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RELEASE



**Pennsylvania
House of Representatives**

**Rep. Tom Scrimenti
D-Erie**

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Eighth term begins for Scrimenti

Harrisburg, Jan. 8 – Constituent service tops his list of priorities, state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, said today after taking the oath of office Tuesday for his eighth term representing the 4th Legislative District.

The swearing-in ceremony at the state Capitol marked the beginning of the 187th session of the General Assembly.

Scrimenti was first elected to the position in 1989 and said he will continue to work to meet the needs of the people he represents.

“I plan to focus on affordable prescription drugs for seniors as well as ways to alleviate the property tax burden on working families,” Scrimenti said. “The upcoming session promises to be a very busy one.”

Scrimenti stressed that constituent service is an important aspect of his career. He encourages any constituent with a question or concern relating to state government to stop by his North East office at 9 W. Main St. or to call at 814-725-8664.

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Northwest Caucus

**Scrimenti named vice chair of Democratic
Agriculture committee**

Harrisburg, Jan. 28 – In addition to serving on ^{two} ~~three~~ House Democratic committees, state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, was appointed vice chairman of the Democratic Agriculture and Rural Affairs ~~committee~~ ^{Rural Affairs committee} for the 2003-04 legislative session.

Scrimenti was also named to the Aging & Older Adult Services, ~~Commerce~~, and Professional Licensure committees.

"I am excited about my new position as vice chairman for the committee dealing with Pennsylvania's top industry," Scrimenti said. "This new responsibility will also be a direct benefit for my constituents because the committee deals with legislation affecting rural areas and a portion of my district falls into that category."

His membership on the other ² ~~three~~ committees will also be helpful where his constituents are concerned, Scrimenti said.

"I expect do deal with issues ranging from prescription drug assistance for seniors to preventing identity theft in these committees," Scrimenti said. "We have a lot of important matters to tackle and I look forward to continuing my work for the people of my district and Pennsylvania."

Scrimenti's duties will also include membership in the Northwest Caucus where he and legislators from the surrounding area will collaborate on legislation and issues that directly affect northwest Pennsylvania.

House Democratic leaders named the committee appointments this week.

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**The Plan for a
New PA has
three funds:**

- Early Childhood Education Fund – 54% of funding
- Student Achievement Fund – 42% of funding
- Rewarding Results Fund – 4% of funding

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**Pennsylvania
House of Representatives****Scrimenti attends Rendell education summit**

Harrisburg, April 15 – Under Gov. Ed Rendell's education proposals in his Plan for a New Pennsylvania, the school districts that state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, represents would receive about \$4 million in additional funding in the first year of the program.

Scrimenti was among nearly 300 policymakers and educators who attended Rendell's education summit on Monday, in an effort to learn more about the governor's plan for education and how it would affect the 4th Legislative District and its taxpayers.

"I do believe that our educational system needs real change in order to ensure a positive future for all Pennsylvanians," Scrimenti said. "Governor Rendell's education proposal incorporates some proven strategies for improvement as well as innovative methods to help schools succeed in properly educating all children."

The summit in Harrisburg allowed Rendell and his Department of Education secretary to outline the plan and answer questions from those in attendance.

Rendell's proposal calls for full-day kindergarten, tutoring for struggling students and smaller class sizes for kindergarten through third grade in all of Pennsylvania's 501 school districts. Competitive grants would also be available to all districts as well as recognition in the form of performance awards, improvement grants and distinguished educator awards.

In just the first year of this three-year program, the Corry Area School District in Erie County would receive \$1,483,323.00 in new education funds from the Governor's plan. Union City Area School District would receive \$834,510.

With these funds, Scrimenti said his school districts will be able to offer pre-kindergarten for four-year-olds, full-day kindergarten, reduced class sizes or increased teacher to student ratios for kindergartens through third grades. Funds would also be made available, under the Rendell plan, for increased teacher training, tutoring and recruitment of high school math and science teachers.

“Undoubtedly this targeted funding would be a big help to all of the school districts I represent and there is no question that the strategic investments would help to improve basic education in Pennsylvania,” Scrimenti said. “The challenge for Governor Rendell is to assure state taxpayers that this plan is worth their investments.”

The entire plan is available online through Pennsylvania’s homepage at www.state.pa.us, Scrimenti said. There is even a place where users can input their income and property tax information and find out how the plan would affect them directly.

“The General Assembly and Pennsylvania taxpayers should look carefully at this plan and consider whether it is what is best for our Commonwealth and our children,” Scrimenti said. “I encourage my constituents to inform themselves on the subject and contact my constituent service office with comments or questions.”

Scrimenti’s North East office is at 9 W. Main St. and the phone number is 814-725-8664.

