legislation was demonstrated last fall when a New Jersey PBM was sued by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Philadelphia. The suit accuses the PBM of forcing drugs made by its old parent firm, Merck and Co., on unsuspecting patients.

"Any time you put an extra layer of people between a doctor and a patient you make it harder for that patient and doctor to control health-care decisions," Tangretti said. "That's why these extra layers of health care – such as pharmacy benefits managers and HMOs – need to be watched closely and regulated carefully.

"Pharmacy benefits managers have the potential to help patients immensely by holding down drugs costs for health plans – and in fact, that is what their mission is," he said. "But they also have the power to do great harm by manipulating prices, conspiring with drug suppliers, and even switching prescriptions on patients without their consent or knowledge.

"That's why the state needs to step up its oversight of pharmacy benefits managers, and its protection of patients."

Tangretti said the bill (H.B. 1067) is still being considered by the House Insurance Committee.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti wants to keep jobs In Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG, March 11 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said he will work to pass a legislative package he expects to be introduced in the state House next week that would penalize companies with operations in Pennsylvania when they take jobs from Pennsylvania workers and ship them overseas.

Tangretti said the practice, known as outsourcing, has cost the state thousands of jobs in just the past year alone. Along with the high number of manufacturing jobs that have been shipped overseas in search of cheap labor and less stringent worker-safety standards, he said, an increasing number of technology-related jobs also are being moved offshore by American companies.

“Outsourcing is doing serious damage to this state’s economy, and serious damage to thousands of working families across Pennsylvania,” Tangretti said. “While the state cannot force companies to value the skill and expertise of American workers, it can make sure companies face a real cost when they decide to dump American workers in favor of cheap labor overseas.”

Tangretti said the three-bill package would:

- ban companies doing contract work for the state from delivering services under those contracts from outside the United States. Companies that violate the ban would have their state contracts voided and could face possible financial penalties.
- require companies with operations in Pennsylvania to notify the state if they send 100 or more existing U.S. jobs overseas during the previous year. These companies would be ineligible for state or local government contracts in Pennsylvania for seven years, and also would be prohibited from receiving state grants, loan assistance or other financial incentives for the same period of time.

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- require all companies with state contracts to prove they have on file the employment eligibility verification form required by federal law for each person they have working on a state contract.

Tangretti said outsourcing represents more than just a financial and economic threat to the state and its workers. It could pose a potential security threat as well.

"I think most people believe that when they call customer service for their credit-card company or Internet service provider, they are speaking to someone in the U.S.," he said. "Increasingly, that's not the case – many of these calls are being handled by workers in India, the Philippines, Mexico or some other country.

"Even the state uses overseas workers to handle some aspects of its welfare and other programs," Tangretti said. "That means foreign nationals have access to our citizens' private information like Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers and account numbers, as well as details about our government programs. We are all increasingly aware of the scope of problems – not just financial, but security problems, as well – that this can pose."

Tangretti said the legislative package, which is being introduced by House Democrats, has been featured by media around the country, including CNN, and has put Pennsylvania in the lead in the fight against outsourcing in America. He said he expects other bills to be introduced in the near future to address related issues, such as requiring customer service call centers to reveal where they are located to callers, and investigating the extent to which the state itself uses foreign workers to administer its programs and services.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti proposes using Blues' excess surpluses to fund health care for Pennsylvania adults

HARRISBURG, April 16 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, is preparing to introduce legislation that would fund the state's adultBasic health insurance program with money from the excess surpluses being held by Pennsylvania's Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance companies.

AdultBasic, which provides basic health coverage for income-qualifying working adults who are laid off or who cannot get coverage at work and cannot afford coverage on their own, was created by the General Assembly and is funded with proceeds from Pennsylvania's portion of the National Tobacco Settlement. Funding for the program has eroded recently as money from the tobacco settlement has been redirected to other programs and to reduce the state's budget deficit.

While about 45,000 people receive coverage from adultBasic, Tangretti said, the program's waiting list has 85,000 people on it – nearly 3,000 of them from Westmoreland County alone. It is estimated that about 350,000 Pennsylvanians actually qualify for coverage. Another funding cut for adultBasic, which has been proposed for 2004-05, would knock an additional 8,000 people out of the program.

"AdultBasic is helping only a fraction of the Pennsylvanians it was intended to help, and is in danger of complete collapse if it does not receive substantial funding in the near future," Tangretti said. "Maintaining health coverage for our temporarily laid-off workers and for our workers who cannot afford private insurance is going to be key to keeping these families in Pennsylvania and to revitalizing our economy and our state. We need funding for this program now."

Tangretti said looking to the state's Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans, such as Highmark Blue Cross, for adultBasic funding is both obvious and appropriate.

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As charitable health-care organizations, the Blues receive tax-exempt status in Pennsylvania. At the same time, Tangretti said, they have amassed nearly \$3.5 billion in surpluses among them. These surpluses are akin to private company profits. While the state requires the Blues to hold a certain amount money in surplus, many professionals in the insurance field feel the \$3.5 billion currently held by the companies far surpasses the amount that's necessary or prudent.

"The tax-exempt status of the Blues costs Pennsylvania about \$150 million in taxes each year that the state could be putting toward adultBasic and other programs," Tangretti said. "But the fact that the Blues have amassed \$3.5 billion in surpluses while still continuing to increase rates for many types of coverage and services calls into question whether or not they are actually meeting the statutory obligations for tax-exempt organizations."

Tangretti said the Blues filed applications with the state Insurance Commissioner on Thursday asking for approval of their surpluses and reserves, and reporting on how they plan to meet their charitable obligations and distribute any excess surpluses.

"It's clear to me that one way we can ensure the Blues' charitable obligations are met, and ensure that adultBasic remains viable, is to take at least a portion of the excess surpluses the Blues have accumulated and use them to fund health-care coverage for the working adults in Pennsylvania who need it but cannot get it."

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Tangretti challenges Pa. Medical Society chairman on scare tactics

HARRISBURG, April 23 – Under repeated questioning by state Rep. Tom Tangretti during a state House Insurance Committee hearing Thursday, an official from the Pennsylvania Medical Society acknowledged that the group has no statistical evidence to back up its claim that hundreds of doctors are leaving Pennsylvania because of the high cost of medical malpractice insurance.

"Information has surfaced in the media and from other sources that suggests that the evidence PMS and other doctors' groups are using to make this claim is either fabricated or, at best, disingenuous," Tangretti said. "I'm troubled by the idea that these groups, with their breathless propaganda about a mass exodus of doctors from our state, might be needlessly scaring our senior citizens and others into believing they are going to lose access to their health care, all in the name of avoiding lawsuits."

The Pennsylvania Medical Society and other doctors' groups have been battling for several years to have caps placed on medical malpractice jury awards in Pennsylvania. The groups claim that "jackpot" jury awards are driving up the cost of malpractice insurance and forcing doctors to close their practices and/or leave Pennsylvania for other states.

In a document titled "Disappearing Doctors," PMS claims that Pennsylvania's medical malpractice crisis has adversely affected 1,700 doctors. Recent media reports, however, have challenged those numbers, pointing out that they do not account for new doctors that have moved into Pennsylvania, doctors that have closed a practice only to open another elsewhere in Pennsylvania, or doctors who have sold their private practices to hospitals or other entities but continue to see the same number of patients.

Tangretti said one PMA official is quoted in a recent media report citing an 800-doctor gain in Pennsylvania since 2002. Other statistics from the Pennsylvania Insurance Department show that there are about 1,000 more doctors paying into the state's MCare fund now than there were three years ago. Figures from the General Accounting Office also show a per-capita increase in the number of doctors in Pennsylvania in the past few years.

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At the hearing, Tangretti challenged PMA Board Chairman Dr. Daniel Glunk to explain the discrepancies. Glunk acknowledged that while it has been his personal experience that doctors in his area are leaving, he has no evidence to show that is a statewide trend.

"Personal experiences and anecdotal evidence on an issue as important as the viability of Pennsylvania's health-care system and the availability of doctors isn't good enough," Tangretti said. "PMA has been presenting the exodus of doctors from Pennsylvania as gospel for several years now, but there is good reason to believe it isn't.

"I believe this calls into question the credibility of the very group that has pushed the hardest for medical malpractice reforms in Pennsylvania, a group that continues to demand even more changes, including changes that could adversely affect patients' rights," he said. "Before we cave in to those demands, we owe it to patients in Pennsylvania to at least make sure PMA isn't just crying wolf in order to protect their own pocketbooks."

