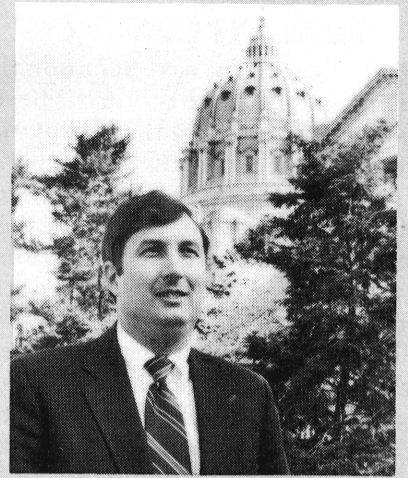


Questionnaire

from

Rep. PAUL SEMMEL

Harrisburg Office:
Box 162,
Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Paula Hand—Administrative Assistant



Dear Friends,

Winter 1986

We are halfway through this legislative session and to date there have been over 3,000 bills introduced into the General Assembly. A lot was accomplished in 1985 including lowering the state personal income tax, increasing school subsidies and passing legislation dealing with sensitive family issues.

Many important issues remain unresolved, including the current crisis that local municipalities are experiencing concerning the lack of available liability insurance. On a related subject, health care cost containment also continues to be a subject under close scrutiny, because of the spiraling costs of health care throughout the country.

Once again this year I have included a questionnaire and I hope that you will be able to make some time available to answer the questions and make your opinions known to me. I consider your input very important and you can be assured that I take residents' concerns into account when voting as your state representative in Harrisburg. I have also included three questions dealing with federal issues. I'm interested in your opinions about the federal budget, and I will pass along the results of these questions to our area Congressmen.

Also take a minute to read the insert if you want to be part of "Outreach," a program that I'm developing that will enable me to provide information to individuals expressing an interest on a particular topic.

If you need help with a state-related problem or would like to comment on a particular issue feel free to contact my office by phone, or by writing one of my three district offices throughout the 187th Legislative District. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Paul Semmel
Paul W. Semmel

QUESTIONNAIRE:

(Please use the enclosed card to record your answers to these questions and for any additional correspondence with my office.)

1. THE CRISIS CONTINUES...

This crisis of liability insurance is threatening all parts of our economy in Pennsylvania and throughout the entire country. The crisis is facing local municipalities, small businesses and is a direct contributing factor to the increased cost of medical care.

In some communities, liability policies have been cancelled, while others face skyrocketing rates and decreasing coverage. Several large insurance companies are not even accepting applications for policies.

In New Jersey, a \$15.6 million settlement was awarded by a Superior Court jury to plaintiffs whose drinking water had been polluted by a landfill owned by Jackson Township, New Jersey. This is the reason given by many insurance companies for either increasing rates, cancelling, or not accepting applications for liability insurance policies.

The crisis that is facing us now did not occur overnight. It has been developing for some time now, and there are a variety of reasons which are complex. The primary cause can be attributed to liberal court decisions resulting in large claim settlements. In 1981, there were 15 million civil suits filed. That was the last year with complete figures. In the last ten years cases filed in Federal Courts have more than doubled.

Legislation has been introduced to help ease the current crisis. The proposal would reduce a municipality's liability limit to \$250,000 in individual cases. This is the same limit that the Commonwealth has now. The present aggregate limit of \$500,000 would be allowed to continue at that level. An ad hoc committee is also investigating and will present its findings to the House upon its completion.

1. With so many lawsuits being filed against governmental bodies, another piece of legislation has been proposed to help local municipalities recover expenses incurred from lawsuits in which the courts determine that the municipality is immune or not liable. Under the bill, plaintiffs and their attorneys would be responsible for all municipal legal expenses and fees arising from such a suit.

Do you favor this proposal?

- A. YES
- B. NO

2. ATTEMPTS TO CONTAIN HEALTH CARE COSTS

Health care costs have been doubling every five years.

