

1993

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: William D. Hunter (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, Jan. 7 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, today opened the new legislative session with a decision to continue constituent services every Tuesday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Summit Township Building Community Room.

Scrimenti began the outreach service at 8900 Old French Road last year.

"This satellite venue allows me to bring my office services closer to people in the outlying areas of the district," he said. "Summit Township is a new addition to the 4th District, following reapportionment, and I am striving to make them aware of what my office can do for residents. Thus far it has been quite successful."

In addition to meetings with the representative, constituents can also bring PennDOT, notary and senior citizen inquiries to the site.

###wdh

R:oreach.004

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**CONTACT:** William Hunter (717) 787-7895

HARRISBURG, Jan. 11 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, will be at the Giant Eagle supermarket at 4400 Buffalo Road in Harborcreek this Friday to assist constituents with state-related problems.

Scrimenti and his staff will be there from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15.

The legislator has maintained the outreach office in the community for more than two years.

"Especially during the winter months, not everyone can make it to my full-time offices," he said. "The outreach office is an attempt to make things more convenient for those people and for the ones who cannot contact me during regular office hours."

Scrimenti and his staff will assist people with any state-related concerns, including PennDOT and senior citizen work.

###wdh

R:oreach2.004

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**CONTACT: William D. Hunter (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, Jan. 25 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, renowned in the state Capitol for his staunch support of legislative reform measures, announced today he will co-sponsor a resolution designed to cut costs incurred by members of the state House of Representatives.

Scrimenti will co-sponsor a three-part legislative package authored by Rep. Robert O'Donnell, D-Phila.

The resolution will include a call for creation of a bipartisan commission to study the operation and management of the House and make recommendations on ways to reduce expenditures; prohibit members from receiving a full per diem without proof of an overnight stay and limit air travel; and change to a fleet auto leasing program through the Department of General Services.

"My support of these measures is consistent with my intentions throughout my tenure in Harrisburg," Scrimenti said. "I am clearly in favor of cutbacks in legislative spending. We must be frugal in such recessive economic times. These initiatives should allow money to be cut from the House appropriation and reassigned to areas such as education and community services, which are in need of additional funding."

Scrimenti has earned a reputation of reform by continuing to return the 1987 legislative pay raise to his district. Scrimenti was elected in 1988, after the creation of the increase.

###wdh

r:reform.004

FEB 05 1993

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**CONTACT: Yvonne Simmeth (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, Feb. 3 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, won support for his position Tuesday as the House agreed to examine its procedural and spending practices.

Scrimenti is one of 13 House Democrats who have pushed in recent weeks for reforms to House rules to cut back on so-called perks and give rank-and-file members more chance to participate in legislative debate.

"I view the vote by the House today to examine its procedures as a victory for my push to reform the way we govern ourselves and the state," Scrimenti said. "The House needs to open itself up to the views of the rank and file and the action today signifies that this will indeed occur."

Under the House-approved resolution, the temporary rules adopted when the House returned to session in January will be extended to March 31. A committee of five Democrats and four Republicans, with the majority and minority leaders serving as non-voting members, will review the House rules and report its findings by March 15.

Further, the Bipartisan Management Committee will study House spending practices and report in September on how the House can operate in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

The plan adopted by the House contains some recommendations that Scrimenti co-sponsored in a resolution with Rep. Robert O'Donnell, D-Phila.

The resolution included a call for creating the bipartisan commission to study the operation and management of the House and make recommendations on ways to reduce expenditures.

The resolution also would prohibit members from receiving a full per diem without proof of an overnight stay, limit air travel and change to a fleet auto leasing program through the Department of General Services.

"I would hope that the special panel developed to study the rules

and perks considers what we have proposed," Scrimenti said. "There is no question that we must cut legislative spending, particularly considering the state of the economy. Quite simply, this money can be better spent elsewhere."

Scrimenti won early recognition for legislative reforms as he returned to the district a 1987 legislative pay raise. Scrimenti was elected in 1988, after the creation of the increase.

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**CONTACT: *Angelia L. Follett (717) 787-7895***

HARRISBURG, March 22 -- Because of complaints from constituents, Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, introduced legislation today to outlaw the use of automobile stereos at extremely high volumes.

The legislator said he received complaints from area residents that cars and trucks were driving through their neighborhoods at all times of the day and night with car stereos so loud that the music could be heard indoors.