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NEWS RELEASE

State Rep. Tom Tangretti

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

House OKs transfer tax exemption for volunteer fire companies

HARRISBURG, May 27 – Legislation introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti that makes property transferred from municipalities to volunteer fire companies exempt from the state's realty transfer tax was passed unanimously Wednesday by the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Tangretti said the measure would mean significant savings for cash-strapped volunteer fire companies that receive property from municipalities for fire houses, training facilities or other purposes.

A variety of nonprofit groups already are exempt from the realty transfer tax when they obtain land, buildings and other real estate, Tangretti said. However, the state Department of Revenue ruled that a volunteer fire department in Tangretti's legislative district was not exempt from the tax, and assessed the department when it received a building from a local municipality to restore and use as a garage.

"Considering the money volunteer fire departments save municipalities and the state, and the tremendous service they provide for many state residents, I believe they should be exempt from the realty transfer tax when they receive real-estate assets from the communities they serve," Tangretti said.

"Attempts by municipalities to provide for the volunteer fire departments that protect their residents – many of which are struggling financially as it is -- should not end up costing those fire departments even more money," he said.

Tangretti's bill, which was introduced last year (H.B. 463), was approved by the House Wednesday as an amendment to legislation that would increase the number and length of fund-raising sales that volunteer and charity groups are permitted to hold without collecting the state sales tax.

The bill (H.B. 1731), along with Tangretti's amendment, passed the House and will be sent to the Senate for consideration.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti criticizes Republican assault on patients

Calls for public disclosure of doctors' med-mal claims

HARRISBURG, July 1 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said Republicans forced legislation through the state House on Wednesday introduced by House Majority Leader Sam Smith that could eventually allow the General Assembly to set arbitrary limits on the amount of damages patients who are catastrophically injured by medical mistakes could recover.

“Of all the things we could be doing to help doctors and patients with regard to medical malpractice, Republican leaders continue to focus obsessively on the one thing that we’ve already been told time and time again will not bring malpractice premiums down or improve patient safety,” Tangretti said.

The bill (H.B. 2722) passed by the House on Wednesday would place a question on the ballot asking voters to approve an amendment to the state constitution that would allow the General Assembly to limit non-economic jury awards in medical malpractice cases. Republican leaders used a parliamentary maneuver to close off debate on other patient safety and doctor accountability measures that had been introduced as part of the bill.

Tangretti pointed out during debate on the House floor that several insurance industry representatives have already testified before a number of legislative committees that limiting jury awards would not reduce the amount of premiums they charge doctors in Pennsylvania for malpractice coverage.

He also said the General Assembly has already taken several steps to lower malpractice premiums and improve conditions for doctors in Pennsylvania: it has prohibited venue shopping, required malpractice lawsuits to include an independently verified certificate of merit, instituted harsh penalties for people who file lawsuits that are deemed frivolous and subsidized hundreds of millions of dollars worth of doctors' malpractice premiums during the past two years.

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In addition, other measures introduced in the legislature would help weed out the doctors in Pennsylvania contributing to the bulk of malpractice payouts by making their malpractice records public and address the insurance industry's role in skyrocketing premium rates.

In fact, Tangretti said, the House has already passed a bill that would reduce malpractice premiums significantly. The legislation (H.B. 158) would require the state to post doctors' profiles, including their malpractice histories, on a Web site for public review. Currently, doctor malpractice histories are kept confidential, meaning patients in Pennsylvania do not know which doctors have had multiple malpractice claims filed against them.

"There are doctors in Pennsylvania that have paid as many as 10, 12, even 17 malpractice claims – they could be your doctor or they could be my doctor, but we'll never know because that information is secret," Tangretti said. "I guarantee you though, if you make that information public, those doctors aren't going to get the business, and soon they're going to be out of business, and then you'll see malpractice rates come down."

Tangretti said the legislation passed Wednesday would help bad doctors stay in practice while delaying real reforms that could lower premiums for good doctors and ensure safe care for patients.

"If a question on limiting jury awards does end up on the ballot, we all know what will happen," he said. "The doctors, the trial lawyers and the insurance industry will spend millions of dollars on slick ad campaigns to protect their own interests.

"Meanwhile, no one will be protecting the interests of the little guy – the injured patients. I thought that's what the General Assembly was supposed to do. Instead, we seem to be leading the assault against them, and I think it's criminal."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti votes for historic property tax reduction

HARRISBURG, July 3 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said significant and long-term school property tax relief will finally be a reality for Westmoreland County homeowners after the House and Senate passed historic legislation this week that will provide \$1 billion annually to fund school property tax cuts across Pennsylvania.

The governor is expected to sign the legislation quickly.

“For more than a decade, I’ve been working toward the goal of lowering the school property tax burden on seniors, young families and all homeowners,” Tangretti said. “This legislation does that without a tax shift and without an increase in any other tax. It’s a strategy for property tax reduction that a clear majority of Pennsylvanians favored, and a strategy that I believe will benefit a clear majority of Pennsylvanians.”

Tangretti said the legislation would allow for the opening of 14 slots parlors in Pennsylvania – seven at horseracing tracks, five at stand-alone facilities and two at existing Pennsylvania resorts. Thirty-five percent of the proceeds from those slots would go directly toward reducing property taxes for Pennsylvania homeowners. The rest of the money would be used to fund various capital projects in the state, and to support the state’s horseracing industry and its thousands of employees.

“This plan lowers taxes while increasing jobs and economic activity in every region of the state,” Tangretti said. “It also makes sure that the bulk of the \$3 billion that Pennsylvanians are already gambling each year stays here in Pennsylvania to help our schools, our taxpayers and our communities, not some other state’s.”

Once the slots are up and running within a few years, Tangretti said homeowners in the state will start to see property tax savings of between 15 percent and 40 percent, depending on the school district in which they live.

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti wants House rules to ban slots stake for lawmakers

Westmoreland legislator also introducing bill to remove
1 percent ownership provision from slots law

HARRISBURG, July 20 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti announced today that he would lead an effort to change House rules so that people serving as state representatives would be prohibited from owning any amount of financial interest in slots establishments in Pennsylvania.

Tangretti also is introducing legislation that would remove the portion of Pennsylvania's recently enacted slots law that permits lawmakers to own up to a 1 percent financial interest in slots-licensed establishments in the state.

"While the 1 percent limit is the most restrictive in the nation, it is not restrictive enough for Pennsylvania," Tangretti said. "Residents of this state have a right to be sure that their public officials are making decisions on slots based on the best interests of their constituents, not their pocketbooks. The only way to ensure that, and to remove all doubt from the minds of Pennsylvanians, is by prohibiting any financial interest in slots facilities for state lawmakers."

Tangretti has written a letter to House Democratic Leader Bill DeWeese and Democratic Whip Mike Veon, who helped to negotiate the slots bill, asking them to do whatever is necessary to help him amend the House rules and get his legislation passed to ban legislators from holding any financial interest in gaming operations.

During the July 4 debate and vote on the slots bill, Tangretti supported and voted for an amendment that would have removed the 1 percent provision, but the amendment was defeated.

Tangretti said the 1 percent provision was included in the bill to cover elected officials who may already unknowingly have an insignificant financial stake – through a mutual fund or other type of investment – in a company or facility linked to slots. The provision was based on a New Jersey law that includes the same 1 percent limit.

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“Lawmakers added this provision because they wanted to be as restrictive as possible without forcing every elected official in the state to go through all of their investments with a fine-tooth comb,” Tangretti said. “But I understand the perception among residents that this isn’t a prohibition against owning too much financial interest in gaming, but permission to own at least a portion of the gaming industry, and they believe that any portion is too much.

“I believe slots will be a good thing for the people of Pennsylvania – bringing property tax relief, jobs and economic activity, as well as a good portion of the more than \$3 billion Pennsylvanians currently spend on gaming outside the state back home to help our residents.

“However, I also understand that slots are a huge step for Pennsylvania and, for many, a controversial one. It is absolutely essential to eliminate, both from public perception and from reality, even the hint of impropriety, or the possibility that any state legislator might gain financially in any way from slots operations in Pennsylvania.”

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ATTENTION EDITORS: The complete text of Rep. Tangretti’s letter to Reps. Bill DeWeese and Mike Veon is attached.