Fortunately, some action has been taken to slow this runaway expense and the rate of increase has declined over the past two years.

Two major factors contribute to health care cost: price and utilization. However, the problem does not lend itself to a "quick fix" solution. A multi-approach to the problem is necessary if we are going to solve the problem.

The solution must deal with preventive and educational programs, alternatives to hospitals and improving the efficiency of those institutions. Another item that must be considered is reducing the expansion of existing hospitals and duplicating services available.

Another aspect that must be considered when discussing this problem is health care that is being provided to those individuals with no insurance or other source of payment. This includes individuals without insurance, medicaid or medicare, those who have no income or job and those whose bills exceed the coverage that they have.

Finally, the malpractice insurance costs must be reduced. These costs are directly passed onto the consumers.

There are several pieces of legislation pending in the House Welfare Committee that would attempt to reduce the cost of health care in Pennsylvania.

2. Assuming that you support the Legislature's efforts to reduce Health Care Costs in Pennsylvania for statistical purposes only are you and your family currently covered by a health insurance plan?

- A. YES
- B. NO

2a. If yes, are you being provided health care by your employer, or purchasing it on your own?

- A. Employer
- B. Self
- C. Joint effort of employer and self
- D. Covered by spouse's plan

2b. Are you familiar with the term HMO — Health Maintenance Organization?

- A. YES
- B. NO

2c. If yes, does your health insurance plan offer this option?

- A. YES
- B. NO

3. THE FEDERAL BUDGET: BRINGING IT INTO BALANCE

Recently the president signed the Gramm-Rudman bill into law. This legislation is designed to balance the federal budget over a period of five years. However, once the problem is solved, then what will happen to keep the federal budget balanced?

Our nation's governors say the best way to put a stop to federal budget deficits is to require the federal government to balance its budget every year. They point out that most states have constitutions that require state governments to balance their budgets every year, and the U. S. Constitution could be amended to require the federal government to do the same. Such an amendment would have to first be proposed at a Constitutional Convention or by Congress, but, in the end, it would be the individual states that would decide whether a balanced budget amendment should be added to the U. S. Constitution.

Supporters of this idea think the federal government should not spend more than it has. The only way to make sure that it doesn't, they say, is to put a pro-

hibition against overspending by the federal government in the U. S. Constitution.

Others say a balanced budget amendment is not necessary or desirable. They argue that Congress can balance the federal budget right now if it wants to, and that a constitutional requirement that it balance the budget every year would result in drastic cuts in federal spending on defense and domestic programs.

3. Should the U. S. Constitution be amended to require federal balanced budgets, as Pennsylvania's is?

- A. YES
- B. NO

4. LINE-ITEM VETO: KEEPING IT IN BALANCE

Another suggestion made for reducing the federal government's budget deficit is to give the President the authority to reduce or eliminate spending on individual programs or "items" in the budgets approved by Congress. Many state constitutions give their governors this "line-item veto" power, but the U. S. Constitution would have to be amended to give this power to the President.

Those who think this amendment should be added to the U. S. Constitution say it would be an effective check on federal spending and a useful tool for reducing the federal budget deficit.

Those who oppose the idea say Congress should continue to have the final say on the level of spending by the federal government. According to them, the present balance of power between the President and Congress would be tipped in the President's favor if a Presidential line-item veto amendment is added to the U. S. Constitution.

4. Should the President have the power to eliminate specific expenditures listed in the federal budget?

- A. YES
- B. NO

5. SHOULD RANDOM ROAD CHECKS BE ALLOWED?

As part of Pennsylvania's increased effort to crack down on drunk drivers and reduce alcohol related auto accidents, police around the state have, at times, set up road checks to catch drunk drivers. The practice has increased drunk driving arrests, but it has also caused significant controversy. A recent Superior Court ruling said the current law is unconstitutional, appeals are pending.

Those who support random road checks say the practice is vital in combatting the life-threatening problem of drunk drivers. The road checks may be inconvenient to some motorists, but they help to keep drunks off the road and permit police to better enforce new drunk driving laws, supporters say.