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**Rendell asks Scrimenti to sponsor bill to boost
state tourism, agriculture**

Harrisburg, May 8 – State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, recently introduced legislation based on an initiative in the economic growth portion of Gov. Ed Rendell's proposed Plan for a New Pennsylvania.

Scrimenti's bill (H.B. 1317) would create the Pennsylvania First Industries Program, designed to boost the state's top two industries by providing low-interest loan financing for tourism and agriculture.

"Investing in agriculture is one of the wisest decisions we can make to ensure success in Pennsylvania's future," Scrimenti said. "Additionally, we want to take advantage of all that Pennsylvania has to offer visitors and offer an incentive for businesses to promote tourism."

The bill would commit \$100 million to the program, with a nine-member committee authorizing all loans, Scrimenti said.

"Despite the importance of these two industries, neither is currently eligible for many funding sources," Scrimenti said. "By earmarking funding specifically for the promotion and expansion of tourism and agriculture, we know that we are making a sound investment."

Rendell included the program among his economic plan for Pennsylvania. Scrimenti said the plan offers some exciting changes for the Commonwealth and that he is pleased to have a part in the governor's vision.

"I wanted Tom Scrimenti to spearhead this legislation because during his years as a state representative, he has consistently exalted the virtues of Erie County's tourism and agriculture fields," Rendell said. "Representative Scrimenti knows the large significance that these two industries play in our state's economy and he knows that this type of legislation is necessary to keep them thriving."

The bill was referred to the House Finance Committee.

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Scrimenti supports summer jobless benefits

Harrisburg, May 12 – State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, is co-sponsoring a bill that would allow school bus drivers and other school support workers to be eligible to apply for unemployment compensation during the summer.

House Bill 1155 would allow non-contract employees to collect unemployment while in between academic years, Scrimenti said. Employees such as janitors, cafeteria workers and crossing guards do not have the financial stability of teachers, who receive a salary structure with built-in summer payments.

“These individuals work hard to provide a vast array of services from the time students leave their homes until their point of return home – this includes everyone from school bus drivers to teachers’ aides and the like,” Scrimenti said. “I see no reason why they should be denied pay during June, July and August just because they do not have a year-long contract with a school or college.”

Unemployment claims by employees at public and private schools are usually denied because the individual will be returning to work at the end of the vacation period, Scrimenti said. Additionally, employers are often unwilling to hire employees for only three months.

“This is a very difficult economic period for Pennsylvania and most of the nation,” Scrimenti said. “School employees, just like everyone else, are struggling to make ends meet and that task is nearly impossible without a paycheck for three months.”

A portion of these school employees’ paychecks goes into the unemployment system just like everyone else, Scrimenti added. There is no reason why they are expected to pay into the system but unable to benefit from it.

The bill is currently being considered in the House Labor Relations Committee.

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Scrimenti: driver services available through office

Harrisburg, May 16 – State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, said area residents should visit his constituent service offices in North East, Corry or Union City with any problem or question they have related to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, including assistance with routine license and registration applications.

“PennDOT forms and procedures often can be confusing, and something as simple as a missing signature can render an application incomplete,” Scrimenti said. “Getting help through my office ensures that applications will not be rejected because they are not completed properly.”

Scrimenti said that one area of confusion for many drivers involves suspended licenses. He said many drivers do not realize that if their license is suspended, they do not begin serving the suspension until their license is actually surrendered and sent to PennDOT.

“Drivers who surrendered their licenses to police or the court should be sure to get a dated receipt,” Scrimenti said. “That way, the suspension can begin on that date.”

Scrimenti also wants drivers to remember that if they lapse or cancel their insurance coverage for a vehicle, the vehicle’s plate must be surrendered to PennDOT.

“Drivers can also use my offices to surrender vehicle plates,” Scrimenti said. “Visiting my office for any PennDOT business ensures that it will be done correctly and it will save drivers time and effort.”

Scrimenti’s North East office is at 9 W. Main St.; the phone number is 725-8664. The Corry office is at 202 N. Center St.; the number is 664-9126. He also operates an office from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at the Northeast Savings Bank, 22 N. Main St., in Union City.

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TAA funding concerns Scrimenti

Harrisburg, June 2 – State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, today said that he is monitoring the situation regarding the state's management of federal funding for jobless assistance, which could affect Erie County workers laid off because of foreign imports.

Scrimenti said that the state may have spent more funding than it actually received from the federal government for two national programs designed to educate, train and employ workers who lost their jobs because of imports. That overspending makes the total deficit for the programs about \$29 million. The problem, Scrimenti said, dates back to the previous administration.

"Many other states are also experiencing shortfalls in funding these programs because unemployment is up and the economy is experiencing problems," Scrimenti said. "However, it may be determined that Pennsylvania's situation is different if the Ridge/Schweiker administration mishandled the funds and knowingly enrolled people in training when the funds were not available."