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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CHAIRMAN – SUBCOMMITTEE
ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INSURANCE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
POLICY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

July 20, 2004

Honorable H. William DeWeese
Democratic Leader
423 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Michael Veon
Democratic Whip
428 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Bill & Mike :

As I am sure you are aware, a provision in the new slots law that permits state legislators to have a financial stake of up to 1 percent in gaming-related companies has created great concern among Pennsylvanians, including many who support the slots initiative in general and the property tax relief it will provide.

The perception among many constituents I've heard from is that lawmakers snuck an obscure provision into the slots law to financially benefit themselves. The reality is that this tangential issue threatens to sour many Pennsylvania residents on the slots plan before we even start to see the many benefits that I, and you, worked so hard bring about. I do not want to see that happen.

House Democrats under your leadership can be proud that we led the way to making slots – and the \$1 billion in property tax relief, new jobs and economic growth they will bring – a reality. We responded to what a clear majority of Pennsylvanians said they wanted.

Now, House Democrats need to respond once again to what a clear majority of Pennsylvanians want by leading the effort to reassure every resident in the state that slots were passed for their benefit, and not ours. I believe your continued leadership on this issue can provide that reassurance.

I am preparing to introduce legislation that would remove the 1 percent provision from the current law, and prohibit state lawmakers from owning any financial stake whatsoever in a slots-related company or operation. I intend to play a strong and aggressive role in getting this legislation passed. As you know, I voted for an amendment on the House floor that would have prohibited ANY ownership of gaming companies by ANY public official. If that amendment had passed, we would not be in the situation we find ourselves in – that being the absolute necessity of coming back into session in September to change the law to make it very clear that public officials can not own any part of gaming companies.

Page 2
Slot legislation

I am requesting that you provide strong support for this legislation, and that you do whatever is necessary to ensure that this bill is considered and passed as soon as the House of Representatives returns to session in September. I will be working hard on this legislation and I want your support.

In addition, I am requesting that you join me in my effort to have a ban on any amount of ownership or financial interest in slots-related companies or operations by state legislators placed in our House Rules. We can amend the House Rules even if we never pass legislation to correct the ownership issue I outlined in this letter. A House Rules change is completely within the discretion of the House members to make. I intend to take the lead on amending the House Rules to clearly prohibit any ownership of a gaming company by House members to make. I want your help to change our House Rules with my suggested prohibition language and to regain some of the confidence of the public on this important issue.

I look forward to your assistance with my efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Tangretti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Tangretti
205th Legislative District



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti appointed by governor to Preservation Pennsylvania board

HARRISBURG, July 27 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, has been appointed by Gov. Ed Rendell to the board of directors of Preservation Pennsylvania, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of historically and architecturally significant properties.

"I am very excited to serve the people of the Commonwealth as a board member of Preservation Pennsylvania," Tangretti said. "This organization provides a great service to the community, connecting the present to the past and ensuring that our state history will be accessible in the future."

Tangretti has a strong history of commitment to Pennsylvania's historic preservation. He also believes that with historic preservation will come economic benefits, including greater tax revenue, increased tourism and the attraction of new jobs, and he has offered legislation to help in those efforts.

"Pennsylvania has a rich and varied history, and we must preserve it," he said. "Restoration and revitalization of our historical structures is important not only for us to remember where we have been, but also to help the Commonwealth move forward."

Tangretti's legislation (H.B. 951), would provide a 20 percent state income tax credit to individuals who purchase and restore historic homes or homes in historic residential districts and live in them for five years. It also would waive the state sales tax on materials used in the restoration and exempt the state share of the realty transfer tax for a seller who agrees to sell a historic structure to someone who will restore and live in it for at least five years.

The other bill (H.B. 952) would offer similar incentives for the restoration of historic commercial properties, including business tax credits for owners who purchase, restore and do business in these structures, and a 20 percent tax credit on eligible redevelopment costs.

Both measures have received unanimous support from the House and await Senate action.

Preservation Pennsylvania originated in 1982 as the Preservation Fund of Pennsylvania to preserve the Commonwealth's historic landmarks through increasing public awareness, providing technical advisory and advocacy assistance, and encouraging private investment in historic structures.

In 1985, the Preservation Fund merged with another statewide preservation group, the Pennsylvania Trust for Historic Preservation, and assumed its educational, advocacy and membership functions.

Preservation Pennsylvania's board of directors has up to 35 members.

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti, panel examine nursing shortage in Pennsylvania

HARRISBURG, Aug. 20 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti and other members of the House Democratic Healthcare Excellence and Accountability Response Team heard from a number of health-care professionals Thursday at a hearing in Pittsburgh about how to address the nursing shortage in Pennsylvania.

“The shortage of nurses in Pennsylvania hospitals and other health-care facilities is reaching crisis level,” Tangretti said. “It’s clear we must do something to attract more people -- and different groups of people -- to this profession, and make nurses’ working environment better once they are in the profession so we can retain them.”

Pennsylvania already has a 10 percent vacancy rate for registered nurses, and only about half of Pennsylvania nurses say they plan to stay in the profession until they retire.

Tangretti said nursing shortages across the state are leading to an increase in the use of mandatory overtime by hospitals. Many nurses at acute-care hospitals in Pennsylvania work 12- to 14-hour days and 55- to 60-hour workweeks.

“Mandatory overtime is hard on nurses and hard on patients,” Tangretti said. “Nursing is a stressful profession to begin with; in hospitals that are consistently understaffed, nurses feel like they do not have enough time to give proper attention to their patients, or they fear making mistakes. Many nurses get frustrated or burned out and end up leaving. That just exacerbates the nursing shortage crisis.”

Currently, there are 15 bills pending in the House and Senate that would address the nursing shortage and nursing in general. Tangretti said he supports several of them, including measures that would guarantee adequate and safe staffing levels for nurses and patients in Pennsylvania hospitals and provide whistleblower protection for nurses who report staffing or other procedures by hospitals that jeopardize patient safety.

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Tangretti said House Democrats and the governor have made improving the quality of health care in Pennsylvania, and reducing the shortage of nurses in particular, one of their top priorities.

"Nurses provide the bulk of patient care in our hospitals, nursing homes and other care facilities," Tangretti said. "If we do not address the acute nursing crisis, or the long-term decline we are seeing in the number of nursing graduates in Pennsylvania, our state's health-care system and the patients it serves will suffer."

The HEART task force took testimony Thursday from several health-care professionals, including Gail Wolf, chief nursing officer for UPMC Health System; Susan Albrecht, associate dean for the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing; and Fred Detrick, executive director of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, which advises the governor on work-force issues.

House Democratic Whip Mike Veon appointed Tangretti to the panel because of his focus on health-care issues and policy over the years, including his legislative efforts to reduce the cost of medical malpractice insurance in Pennsylvania, reform the insurance industry and improve patient safety.

The HEART task force will continue to hold hearings on nursing and other health-care issues throughout the state this fall in anticipation of offering several legislative proposals next year. The next public hearing is scheduled to take place Thursday, Aug. 26 at the state Capitol in Harrisburg, and will focus on quality of care and patient safety issues.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti opposes proposed tax hike on businesses, consumers

HARRISBURG, Sept. 1 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said today that a \$12 billion tax increase proposed by a group of mostly Republican state lawmakers would harm both businesses and consumers in the region and across Pennsylvania, and he vowed to fight the proposal in the House of Representatives.

The House Finance Committee recently held hearings on the proposal, introduced by lawmakers in the Commonwealth Caucus, which calls for eliminating property taxes and the state sales tax by imposing a 4.5 percent business receipts tax and tripling the state's realty transfer tax.

"The Commonwealth Caucus can claim that their plan eliminates the sales tax, but what it really does is expand the sales tax to include most of the necessities that people in Pennsylvania currently purchase tax free," Tangretti said. "The price of clothing, groceries, doctor visits, baby diapers, college tuition, aspirin, even flags would increase because of this tax hike."

Pennsylvania's current 6 percent sales tax is not applied to goods and services that are considered necessities. However, Tangretti explained, since all retailers and service providers would be subject to the new gross receipts tax, and since most businesses would pass the cost of that tax on to consumers, the new tax would essentially place a sales tax on all goods and services in Pennsylvania.

"I've already received several complaints from area small businesses about this proposal," he said. "They either can't pass the costs on for various reasons, or they simply don't want to raise prices for their customers, but they can't afford to absorb a tax increase at this time, especially not in this economic climate."