Opponents of the practice say it is not only inconvenient, but a violation of their rights. They say police should have probable cause that a driver is intoxicated or has committed some other offense before stopping a vehicle. Stopping a motorist without suspicion of wrongdoing amounts to harassment and is a waste of police time that might better be spent pursuing criminal suspects, opponents claim.

5. Should random road checks be allowed?

- A. YES
- B. NO

6. BINDING ARBITRATION FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES?

The House overwhelming passed a proposal permitting the General Assembly to provide for binding arbitration on public employees' labor contracts. The bill is now before the Senate for their consideration.

The measure, an amendment to the state Constitution, must be adopted in its identical form by two consecutive sessions of the General Assembly and then be ratified by the voters of Pennsylvania.

This legislation would not mandate binding arbitration for all public employees. Rather, it gives the General Assembly authority to order binding arbitration for any or all classes of public employees. Presently, mandatory binding arbitration is permitted only for police and firemen.

If this proposal is accepted by the entire General Assembly and the voters it would give the Legislature the power to provide for binding arbitration in any case in which a problem has arisen.

Another part of the legislation would give the General Assembly flexibility when acting on enabling legislation to designate what type of arbitration be employed when it may be needed.

Others believe that it would subvert Act 195, which gives public employees the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike.

6. In your opinion, should the General Assembly have the power to provide for binding arbitration on public employees' labor contracts?

- A. YES
- B. NO

7. SHOULD TELEVISION ADS PROMOTING SMOKELESS TOBACCO BE BANNED?

A bill has passed the House, and has been sent to the Senate that would require the manufacturers of smokeless tobacco to place a warning label on packages. A companion resolution asking Congress to ban television commercials promoting the use of smokeless tobacco is also under consideration.

Under federal law, states are prohibited from regulating cigarette labeling or advertising. However the federal preemption rule does not apply to other forms of tobacco. Several other states have introduced similar legislation.

Proponents argue that because of the increase in the number of lung cancer deaths and the heightened awareness of the hazards of smoking, tobacco companies are promoting "chewing and dipping" as an acceptable alternative to smoking. They also argue a particular appeal is made to young people, because of the use of sports stars in promotions.

National studies have shown that smokeless tobacco presents definite health risks. People using these products face a greater risk of developing cancer of the oral cavity, pharynx, throat and esophagus.

Opponents believe that banning television ads would violate the first amendment of the U. S. Constitution allowing free speech.

They also argue that the states should not be involved in making laws that normally should be handled by the federal government.

Television stations would also be hurt immensely by the banning of advertisements promoting the use of smokeless tobacco.

7. Should Congress ban television advertisements promoting smokeless tobacco products?

- A. YES
- B. NO

8. WHAT SHOULD LAWMAKERS DO WITH THE EXPECTED SURPLUS?

Similar to last year, the state is facing an expected surplus in the General Fund. In your opinion, what should lawmakers do with the expected surplus?

- A. Cut the state personal income tax rate?
- B. Cut the state corporate income tax rate?
- C. Increase subsidies to school districts?
- D. Spend more money on economic development?
- E. Spend more money on social programs?

(Please use the enclosed card to record your answers to these questions and for any additional correspondence with my office.)



FAMILY ISSUES

It seems as though a day does not go by without a report about a missing child, a neglected child or a child abused. Some would call these children's issues. I believe they are "family issues" because they impact on all of us. I am proud to say that I have taken the following actions in support of our children and the many problems they face today.

I am a cosponsor of House Bill 98, recently signed into law by the governor, which would establish a wage attachment procedure to ensure that parents meet their financial obligations to support their offspring. The measure also would make changes in the awarding of spousal and child support to make support payments more uniform and fair.

I also support a proposal that would allow children who have been sexually molested to testify by way of videotape. Such a procedure would help to make an already dreadful situation less traumatic for young victims of sexual aggression.