"Not only is it rude to drive through residential areas with a blasting car stereo but I don't see how the driver of that car or truck could hear an emergency vehicle," remarked Scrimenti. "That has to be a concern -- these drivers could put themselves and others in danger simply because they cannot hear emergency sirens."

The measure targets any vehicle amplification system that can be heard outside the vehicle at a distance of 50 feet or more when the vehicle is driven on a street or highway. Systems being used to request assistance or to warn of hazardous roadways are exempt from the legislation. Emergency, government and utility company vehicles and vehicles being used in parades and other public events also are exempt.

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r:stereos.004

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HARRISBURG, April 26 -- Legislation was introduced last week to strengthen the law prohibiting a classic advertising method to get customers into a store.

Under legislation co-sponsored by Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, advertisers would be required to include the exact number of items available if an item is being specially advertised.

Attracting customers to the store for a particular sale item, telling them the item is sold out and selling them another higher priced item is a classic "bait-and-switch" advertising method. Officials at the state Attorney General's office say this is a historical advertising practice but has not been as prevalent lately because of federal and state laws banning the practice.

"This measure gives the law some bite. Although the current law has helped to deter businesses from using the 'bait and switch,' we've had complaints that the practice still continues," said Scrimenti. "Taking advantage of customers like that is disgraceful, especially in an economy where every penny counts."

The current law states that "advertising goods or services with intent not to supply reasonably expectable public demand unless the advertisement discloses limitation of quantity" is unfair competition.

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r:bait.004

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HARRISBURG, May 5 -- Pennsylvania does not need so many state legislators. That's the gist of a measure introduced this week by state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie.

"We could perform our business just as easily with fewer legislators. I suggest that we combine a few districts and drop about 50 representatives from the state House," said Scrimenti. "The cost savings alone from lessening the number of representatives makes the measure worthy of serious consideration."

The joint resolution would amend the state Constitution to maintain the 50 senatorial districts and reduce the House districts from 203 to 149. Reapportionment would have to be completed by January 2002; the changes would take effect beginning December 1, 2002.

"We need to take another look at Pennsylvania government. It has grown to the point where Pennsylvania has one of the largest state legislatures in the United States," Scrimenti added. "We shouldn't avoid re-evaluating our system of doing business simply because it gets the job done."

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r:leg.004

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**CONTACT: Angelia L. Halaja (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, June 15 -- The state House today passed 192-10 a measure that would allow smaller Pennsylvania wineries to sell their wines off licensed premises, announced Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, the bill's prime sponsor.

"I've always been a strong supporter of Pennsylvania's wineries. They bring revenue and many jobs to our region," Scrimenti said. "My bill would give wineries more latitude to promote and sell Pennsylvania wine."

The legislation (H.B. 1462) would allow certain wineries to apply for a special permit to publicize and sell their products at food expositions, fairs, and any similar type of festival. First-time applicants would be charged \$85 a day up to five days for the permit. After the initial application, permits would be available for \$30 a day up to five days. The permits only would be available to wineries that produce less than 200,000 gallons of wine and wine coolers yearly from fruits grown in Pennsylvania.

"This very simply gives them more opportunities to sell their products. With all they do for our state, I think we should help make it a little easier for them to do business," Scrimenti said. "I hope the measure gets the same support from the Senate."

##ah/kmv

r:wine.004

JUN 18 1993

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**CONTACT: *Angelia L. Halaja (717) 787-7895***

HARRISBURG, June 17 -- To help put them on their way to a national competition, state Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, made a donation toward traveling expenses for members of the North East High School Future Homemakers of America.

The \$250 donation comes from Scrimenti's Community Account, funded by the legislator's salary. More than \$33,000 in donations have been made since the account was opened in 1989 when Scrimenti was first elected.

The group recently competed at the State Leadership Conference in Lancaster. A few members came away with excellent scores, sending them to the national competition in Anaheim, Calif., July 11-15 as members of the Pennsylvania National Team. Their chapter was honored for outstanding community service.

"Ever since I devised the account, it has been my good fortune to be asked to participate in scores of worthy and admirable community projects," Scrimenti said in his letter to the group. "Our area is truly blessed with a charitable spirit. Your request is one such program, and I am honored to be included in your plans."

###ah/y

r:home.004

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HARRISBURG, July 27 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, has made a donation from his Community Account to the Corry YMCA.