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) funding comes from the federal government and Pennsylvania uses it to help retrain and employ displaced workers who became unemployed due to foreign imports or whose work hours and wages decreased because of increased imports.

Last year, thousands of Pennsylvanians relied on training through TAA, and because so many people in Erie County and statewide are losing their jobs, Scrimenti said he is concerned that these programs will not be operating, leaving many of them helpless.

"Pennsylvania received almost \$14 million less from the government this year than what was spent on this program," Scrimenti said. "That means funds are exhausted and anyone else who loses their job from this point through the rest of the year will not be able to get the assistance they need to get back on their feet."

- more -

Erie County's unemployment rate hit 8.8 percent in February - its highest level in 11 years, Scrimenti said. In March, the number dropped slightly to 7.9 percent. However, as Scrimenti pointed out, that figure is still more than both the national and state rates.

"This region relies heavily on its manufacturing industries, the very industries being negatively impacted by increasing foreign imports," Scrimenti said. "I don't want to see workers who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own punished a second time by losing their financial assistance."

As of March 24, the state has delayed further TAA training until the problem is thoroughly investigated and brought to some sort of resolution.

"This is a situation that I will continue to monitor very carefully because I know that Erie County residents are affected by its outcome," Scrimenti said. "Lay-offs are devastating to individuals, families and communities."

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Child day-care safety gets Scrimenti's vote

Harrisburg, June 4 – Every child deserves a safe start in life, and legislation state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, voted for Tuesday would advance child safety in Pennsylvania.

Legislation (H.B. 19) that passed the House Tuesday would require the Department of Public Welfare to conduct unannounced inspections of child day-care centers and family child-care homes, including those with seven or fewer children.

“Statistics tell us that about 70 percent of all parents use day-care facilities for their children, so we should be doing something to ensure the safety and well-being of all of those children,” Scrimenti said. “Parents should be able to feel OK about leaving their children in a registered facility.”

The legislation would require DPW to conduct annual unannounced inspections of facilities with more than seven children and unannounced inspections of at least 25 percent of all registered family day-care homes – private homes where between four and six children are in someone's care.

Currently, family day-care homes are not subject to annual inspections, but are inspected on a random-sample basis and receive an unannounced inspection in response to a complaint.

The department would have the right to inspect any child day-care center or family day-care home with or without notice, with free access to records and the opportunity to interview children and staff privately.

Finally, under the legislation, DPW would be required to conduct an unannounced inspection of any type of child-care facility within 24 hours of receiving a complaint involving an immediate or serious risk to a child's health or safety.

As amended, the legislation also would require criminal and child-abuse background checks of prospective child-care personnel. Additionally, it would require similar background checks of anyone 18 or older who lives in a home where children are being taken care of.

“Through this legislation, we would be able to establish proper monitoring procedures to ensure that quality child day care is the rule everywhere children are being cared for outside the home,” Scrimenti said.

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**Scrimenti seeks northwestern Pa. member for
tourism board**

Harrisburg, June 27 – State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, has written to Gov. Ed Rendell requesting that a state travel and tourism board that advises the governor on tourism issues and reviews the state's tourism and marketing plans include representation from the northwestern part of the state.

"I've offered to work with the governor to ensure that the Erie region – which includes historically and economically significant travel destinations – is represented in the effort to further advance what has become a leading industry in Pennsylvania," Scrimenti said. "I'm pleased to see this administration placing a priority on travel and tourism in Pennsylvania, and I want to make sure Erie and its surrounding counties play an important role in that initiative."

The 34-member Travel and Tourism Partnership includes the secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development, the majority and minority chairmen of the House and Senate committees that oversee tourism in the legislature or their appointees, and various members appointed by the governor.

Scrimenti said he believes it is essential for the board to include representation from the Erie region.

"Tourism is the second-leading industry in Erie County and the region is home to many of the state's most important tourist draws," Scrimenti said. "From its renowned vineyards, to its historic sights like *the U.S.S. Niagara*, to its recreational destinations like Presque Isle, the Erie region is one of the top destinations in Pennsylvania and a huge contributor to the state's overall tourism industry."

Scrimenti is the senior-most legislator in the Erie County delegation to the House of Representatives, and is the prime sponsor of the Pennsylvania First Industries Program legislation, a key part of the governor's economic development plan for Pennsylvania.

"Travel and tourism is a major part of that plan, and promoting the travel and tourism destinations in this region of the state is vital," he said. "I believe it is imperative to have a representative from our region on the state board that is advising the governor on this issue and helping to develop Pennsylvania's overall travel and tourism promotion effort."

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