In addition, I have joined the Bipartisan Legislative Children's Caucus of House and Senate legislators committed to reviewing the state's policies on children's issues to ensure that the special needs of children today are addressed.

The process for reporting missing children has been streamlined as a result of a new law passed by the General Assembly earlier this year. Under the measure, police are required to immediately file a missing person report when notified that a child is missing. The report is placed in a state information bank which will enable all law enforcement agencies and police departments in the state to be abreast of the latest missing children information.

1985 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

The results from my 1985 constituent survey to the 187th District were, once again, an excellent means of communicating with those I represent. We received approximately 1500 responses.

In order to let you know just where you stood with regard to the rest of the 187th District, I have included the 1985 Questionnaire results in this newsletter.

The results are most interesting. Moreover, they assist me in my efforts to better represent and reflect the concerns of the 187th District when I cast my vote in Harrisburg.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. How should Pennsylvania use its end-of-year Surplus?</p> <p>A. Reduce Personal Income Tax and establish a "rainy day fund" (45.4%)</p> <p>B. Establish a "sunny day" fund (26.1%)</p> <p>C. Increase aid to public schools (19.5%)</p> <p>D. Increase energy assistance (3.4%)</p> <p>E. Reduce corporate income tax (3.0%)</p> | <p>6. Would you sort cans/bottles and other recyclable materials?</p> <p>A. Yes (75.4%)</p> <p>B. Yes, with economic incentive (20.4%)</p> <p>C. No (3.9%)</p> |
| <p>2. What action should the General Assembly take in regard to seat belts?</p> <p>A. Enact a law mandating seat belts? (67.2%)</p> <p>B. Reject a mandatory law? (25.3%)</p> | <p>7. Should the General Assembly revise Local school tax laws?</p> <p>A. Yes, shift the burden from property owners to local wage taxes (31.7%)</p> <p>B. Yes, combination of property and wage tax (34.0%)</p> <p>C. Yes, shift burden from property tax to increased sales tax (10.1%)</p> <p>D. No (20.9%)</p> |
| <p>3. Should Pennsylvania legalize any other forms of gambling?</p> <p>A. No (55.7%)</p> <p>B. Yes (26.1%)</p> <p>C. Yes, electronic devices (16.8%)</p> | <p>8. Should the state establish a separate category of dangerous juvenile offenders and treat them differently?</p> <p>A. Yes (89.9%)</p> <p>B. No (7.8%)</p> |
| <p>4. What action should the General Assembly take this year relative to the LCB?</p> <p>A. Continue as is (22.4%)</p> <p>B. Transfer enforcement responsibility (19.8%)</p> <p>C. Abolish the LCB (55.7%)</p> | <p>9. What are Pennsylvania's most pressing problems?</p> <p>A. Inadequate roads (30.8%)</p> <p>B. Inflation (10.1%)</p> <p>C. Interference by government (12.3%)</p> <p>D. Substance abuse (38.3%)</p> <p>E. Taxes (25.2%)</p> <p>F. Unemployment (39.2%)</p> <p>G. Violent crime (30.6%)</p> |
| <p>5. Should the Legislature act to restrict smoking in public places?</p> <p>A. No (17.4%)</p> <p>B. Yes (45.9%)</p> <p>C. Yes, should have some facilities (36.6%)</p> | |

NEW DISTRICT AIDE AT KUTZTOWN



I would like to introduce a new district aide to you. Her name is Joy Adams and she is working in our Kutztown office. If you should need any assistance on a state-related matter you may contact Joy by calling 683-9199. The Kutztown office is located at 178 West Main Street. The office hours are Tuesday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and Tuesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m.