"The Corry YMCA has made lasting contributions to our community," said Scrimenti. "The YMCA is a valued member of Corry, and the town just wouldn't be the same without their efforts."

According to Chip Williams, YMCA executive director, the \$300 donation was used to purchase a head and neck immobilizer and a backboard, which is equipment used to help transport accident victims at the swimming pool.

The Community Account is funded through the legislator's salary and over the past five years has been the source of more than \$33,000 in donations to area organizations.

###ah/y

r:donate1.004

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**CONTACT: Angelia L. Halaja (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, Aug. 3 -- Everyone giving testimony at a public hearing held Tuesday in downtown Erie gave their support to a four-bill package of legislation aimed at helping lower- and middle-income first-time home buyers.

Six Erie-area housing experts testified before members of the House Business and Economic Development Committee, which is traveling around the state this summer in consideration of the bills.

"Young families are finding it increasingly difficult to purchase a home of their own. Upfront cash requirements, such as downpayments, are the No. 1 barrier," Rep. Tom Scrimenti, host of the public hearing, said in his opening remarks. "And it's not enough to just say, 'save more.' These young people are able to pay their bills and would be able to make a monthly mortgage payment. It's time that we investigate methods to assist our state's would-be home buyers."

The package includes the proposed Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act (H.B. 2942) which would create a revolving loan program to help first-time home buyers pay upfront costs or obtain a better interest rate. Funding for the loan program would be provided by a \$10 surcharge on documents registered with the recorder of deeds in each county, eliminating the need for state monies. The surcharge is estimated to raise at least \$22 million annually.

The second major bill in the package, the Home Mortgage Insurance Program, (H.B. 2943) would provide mortgage insurance for 100 percent financing, allowing a home buyer to not need a down payment by providing

- more -

for 100 percent financing.

Two other measures (H.B.s 2944 and 2945) would exempt homeowners from the state's 1 percent portion of the 2 percent realty transfer tax under certain conditions.

Charles Scalise, executive director of the Housing and Neighborhood Development Service, said that Erie is experiencing a decrease in home ownership but an increase in multi-family rentals and that the lack of single-family units helps the deterioration of neighborhoods.

Several who testified also pointed out that a provision providing for home ownership counseling is very important. One individual said that many people just don't know that their mortgage must be the first bill paid every month.

That counseling would be provided through existing housing agencies, including nonprofits and state agencies, and would not require the formation of additional organizations, according to committee Chairman Victor Lescovitz, D-Washington/Beaver.

"I extended the invitation for the committee to visit Erie and was very pleased when Chairman Lescovitz accepted," said Scrimenti, D-Erie. "So often, committees hold hearings in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, excluding the vital interests of other communities. I believe that the Erie region's concerns are important in the committee's consideration of such significant legislation, and I was proud of the level of participation we received and the interest shown by the people of this area."

###ah/k

r:hearing2.004

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**CONTACT: *Angelia L. Halaja* (717) 787-7895**

HARRISBURG, Sept. 10 -- Several state officials including state Treasurer Catherine Baker Knoll formally announced a program this week that will allow Pennsylvanians to pre-pay their college tuition, according to Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie.

The Pennsylvania Tuition Account Program allows individuals to purchase college tuition credits for use later. The credits are good at any participating college or university, including all 14 universities of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

"This is an ideal program to help parents prepare for their children's education," said Scrimenti, a member of the Tuition Account Program Advisory Board. "From the time your child is born, tuition prices could double or even triple by the time your child is ready for college. Parents can save themselves a substantial amount of money by buying credits now. The program is also incredibly flexible."

Aside from a required nominal purchase, the program allows individuals to purchase any amount of credits whenever they are able. The credits also are good at any post-secondary school that participates in the program, including accredited art, trade and culinary schools.

Individuals can purchase credits for themselves or a beneficiary. Businesses or any legal organization also are eligible to enroll in the program. For example, a business can allow employees to purchase credits through payroll deduction.

"This is a unique program that has the ability to change the way we purchase college tuition," said Scrimenti. "The program could save parents a lot of money in preparing for their children's education."

Anyone interested in the program can contact Scrimenti's district offices in North East or Corry.

###ah/b

r:tuition.004

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HARRISBURG, Oct. 5 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, has introduced legislation that would allow more veterans and college graduates to join the Pennsylvania State Police.