"We should be working to encourage business activity and consumer spending, not imposing more taxes on it."

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Tangretti said tripling the real estate transfer tax would hurt the housing market, one of the few sectors of the economy that has remained relatively strong in Pennsylvania.

"Besides that, it adds thousands of dollars to the cost of purchasing a home, pricing thousands of young families out the market and denying them the opportunity to purchase their first home," he said. "These are the very people that Pennsylvania – and particularly our region – needs to retain and attract. You can't do that by pricing them out of the housing market."

As for the property tax, Tangretti said, the legislature already has taken a significant step toward reducing the burden of this tax with the slots-funded property tax relief law passed in July.

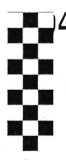
"I realize the slots revenue will not eliminate property taxes, but it will provide substantial and permanent property tax savings without increasing other taxes at all, let alone by \$12 billion.

"In addition to that, a comprehensive sales tax is just as unfair as the property tax," he said. "Low- and middle-income families spend a much larger percentage of their money on necessities than do wealthy families. Imposing what amounts to a new sales tax on all goods and services impacts them much more.

"Reducing or eliminating the property tax is a laudable goal, but not at the expense of new taxes on the goods and services that people in Pennsylvania need," Tangretti said. "I will continue to fight for the real tax reduction that we have already begun in this legislative session, but I oppose this effort to shift new taxes to our working and retired families."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

House bans slots ownership for its members

Tangretti praises step he first proposed this summer

HARRISBURG, Oct. 4 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said the state House of Representatives banned its members today from having any amount of direct ownership in slots operations or gaming-related businesses, a move he said eliminates possible financial conflicts of interest for state representatives while allowing the slots law to deliver property tax relief and economic development on schedule.

The ban was adopted in the form of a House resolution (H.R. 854) that changes House rules to prohibit any member from owning a direct interest, in any amount, in gaming-related enterprises. The House took the action in response to concerns about a provision in the gaming law passed in July that limits members to 1 percent of such direct ownership.

Tangretti voted to eliminate the ownership provision in July during original consideration of the slots bill, and has since introduced legislation (H.B. 2836) to remove the 1 percent provision from the law and a resolution (H.R. 837) similar to the one that passed today banning slots ownership for state legislators.

House Democratic leaders pledged support in July for Tangretti's efforts, and Tangretti had urged a quick vote on his resolution when the House returned to session.

"State legislators should have absolutely no financial interest in slots or gaming-related businesses," Tangretti said. "The 1 percent provision and the financial conflict of interest it created – whether real or perceived – threatened to derail the law and its benefits.

"We've now removed that conflict of interest for House members, and I urge the state Senate to do the same promptly so we can avoid reopening this law to a string of amendments and other attempts by slots opponents to gut it."

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Tangretti said using House rules to ban slots ownership allowed the ban to take effect immediately, and avoided a protracted legislative battle over other efforts to change provisions of the law, which passed by a sizable majority in July.

"My goal was to fix the problem in the law without jeopardizing the timetable the law establishes for delivering school property tax relief to Pennsylvania homeowners, support for our state's horseracing industry, and thousands of new jobs and economic development money for state residents.

"Our focus should be on getting rid of the one part of the law most Pennsylvanians have a problem with, while preserving the parts of the law Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly agree with," he said. "I believe that's exactly what we've done today."

The resolution that passed the House today was introduced by House Speaker John Perzel. It prohibits state representatives from having a direct ownership or financial stake in any gaming-related operation in any amount. It does permit state legislators to retain pension funds, mutual funds or other investment vehicles they do not control that may include small investments in gaming stocks.

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti to join House Drug and Alcohol Treatment Caucus

Lawmakers will fight for increased state focus, funding for addiction recovery

HARRISBURG, Oct. 5 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti joined other House members and representatives from various alcohol and drug addiction awareness and recovery groups at a Capitol news conference today to announce the formation of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Caucus in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Tangretti said the group of lawmakers will provide a stronger voice for adequate and increased state funding for alcohol and drug addiction treatment, educate fellow lawmakers and the public on the issues surrounding drug and alcohol addiction in Pennsylvania, and act as a resource for legislators and other groups working to provide drug and alcohol treatment recovery initiatives in their communities.

"The evidence overwhelmingly shows that drug and alcohol addiction is a disease, and just like any other disease, treatment works," Tangretti said. "The sooner that treatment takes place, the sooner recovery begins and the less expensive that recovery is for all of us."

Tangretti said studies show that for every \$1 invested in drug and alcohol treatment programs, the state saves about \$7 in costs related to crime, welfare and health care.

"People who do not seek or who cannot get treatment for drug and alcohol addiction are the people who end up in our emergency rooms, in our prisons and on our welfare rolls," Tangretti said. "By not helping to lift the stigma on drug and alcohol treatment, and by not providing sufficient funding to treat all the people who seek treatment, we not only cost Pennsylvania's taxpayers and health-care system millions of dollars each year – we also sentence hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania residents and their families to continue to suffer from a debilitating disease."

"We do not treat people in Pennsylvania who suffer from cancer, diabetes or heart disease that way; we should not treat the people who suffer from alcohol and drug addiction that way."

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Today's news conference was also held to recognize September as Drug and Alcohol Addiction Recovery Month in Pennsylvania. The month-long observance is held each year to raise public awareness of alcohol and drug addiction as a disease and the importance of access to treatment for those who suffer from the disease.

Tangretti said one of every 10 people in Pennsylvania is addicted to drugs or alcohol, and the disease affects at least one member of every four families in Pennsylvania. Among the non-violent criminals in Pennsylvania's state correctional system, 92 percent are in prison because of a drug-related crime or because of a crime they committed while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

"Without the treatment they need, these people, once released, simply end up back in jail, or eventually dead," he said. "Pennsylvania must start to view drug and alcohol addiction as the disease – and the public health problem – that it is, and start addressing it as such. I believe the House Drug and Alcohol Treatment Caucus can play a big part in making that happen."

Tangretti was one of the legislative leaders in the fight to restore drug and alcohol treatment money to the state budget this year after it had been cut in previous years.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti urges ban on mandatory nurse overtime Ban would improve patient safety, ease state's nursing shortage

HARRISBURG, Oct. 5 – Nurses and other health-care workers in Pennsylvania, as well as patients, would benefit from legislation state Rep. Tom Tangretti is supporting that would ban mandatory overtime for nurses in the state.

The legislation (S.B. 722) is similar to bills Tangretti has co-sponsored in the House of Representatives. It would ban hospitals and other health-care facilities from requiring nurses to work more than their regular daily shift and more than 80 hours in a two-week period.

"Mandatory overtime has a direct impact on the quality of nursing care that is delivered to patients in Pennsylvania," Tangretti said. "Nurses cannot continually be required to work 12- to 18-hour shifts, days and weeks at a time without time off, and be expected to properly care for their patients. They know they make more mistakes when they are tired, overworked and forced to care for too many patients, and independent studies confirm it."

Tangretti said a recent University of Pennsylvania study showed nurses are three times more likely to make a mistake when they work more than 12 hours at a time. Many nurses in Pennsylvania are mandated to work 12-hour shifts and more. The Westmoreland County Democrat said that while many hospitals and health-care facilities have used mandatory overtime to compensate for short staffing, forcing nurses to work long hours for weeks at a time is only worsening the state's current nursing shortage.

"Good nurses are getting out of the profession, and good nursing students are deciding not to get in," he said. "Mandatory overtime, and the stress and dangerous working environment it creates, is one of the reasons this is happening, and it's severely impacting patient health and safety."

Tangretti pointed out that nurses account for as much as 90 percent of the direct care that patients receive in hospitals and nursing homes in Pennsylvania. At a rally at the state Capitol today, Tangretti joined hundreds of those nurses and other health-care workers from across Pennsylvania to urge the passage of legislation to ban mandatory overtime.

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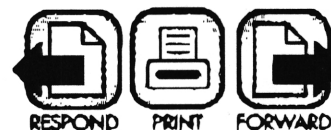
Attention Radio News Directors: an actuality from Rep. Tangretti is available by calling 1-800-452-3001. Enter PA57 (7-2-57) and the pound sign (#) at the menu prompt to get today's sound. You can also download the sound in .mp3 format by visiting www.pahouse.com/tangretti.