1985-86 SCHOOL SUBSIDIES

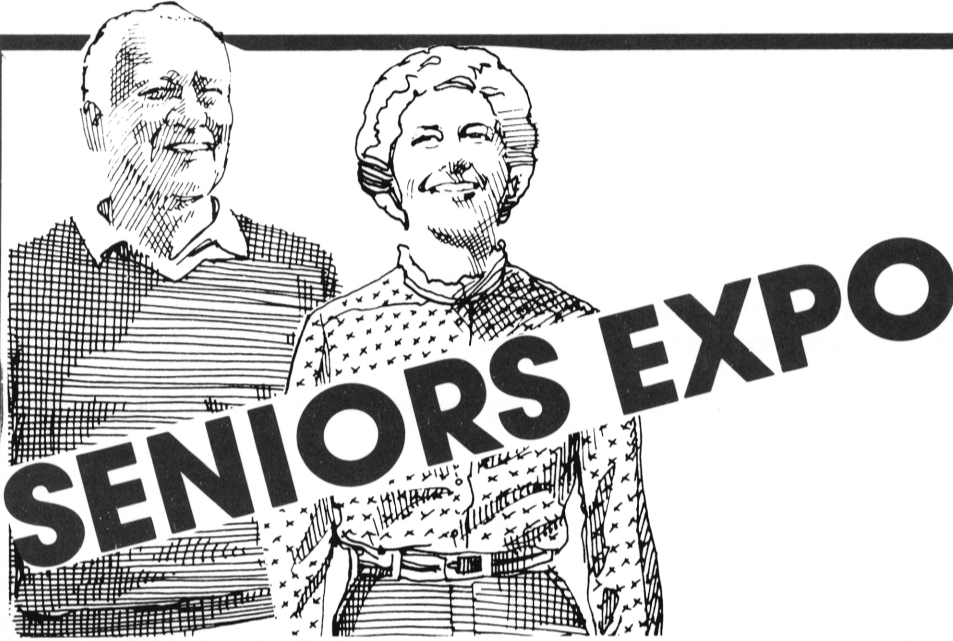
PARKLAND.....	\$3,538,537
NORTHERN LEHIGH.....	2,648,445
HAMBURG.....	2,278,226
NORTHWESTERN LEHIGH.....	2,253,223
WHITEHALL-COPLAY.....	2,153,620
KUTZTOWN.....	1,638,480



Items of Interest
from
Rep. Paul Semmel

BULK RATE
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Permit # 529
Harrisburg, PA

Harrisburg Office:
Box 162, Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Paula Shadle, Administrative Assistant



- Health Care
- Housing
- Insurance
- Investments

- Legal
- Leisure
- Nutrition
- Transportation

**Information Fair for Senior Citizens
and their families.**

**Thursday, Sept. 12th
10 am to 4 pm**

**Hamburg Boro Hall
31 N. 3rd Street
Hamburg, PA**

FREE ADMISSION

Sponsored by

**State Representative PAUL SEMMEL
187th Legislative District — Berks/Lehigh County
and Local Senior Citizen Clubs**

Bringing Government Closer To Home

In an effort to bring government closer to home I have scheduled two town meetings. One will be held in Shoemakersville and the other in Maxatawny Township.

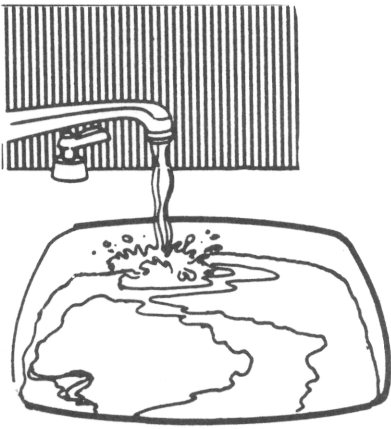
This will enable me to meet with residents who may have problems with the state bureaucracy, or may want to discuss some important state-related issues.

I feel that it's important for me to get out as often as possible to meet with the residents that I represent. I look forward to seeing you at the town meetings.

Thursday, October 10 -- Shoemakersville Borough Hall.

Thursday, October 17 -- Maxatawny Township Municipal Building.