"By increasing the upper age limit for applicants from age 30 to age 34, we're not forcing young adults to choose between having a career in law enforcement and serving the country or earning a four-year college degree," said Scrimenti. "We should always be looking for ways to improve the quality of our State Police force and this is one way to do just that."

His bill (H.B. 2109) would simply increase the age limit to 34. Scrimenti said a letter from a constituent prompted him to draft the legislation.

"Earlier this year, I received a letter from one of my constituents currently serving with the Navy in Pensacola, Fla., where he is considering terminating his active duty in early 1994 and pursuing a career with the Pennsylvania State Police," the legislator said. "Much to his dismay, he was told that at 30 years old he is considered too old for our State Police Academy, although he is in top physical condition.

"It appears arbitrary to exclude excellent candidates like this young man from applying to the academy just on the basis of his age," Scrimenti added.

The three-term legislator noted that he expects the measure to be referred to the House State Government Committee.

###ah/b

r:police.004

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HARRISBURG, Oct. 8 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, has introduced legislation to give consumers more information about the prescription drugs that they take.

"It's unacceptable that individuals can be harmed by medications designed to heal them because prescription information isn't being disclosed," said Scrimenti. "We need to give people complete information to use prescription drugs correctly. This is particularly important for senior citizens, many of whom take a number of prescription drugs."

House Bill 2108 would require prescription drugs to be accompanied with a prescription advisory fact sheet, an easily read and boldly printed fact sheet listing the name of the drug and its side effects, adverse interactions with other substances, proper storage and other general information.

"With the number of prescription drugs in use, consumers need to be aware of the full effects of the drugs they are taking," said Scrimenti. "Although some pharmacies do provide such information, we need to ensure that everyone is receiving complete information about any medication they may be taking."

"All pharmacies need to accept the responsibility to relay the existing wealth of prescription information to consumers," he added.

###ah/y

r:drug.004

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HARRISBURG, Nov. 30 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, has received assurances from the Department of Environmental Resources that the health and safety of North East residents are not at risk in regard to the environmental cleanup of the abandoned Pennzoil site on Smedley Street.

"I was immediately concerned when I learned that Pennzoil was cleaning up a contaminated site that had been abandoned for ten years and made no mention as to any threat to the health of North East residents," Scrimenti said. "I wanted to be certain that petroleum contaminants were not poisoning our drinking water.

"DER has assured me that this is a routine cleanup, and the project will not threaten the health of residents or the availability of clean water."

According to Kenneth Young, DER's Northwest region oil and gas manager, a contractor will clean up gas and diesel fuel at the former Pennzoil distribution center. The contamination is not extensive and cleanup will only have to be conducted at the site. Soil contamination is limited and any contaminated soil will be treated and left on-site.

DER also will treat contaminated groundwater on-site using carbon filtration to remove pollutants and purify the water. After decontamination, the water will be monitored for any recontamination. Hazardous materials will be transported off-site for treatment and proper disposal.

"Any environmental cleanup requires a thorough examination of possible exposure of both wildlife and humans to hazardous materials. I thought it was important to know for certain that the cleanup poses no threat to the community," added Scrimenti. "I wanted to be sure that everything was OK."

###ah/b

r:cleanup.004

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HARRISBURG, Dec. 22 -- State Rep. Tom Scrimenti, D-Erie, not only has donated \$400 to the Summit Township Food Pantry, but he also will participate in the charity's Christmas Food Distribution Thursday morning.

"The holidays are a very important time of the year for the pantry, and I'm happy to make a financial donation," said Scrimenti. "However, the most rewarding part of my donation is the time I spend working with the people. Although monetary donations are essential, I don't think people realize the importance of giving their time."

Scrimenti made the donation from his Community Account, which is funded by the legislator's salary and has resulted in nearly \$35,000 in donations since Scrimenti was first elected in 1987. The food distribution will take place from 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 23 at the Summit United Methodist Church.

The food pantry offers food to eligible Summit Township residents and is administered by the Summit Township Methodist Church, St. Matthew-in-the-Woods Catholic Church and the Summit Lions and Lioness clubs. In addition to the food distribution, the food pantry donates gifts of toys and clothing to area children.

"Around the holidays, we're reminded more often of how important it is to give, but we must remember that organizations like the Summit Community Food Pantry depend on our generosity all year round," Scrimenti said. "I encourage everyone to remember friends and neighbors who are less fortunate than themselves, and to give generously all year."

###ah/b

r:food.004