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Blues agree to help boost adultBasic program

HARRISBURG, Feb. 8 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said the state's Blue Cross/Blue Shield companies have agreed to do more to provide health-care coverage for Pennsylvania's low-income working families, something Tangretti has been urging for several years.

Under an agreement announced Monday by the Rendell administration and the Blue Cross/Blue Shield companies, the Blues have agreed to pay an assessment on the premiums they collect from their individual, commercial and government health-care policies. The money collected from that assessment – estimated at about \$150 million per year – will be used by the state and the Blues themselves to invest in adultBasic, the state-sponsored health-care program for low-income adults who are working or transitioning between jobs, as well as other community health-care efforts.

"For several years now, I and other members of the General Assembly have been calling for the Blues to fulfill their charitable responsibilities by doing more to provide health-care coverage for the hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians who cannot afford it," Tangretti said. "With tax-exempt status and billions of dollars in accumulated surpluses, these companies should be playing more of a role financially in our efforts to extend health-care coverage in Pennsylvania.

"I'm happy we've finally brought these companies to the table," he said. "This agreement is a good first step, and I hope and expect to see more in the future."

During the 2003-04 legislative session, Tangretti introduced legislation that would have required the Blue Cross/Blue Shield companies to dedicate a portion of their excess surpluses to reducing the adultBasic waiting list. At the end of December, about 39,000 Pennsylvanians were receiving basic health-care coverage under the program, but more than 96,000 who were eligible for benefits and who had applied for adultBasic were still on the waiting list.

"This agreement will put a dent in that number, but I believe the surpluses that the Blues are currently holding could significantly reduce or even eliminate the waiting list entirely," Tangretti said.

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"That's why I plan to reintroduce my legislation this session, and why I'm hoping that when the state Insurance Department releases its recommendations on the Blues' surpluses within the next week or so, those recommendations include driving some of those surpluses into adultBasic."

Tangretti said the agreement between the Blues and the state splits the money collected from the premium assessments into two funds: 60 percent will go directly to the state to be used to fund adultBasic and other programs that cover the uninsured; 40 percent will be used by the Blues to fund community health efforts that are approved by the state Insurance Commissioner.

In addition, assessment dollars received by the state must be used for programs in areas of the state from which they originated.

"That means assessments from the portion of Blue Cross/Blue Shield premiums being paid by individuals, businesses and governments in Westmoreland County and other areas in southwestern Pennsylvania will be coming back to fund health-insurance and health-care programs in this area," he said.

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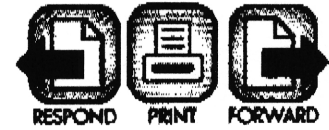
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti: turnpike will not sever Seanor Church Road **Turnpike Commission agrees to construct new bridge to carry local highway**

HARRISBURG, March 24 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said today that the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission has agreed not to split Seanor Church Road in Hempfield Township to accommodate new turnpike construction between the Irwin and New Stanton interchanges.

Instead, Tangretti said, the commission will construct a bridge to carry Seanor Church Road overtop of the new section of the turnpike. Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission Chief Executive Officer Joseph Brimmeier announced the decision Tuesday. Tangretti, along with other state and local officials, has been working with turnpike officials to try to avoid splitting Seanor Church Road.

The turnpike's \$110 million road-widening project between the Irwin and New Stanton interchanges calls for demolishing and rebuilding five bridges that carry the turnpike over local roads. The Turnpike Commission wants to completely eliminate a sixth bridge – the one carrying traffic over Seanor Church Road – because rebuilding it to accommodate the turnpike's new elevation would cost an extra \$5 million.

Because PennDOT, which owns Seanor Church Road, normally does not allow its roads to be split, the Turnpike Commission had requested Hempfield Township to take over the road. In return, the Turnpike Commission and PennDOT were offering the township \$860,000 to make upgrades to both sections of Seanor Church Road and nearby Glenn Fox Road.

But Tangretti said severing Seanor Church Road would have increased travel time for many commuters and slowed emergency response times by as much as 20 minutes. In addition, area businesses such as UPS and Sony, and their workers, would have been adversely affected and the rerouting of cars and trucks would have caused increased traffic -- and forced costly upgrades -- on other area roads.

The alternative plan agreed to this week, Tangretti said, will still allow the turnpike to save money, but will also allow local residents, businesses and municipalities to save time, money and hassle.

"The money the Turnpike Commission was offering to the township for splitting Seanor Church Road would not have been worth the increased costs to local residents and municipalities in terms of longer commutes, increased traffic and emergency response times, and increased road construction and maintenance costs," Tangretti said. "I'm very happy that the Turnpike Commission was able to reach a compromise that respects the transportation concerns and needs of local residents, businesses and municipalities."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

House agrees to budget funding for historic preservation, Westmoreland County commuter rail line study

HARRISBURG, April 12 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said today the House of Representatives has adopted two amendments to the 2005-06 state budget that would provide funding for historic preservation tax credits and the study of a commuter rail line from Greensburg to Pittsburgh.

Tangretti offered the amendments as the House began debate on the 2005-06 General Fund budget bill Monday. The first amendment would provide \$5 million in state funds for a program to provide tax credits to buyers and sellers of residential properties in Pennsylvania's historic, downtown neighborhoods when those properties are restored and used for their original purpose.

Tax benefits for buyers of historic homes would include a 20 percent state income tax credit for people who purchase and restore the homes and live in them for at least five years, as well as an exemption from the state sales tax on materials used to restore the properties. Sellers would be exempt from the state's share of the realty transfer tax if they agree to sell a historic structure to someone who will restore and live in it for at least five years.

"This type of tax credit program is working in other states to boost revitalization of downtown residential and commercial districts, and I believe it could do the same here in Pennsylvania," Tangretti said. "Bringing residents back to our established, downtown neighborhoods would boost these communities' tax base and economy, and help keep a good part of Pennsylvania's remaining open space from disappearing to sprawl."

Tangretti's second amendment would use \$250,000 in state money to fund the feasibility study of a commuter rail line between Greensburg and Pittsburgh.

"This is a project that I and local leaders in Westmoreland County have been working on for several years," he said. "I believe a serious study would reveal that such a commuter rail line could offer reliable, efficient and inexpensive transportation in and out of Pittsburgh to thousands of daily and recreational commuters – reducing traffic and taking much of the pressure off of our strained highway system."

Tangretti said neither amendment would impact Pennsylvania taxes, since funding for them would come from surplus money not appropriated in the governor's 2005-06 budget proposal. The House is expected to continue debating the budget bill (H.B. 815) tomorrow and Wednesday before passing it and sending it to the Senate for consideration. The budget must be passed and signed by the governor by June 30.

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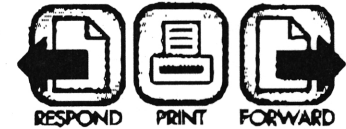
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti votes for full unemployment for laid-off Pa. seniors

HARRISBURG, June 14 -- State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, voted today for legislation that would prohibit the state from reducing senior citizens' unemployment compensation because they receive Social Security benefits.

Tangretti said the bill (H.B. 163), which passed the House unanimously, would protect senior citizens' right to collect full unemployment, just like other laid-off Pennsylvania workers, and make the unemployment compensation system fairer for Pennsylvania employers.

Currently state law allows the Department of Labor and Industry to offset the unemployment compensation benefits that elderly workers receive by an amount equal to half of their Social Security income. Tangretti said the offset is unfair to seniors, many of whom work because of financial necessity.

"Many of these senior citizens are working specifically because their Social Security check is not enough to pay the bills," Tangretti said. "Why in the world do we penalize them when they get laid off because of that Social Security income?"

"Older workers should be entitled to the same unemployment benefits that all other workers who lose their jobs collect, especially since seniors are often some of the best and most dedicated workers in our work force."

Tangretti noted that the offset is also unfair to businesses that employ seniors: even though the seniors receive only partial unemployment when they are laid off, their employers still pay the full contribution rate into the unemployment compensation fund.

"The Social Security offset is a double penalty – it hurts both seniors and the Pennsylvania businesses that employ them. We should eliminate it."

The federal government allows each state to set its own unemployment compensation rules. Many states that once had the Social Security offset have since eliminated it, Tangretti said. The legislation now goes to the Senate for consideration.

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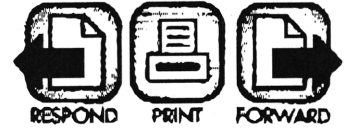
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti to serve on Identity theft select committee

HARRISBURG, July 28 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti said today that he will serve on a state House select committee that will investigate current procedures and policies for storing and transmitting the personal, financial and other sensitive data of Pennsylvania residents held by the state.

Tangretti was appointed to the select committee, created by the House in July, by House Minority Leader H. William DeWeese. The committee will hold hearings and take testimony over the next year, and will report its findings and any recommendations it makes on improving or changing state information storage and transmittal policies to the House and the public by Nov. 30, 2006.

"The state and its various agencies and departments store millions of individual records on Pennsylvania residents and businesses," Tangretti said. "These records contain sensitive information such as Social Security numbers, addresses, financial data, credit card numbers, etc. The state must be committed to providing the best protection of this information that it can, and to providing this information to outside parties in a secure manner, and only when necessary and appropriate."

Tangretti said there is concern among many people that information stored by the state, its agencies and the organizations it regulates is susceptible to theft.

"Without proper safeguards in place – including clear policies about the proper storage, security and transmittal of this kind of information – there is a clear risk that outside individuals or groups could gain access to the information, particularly information stored electronically, and use it to steal people's identities, commit credit fraud or engage in other crimes," he said. "We also know that gaps in information or technology security can also leave our state's computer systems and files susceptible to sabotage and our communities vulnerable to terrorism."

Tangretti said identity theft alone already costs Pennsylvania residents, businesses and government \$2 billion a year.

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The select committee, which will be composed of 28 legislators from the House Consumer Affairs, Judiciary, Commerce and State Government committees, will review the policies of state agencies on electronic and other kinds of information storage and transmission, and identify any potential security weaknesses in these information systems.

"We want to ensure several things with respect to how the state stores and uses the private and otherwise sensitive information that it holds: that it is protected from unauthorized use, that the systems used to store and protect it meet industry standards, that Pennsylvania is complying with all laws and regulations on how this information may be used, that only the appropriate personnel within our agencies and departments have access to and the authority to use this information, and that we have a system in place to periodically review and test these systems and their security," Tangretti said.

Tangretti, a Democrat from Westmoreland County and a member of the House Commerce and Consumer Affairs committees, has introduced and co-sponsored several bills in the House to improve the security of private financial and identifying information stored and used by government and private industry, including legislation that would create a state office to assist identity theft victims, restrict the sale of information held by the state to third parties, and require credit card companies and retail stores to better protect residents' and consumers' credit and identifying information.

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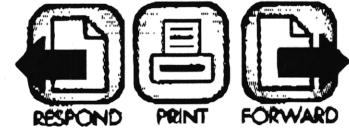
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tangretti bill would strengthen patient safety at abortion clinics

HARRISBURG, Nov. 22 – Abortion providers in Pennsylvania would be required to follow the same patient safety and reporting guidelines as other health-care facilities under legislation introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, and approved today by the House Insurance Committee.

“The fact that many abortion clinics are exempt from the strict patient-safety guidelines required of hospitals just because they are not located in hospitals makes no sense,” Tangretti said. “Abortion is an invasive surgical procedure, with as many or more inherent risks than many other types of procedures performed in hospitals.

“Doctors who provide abortions on a regular basis in Pennsylvania should have to adhere to the same patient safety and reporting standards as other physicians, whether they are providing abortions at a hospital, at a clinic, or at their office.”

Tangretti’s measure (H.B. 1591) would require abortion providers that are not located in hospitals or other health-care facilities but provide more than 100 abortions a year to submit a patient safety plan to the Department of Health, and to begin reporting serious incidents and errors to the state’s Patient Safety Authority. These patient safety planning and reporting requirements were included for hospitals and other medical facilities in the 2002 MCARE law that the General Assembly passed to increase patient safety and reduce medical malpractice costs. Abortions performed outside of hospitals or similar medical facilities currently are not covered by the law.

“My bill is not about abortion, it is about patient safety,” Tangretti said. “This procedure, no matter where it is performed, should not be left out of the system we have put in place to track medical mistakes and patient safety involving other surgical procedures in Pennsylvania.”

Tangretti’s measure passed the full House in 2003 as part of a larger patient safety bill, but was removed by the Senate. With today’s committee approval, it is now poised once again for a vote by the entire House.

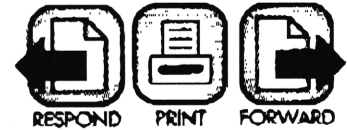
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

House OKs Tangretti patient safety rules for abortion providers

HARRISBURG, Jan. 31 – The House today passed legislation introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti that would require abortion providers in Pennsylvania to comply with the same patient safety and reporting requirements that other hospitals and health-care facilities must follow.

The measure would add stand-alone abortion clinics and doctor's offices where abortions are performed to the list of health-care facilities covered by the state's 2002 MCARE law, which introduced new patient-safety and medical error reporting requirements for hospitals in Pennsylvania.

"Abortion is an invasive procedure that should be subject to the same patient safety guidelines as any other medical procedure," Tangretti said. "And medical mistakes and patient complications should be reported whether they occur in a hospital, at a neighborhood clinic or in a doctor's office."

Tangretti's measure (H.B. 1591) would require abortion providers that are not located in hospitals or other health-care facilities but provide more than 100 abortions a year to submit a patient safety plan to the Department of Health, and to begin reporting serious incidents and errors to the state's Patient Safety Authority. These patient safety planning and reporting requirements are already part of Pennsylvania law for hospitals and similar health-care facilities.

"This is not abortion legislation, it is patient safety legislation," the Westmoreland County Democrat said. "Abortions that are provided in clinics or other locations should not be left out of the system we have put in place to track medical errors and the safety of patients in our health-care system. This is an important part of reducing medical mistakes and lowering health-care and medical malpractice costs in Pennsylvania."

Tangretti's measure also passed the House in 2003; he said he is hoping for approval by the state Senate this session, as well.

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Tangretti: House failure to vote lobbyist disclosure regrettable

HARRISBURG, May 4 – Property tax relief wasn't the only important reform issue left incomplete as the House adjourned for three weeks Wednesday evening without voting on legislation to require the disclosure of lobbyist spending in Pennsylvania, said state Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland.

Tangretti was one of 46 Democratic and Republican legislators who formally petitioned legislative leaders earlier this week to allow a vote on lobbyist disclosure legislation. However, the House adjourned Wednesday until June 5 without voting on any of the lobbyist reform measures currently under consideration.

"The failure to act on this issue is not just regrettable, but irresponsible," Tangretti said. "Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation without a law that requires the people who spend millions of dollars each year lobbying the legislature on behalf of special interests to disclose that spending and what it is for.

"This lack of accountability and public disclosure places a stigma on the legislature, and creates mistrust in the public's mind," he said. "Moving forward with lobbyist disclosure is one of the first and most effective steps this legislature can make to restore public confidence and trust in the General Assembly and state government in general."

Tangretti said there is no reason for the delay in bringing lobbyist disclosure to a vote. The various legislative proposals that are pending have all received extensive review by legislative committees, individual legislators and the public.

"The time for delay and political maneuvering on the part of our legislative leaders on this and other issues is over...we've had more than enough of it this legislative session," he said. "It's time to get down to businesses, and lobbyist disclosure should be one of the first orders of business for this General Assembly.

"My colleagues and I who believe that lobbyist disclosure and reform is what the people of Pennsylvania want, and what this General Assembly needs, hope to see it on the voting schedule as soon as we return in June."

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Respond Print Forward

Tangretti introduces constitutional amendment to take politics out of reapportionment

HARRISBURG, May 5 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, said he has introduced a proposed constitutional amendment that would take the partisan politics out of the legislative reapportionment process in Pennsylvania.

“The reason we redraw legislative districts every 10 years is supposed to be to ensure that in the face of population shifts, the voice of each voter in Pennsylvania continues to carry the same weight,” Tangretti said. “Instead, the reapportionment process has too often become a method for gaining political advantage in elections, or for protecting the seats of vulnerable incumbents.

“We need to create a system that ensures the results of reapportionment reflect its intent, and that it is a tool for protecting the integrity of our elections, not protecting the advantages of politicians or their parties.”

Instead of having legislative districts drawn by the General Assembly, as they are now, Tangretti said, his legislation ([H.B. 2665](#)) would create a nonpartisan state agency to produce reapportionment maps every 10 years. The state agency would handle the reapportionment for state House and Senate districts as well as for congressional districts in Pennsylvania.

When redrawing district boundaries, the agency would be required to maintain equality of population across legislative districts while respecting the boundaries of municipalities. Districts would also have to be as compact as possible, avoid “peculiar and disfigured shapes” and, when possible, include all areas near a municipality that are generally considered to be a part of the same community.

“Most importantly, this new constitutional amendment would specifically prohibit the reapportionment agency from considering voter registration, voter performance, the home address of incumbent legislators or any similar factor when redrawing legislative and congressional districts,” Tangretti said. “I believe this is the one way we can make our elections both meaningful and competitive once again.”

Tangretti said Iowa adopted a similar plan for reapportionment after the 1990 census and that the plan has worked well. Both Alaska and Arizona adopted the plan after the 2000 census.

“In the interest of our constituents and the electoral process, we need to enact this kind of a nonpartisan reapportionment plan in Pennsylvania, as well,” he said.

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Tangretti National Guard Insurance bill headed to governor

HARRISBURG, July 1 – A measure introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti that was the centerpiece of a legislative effort unveiled last year to help members of Pennsylvania's National Guard serving in Iraq and elsewhere was given final approval Friday by the state Senate and now heads to Gov. Ed Rendell for his signature.

Tangretti's measure, passed as part of S.B. 1043, will provide Guard members with the maximum amount of life insurance available through the Service Members Group Life Insurance Plan.

"During the past year and a half, the General Assembly has passed several measures to assist active-duty Guard members and their families financially, legally and educationally," Tangretti said. "I think this is one of the most important of those measures. Families who are left behind when a Guard member is killed in action often struggle financially as well as emotionally. Ensuring they have the maximum life insurance benefit possible removes at least some of their financial burden and makes dealing with the emotional loss a bit easier."

National Guard members called to federal active duty are eligible for \$150,000 of life insurance coverage at the federal government's expense. Guard members who want to purchase the maximum coverage available -- \$400,000 -- must pay the difference in premiums. Under Tangretti's legislation, that state will now pick up that premium difference for Pennsylvania National Guard members on active federal duty.

In addition, the measure will reimburse the families of Pennsylvania Guard members killed while on active duty for any premiums they paid on Service Members' Group Life Insurance since Sept. 11, 2001.

Tangretti introduced his measure in early 2005 as part of a multi-bill package to provide Guard members and their families with things such as tuition assistance, child-care support, job-placement assistance when they return from duty and other benefits.

In addition to Tangretti's life insurance provision, Senate Bill 1043 also includes a provision that waives tuition at all state-owned and state-related universities, approved technical schools and community colleges in Pennsylvania for the children and spouses of Guard members killed while on active duty after other forms of financial aid are exhausted.

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2006



House
Democratic
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Hearing Hosts

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State Rep. Tom Tighe, D-Luzerne/Monroe
State Rep. Richard Grucela, D-Northampton

  
Respond Print Forward

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Democratic Policy Committee continues study of stem-cell research

HARRISBURG, July 25 – The House Democratic Policy Committee today held its third hearing this session on stem-cell research, according to Policy Committee Chairman Stephen H. Stetler, D-York.

Requested and hosted by state Reps. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, Tom Tighe, D-Luzerne/Monroe, and Richard Grucela, D-Northampton, the hearing mainly focused on the pro-life perspective and featured testimony from Steve Johnson and his daughter Zara, participants in the Snowflake Frozen Embryo Adoption Program; Stephen Webster, president and CEO of Nureonyx; Dr. Gary Friedman, trustee, New Jersey Stem Cell Research and Education Foundation; the Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of Education for National Catholic Bioethics Center; and Dr. Katherine High, director of the Center for Cellular and Molecular Therapeutics at the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania.

"Stem-cell research is a complex issue that deserves to be explored from all perspectives," Stetler said. "Even though pro-life members have a different view than me, I still think it is important to have this hearing from their perspective. Hopefully, a better mutual understanding can be achieved by having an open dialogue with both sides of this debate, whether it is legislators, the public, or experts."

Tangretti said, "Today's hearing demonstrated why it is vital to hear all sides of an issue, especially those that are controversial. I hope members of the committee now have a deeper realization of the pro-life perspective surrounding embryonic stem cell research."

Tighe added, "I thank Chairman Stetler for having this hearing today, so the committee could hear more testimony on stem-cell research from experts who understand the ethical concerns and the potential dangers."

Grucela said, "I am glad the committee was able to shine a stronger light today on the pro-life considerations of stem-cell research. While scientific advancement can be exciting, it is critical to evaluate the ethical effects of any research."

Stetler is co-chairman of the House Life Sciences Caucus. Tighe, Tangretti and Grucela are members of the House Pro-Life Caucus.

HDPC's two previous hearings on stem-cell research were held Aug. 3 in Pittsburgh and Sept. 21 in Philadelphia. Those hearings also included testifiers from both sides of the issue.

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Tangretti gets key appointments for 2007-08 legislative session

Westmoreland legislator to chair tourism committee, serve on House reform panel

HARRISBURG, Jan. 16 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti has been appointed chairman of the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee and to serve on an important bipartisan committee created by the House speaker to study ways to reform the House's rules and procedures during the 2007-08 legislative session.

For Tangretti, who is beginning his 10th term in the House representing Greensburg and surrounding municipalities in Westmoreland County, it is his first committee chairmanship. Tangretti said serving as majority chairman of the Tourism and Recreational Development Committee presents a great opportunity to enhance the visibility and economy of southwestern Pennsylvania and other areas of the state.

"Tourism is now one of the top two industries in Pennsylvania," Tangretti said. "Several of the issues I have been working on for a number of years in the legislature – including historic preservation and transportation – are key components of the tourism industry and integral to building the success of that industry and of our economy."

Tangretti said he is also excited about the opportunity to help shape reform in the House of Representatives. New House Speaker Dennis O'Brien announced creation of a Speaker's Commission on Legislative Reform, a bipartisan panel charged with rewriting the rules of the House to make the process of government more open and accountable to voters. Majority Leader Bill DeWeese and Majority Whip Keith McCall named Tangretti as one of the 12 Democrats to the panel on Friday.

"Reform in Harrisburg is a huge issue for the people of Pennsylvania, and it is a priority of mine, as well," said Tangretti, who was part of a bipartisan group of legislators that successfully pushed for repeal of the pay raise last session and advocated several reform initiatives for the new session.

"We need to restore confidence in our state government, and the only way we can do that is with more transparency and more accountability," he said. "I will be working hard with other members of the Speaker's Commission on Legislative Reform to come up with and gain adoption of new rules and procedures to improve the way the House does business and the way it serves the people who elect it."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Rep. Tom Tangretti
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Tangretti co-sponsoring open-records bill

HARRISBURG, Feb. 21 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti, D-Westmoreland, announced at a Harrisburg news conference today that he is co-sponsoring legislation that addresses an issue “at the top of the list” of necessary government reforms in Pennsylvania.

Tangretti said the legislation, introduced by freshman state Rep. Tim Mahoney, D-Fayette, would significantly improve Pennsylvania’s open records law.

“Pennsylvania is now consistently rated as having one of the worst open-records laws in the country,” Tangretti said. “Passage of this bill would immediately move us to one of the best.

“When people know what is going on in government – when they can see what is being spent and where it is being spent – there is a different attitude in government,” he said. “Out of every black cloud comes a silver lining, and I believe the renewed push for reform is the silver lining that came out of the July 2005 pay raise vote. Open records is at the top of the list.”

Tangretti said the legislation would substantially enhance the number and types of government records available to the public, and improve the ability of Pennsylvania residents to access those records in a timely manner. In addition, the legislation would set up a state office to assist residents seeking public records and streamline the appeals process for people denied access to records.

The legislation would apply to public information held by all three branches of state government, as well as government boards, agencies and authorities at the local level.

Tangretti was part of a bipartisan group of legislators that offered a number of reform proposals during the 2005-06 legislative session. Many of those proposals are now being considered by the Speaker’s Commission on Legislative Reform, created in January by Speaker of the House Dennis O’Brien to make the House more open and accountable to the public. Tangretti is a member of the speaker’s commission.

The open records legislation (H.B. 443) has nearly 50 co-sponsors.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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House passes Tangretti historic preservation grants proposal

HARRISBURG, July 2 – The House of Representatives today passed legislation (H.B. 221) introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti that would create a state grant program for the restoration and commercial or residential use of historic properties.

“These grants would represent a significant economic development tool in Pennsylvania’s older downtown residential and commercial neighborhoods,” Tangretti said. “Beyond revitalizing residential and commercial neighborhoods and getting many of these properties back on the tax rolls, this program would reinvigorate downtowns with new residents and businesses and help preserve farmland and open space outside our cities and boroughs from development.

Under the program, the state Department of Community and Economic Development would work with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to approve and provide the grants. The criteria used to designate properties in Pennsylvania as historically significant also would be used to determine if the owners of those properties qualify for the state grants.

Owners restoring commercial properties would be eligible for grants up to \$500,000; owners restoring residential properties would be eligible for grants up to \$15,000. The grants would be used to reimburse owners for up to 70 percent of the costs of exterior rehabilitation or restoration work that meets the criteria for historic properties.

To be eligible, properties would have to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, be located in a National Register historic district, or be located in a designated local government historic district.

Restoration would have to be followed by use as an income-producing business in the case of commercial properties or the primary residence of the owner in the case of residential properties.

The legislation stipulates that at least 31 percent of the total grant money reserved for the program be used for residential applicants, and that DCED take into consideration the geographical distribution of grant funding when making awards. It also would allow for properties in Elm Street, Main Street, enterprise zones and local government historic districts to be given priority.

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**News Release****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

State Rep. Tom Tangretti
D-Westmoreland
www.pahouse.com/Tangretti



Tangretti announces he will retire from state House

HARRISBURG, Oct. 2 – State Rep. Tom Tangretti today announced that he will retire from the state House of Representatives effective at the end of the current 2007-08 legislative session.

The Westmoreland County Democrat represents residents of the 57th Legislative District, which includes the city of Greensburg, Salem Township and parts of Hempfield and Unity townships, as well as the boroughs of Delmont, Hunker, New Stanton, South Greensburg, Southwest Greensburg and Youngwood.

At the end of his term, Tangretti, who took office in 1989, will have spent 20 years in the state legislature. Before that, he served as Westmoreland County controller from 1983 to 1988.

"It has been a wonderful honor representing the people of this legislative district, and I want to thank them for the support and trust in me they have shown over the past two decades," Tangretti said. "Fighting for the people of this region in Harrisburg and helping thousands of them access and benefit from state government here at home has truly been a privilege.

"After 35 years in public service in one form or another, however, it is time to finally give my wife and my family the attention they deserve and that they so often have sacrificed to help me achieve my goals and meet my responsibilities."

Tangretti, who this session was named chairman of the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee, served under four governors during his House tenure – Robert Casey, Tom Ridge, Mark Schweiker and Ed Rendell. As a member of the legislature, Tangretti served on the Appropriations, Insurance, Banking, and Local Government committees. He also served on the Local Government Commission, a bipartisan legislative service agency that provides research assistance to the General Assembly and proposes legislation to help local governments be more effective and efficient; and as Democratic chairman of the legislative Pro-Life Caucus, which is dedicated to protecting the sanctity of life in state law and policy.

Among his legislative accomplishments, Tangretti said he was most proud of his role in helping to refocus Pennsylvania's economic development strategy.

"For decades Pennsylvania's development initiatives were aimed at building out," he said. "That resulted in sprawl, the loss of rural land and environmental resources, and the hollowing out and decline of many of our state's historic smaller communities and city centers. Now, thanks to programs such as the Main Street and Elm Street initiatives, and a new emphasis on smarter growth, state government is once again paying attention to its established downtowns and the historic business and residential districts that still have much to offer economically and socially."

As a capstone, Tangretti said he hopes to see legislation pass in the near future that would provide state tax credits or grants to businesses and residents that restore and occupy historically significant properties in Pennsylvania's older communities.

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"I truly believe this legislation is a key component of our state's economic development and community revitalization future," said Tangretti, who has introduced the legislation in several sessions.

Tangretti said he would also continue working, even after he leaves office, to bring reliable commuter rail service to Westmoreland County that would help thousands of residents who travel to and from Pittsburgh every day bypass the traffic nightmare they endure, and reduce congestion and pollution in the region.

"This is an initiative that is extremely important to me, not just as a state legislator but as a resident of Westmoreland County and as someone who cares about our communities, our quality of life, and the future of our environment," he said. "Even after I leave office, I will continue to serve on the Westmoreland County Transit Authority and work hard to make daily commuter rail service from Westmoreland County to Pittsburgh and beyond a reality."

Tangretti said he also is proud of legislation he sponsored that was signed into law last session that increases life insurance benefits for the families of Pennsylvania service members killed in the war on terrorism and other active-duty assignments.

Tangretti said the most disappointing event of his 20 years in office was the 2005 legislative pay raise. Tangretti voted against the pay raise and led efforts by several legislators to repeal the raise. He called the pay raise vote and its aftermath a "debacle."

"The pay raise lowered many Pennsylvanians' respect for the legislature and shredded its dignity and credibility," he said. "It truly saddened me, and I felt a strong need to challenge the institutional environment that led to the pay raise vote. As predicted, the pay raise and other related issues have resulted in a reform movement both inside and outside of the legislature, a reform movement I hope will grow and eventually succeed in making the General Assembly a more responsible, accountable and effective institution."

Tangretti said the Speaker's Commission on Legislative Reform, of which he is a member, has already moved the process forward by suggesting many legislative reforms, a number of which were adopted by the House earlier this year.

"The efforts of the commission should lead to even wider reforms on issues such as open records, campaign finance, reapportionment and even perhaps a constitutional convention to consider things like term limits, the size of the legislature and legislative and judicial compensation."

Still, Tangretti said he has no regrets about his time in the General Assembly.

"It has been a tremendous honor for me to be involved in the legislative process and with the people who make that process possible," he said. "Although democracy at times isn't pretty, it is also still the truest reflection -- and the best servant -- of the people it represents."

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October 30, 2007

*Honorable Tom Tangretti
328 Irvis Office Building*

Dear Tom,

*Thank you so much for placing your ad in the Italian
Heritage Society Awards Dinner booklet. Not only was I
proud to receive the honor but happy to see your personal
congratulations.*

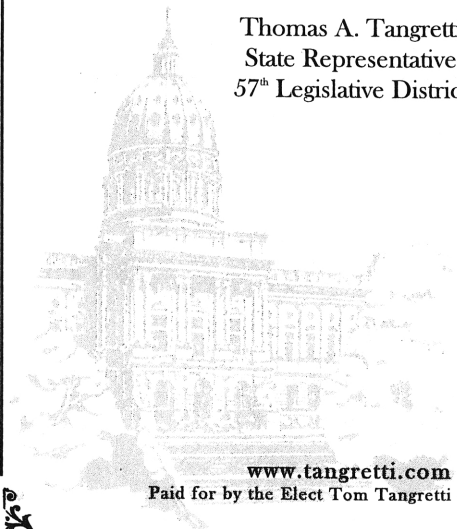
Thanks again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paulie".

Congratulations to my friend Rep. Paul Costa!

Thomas A. Tangretti
State Representative
57th Legislative District



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

State Rep. Tom Tangretti
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House open records bill includes Tangretti amendment

Change moves public records office from DCED to State Ethics Commission

HARRISBURG, Dec. 10 – Open records legislation debated by the House today and ready for a final vote later this week includes an amendment introduced by state Rep. Tom Tangretti that would establish a new Public Records Office in the State Ethics Commission to help Pennsylvania residents gain access to public records and appeal decisions by state and local agencies denying access to records.

The legislation, a House-amended version of a Senate bill that passed earlier this month (S.B. 1), would, for the first time, place a presumption in state law that the records of all three branches of government at both the state and local level are public. It also exempts fewer records than the original Senate version.

As originally drafted, the main portion of the legislation would have created a public records clearinghouse within the state Department of Community and Economic Development to facilitate access to public records. The director of the clearinghouse would have been appointed by the governor.

Instead, Tangretti's amendment would create an Office of Public Records with an executive director appointed by the independent State Ethics Commission.

"A state office charged with facilitating public records requests and resolving public records disputes should be as independent as possible," Tangretti said. "Placing this office under the direction of the State Ethics Commission instead of DCED removes the potential for its decisions and policies to be influenced by the administration."

Tangretti said the Ethics Commission would have time to prepare for its new open records responsibilities should the bill become law because the measure would not take effect for another year.

Legislators in the House and Senate are aiming to get open records legislation passed and to the governor's desk before the end of the year.

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