Both meetings are being held in conjunction with Senator David Brightbill and are scheduled to begin at 7:45 p.m. each night.



Drought Emergency Update

The drought emergency is still in effect throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) has proclaimed the following uses of water are non-essential and prohibited within the designated areas of the declared drought emergency. These rules were in effect at the time this newsletter went to print.

- Lawn watering;
- Irrigation of gardens, landscaped areas, trees and shrubs by any means other than a hand-held hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle, bucket or pail between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 9 a.m.;
- Watering golf courses, except tees and greens between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m.;
- Washing paved surfaces such as streets, roads, sidewalks, driveways, garages, parking areas, tennis courts and patios;
- Operation of water fountains, artificial waterfalls and reflecting pools;
- Washing vehicles;
- Serving water in eating places unless specifically requested by the individual; and,

The object of these restrictions is to conserve water and reduce consumptive uses while preserving employment to the maximum extent possible and avoiding damage to property or other economic dislocations.

The Governor declared the drought emergency on April 26. Officials indicate the drought is likely to continue all summer and into the winter.

I hope residents will comply with DER's request. This is a crisis situation and every citizen must do his fair share in helping to ease these difficult circumstances.

A New State Budget... Taxes To Be Reduced

It was 1:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 29, when the House finally adopted the 1985-86 state budget, beating the July 1st deadline by two days.

We were able to cut the personal income tax to 2.2 percent, while increasing subsidies to school districts around the Commonwealth.

During the economic downturn of 1983, the legislature passed and the Governor signed legislation to increase the personal income tax to maintain state programs. At that time, the majority of legislators and the Governor committed themselves to a future tax cut.

In July 1983, the personal income tax was raised to 2.45 percent. It was reduced to 2.35 on July 1, 1984. In January, we will realize our goal of getting the tax back to 2.2 percent. The new rate will allow a person to keep \$1.50 more for every \$1,000 of taxable income.

Major budget bill increases include \$148 million in additional aid for basic education to local school districts. The legislature was able to cut taxes and increase aid to school districts because the state found itself with a \$300 million surplus at the end of fiscal year 1984-85. The state also expects to get greater revenues from taxes in the 1985-86 fiscal year because of an improved economy.

Along with the personal income tax reduction, a companion bill which passed the House 180-22, reduces a special assessment on businesses for unemployment programs by \$189 million a year.

A last-minute compromise resulted in the insertion of \$4 million into the budget for in-service training for teachers, a program that would provide grants only to selected teachers.

The legislature also included both the "Sunny Day" and the "Rainy Day" funds into the budget. Each fund was allocated \$25 million. The "Sunny Day" fund will be used for economic development, while the "Rainy Day" fund will be set aside to offset any future tax increase or deficits.

The Governor signed the bill without vetoing any of the measures. I am delighted that we were able to cut taxes while increasing aid to school districts. The education of our youth is very important and we must continue to work diligently in that field.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Extended

The deadline to apply for the property tax/rent rebate program has been extended to December 31. The Revenue Department has determined that there is sufficient money in the lottery fund proceeds for this program to extend the deadline for applications.

Those eligible for the rebates are individuals age 65 or over, widows and widowers age 50 and over and permanently disabled persons over the age of 18 who meet the income guidelines. The maximum eligible income for claimant and spouse is \$11,999. Only one person per household may file.

The maximum amount of the rebate is \$500. Those who receive rebates also automatically qualify for inflation dividends of up to \$125.

Income that must be reported includes salaries, wages, self-employment and rental income, veterans' disability payments, interest, dividends, social security (except Medicare), Supplemental Security Income, pensions or annuities, unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation, alimony and support payments, cash public assistance and railroad retirement benefits.

Also included are life insurance death benefits in excess of \$5,000, all gifts of cash or property when the total value exceeds \$300, the full amount of any realized capital gains and certain income from the sale of a home.

Applications for the rebate program are available at my district office

Representative Paul W. Semmel

3 Spring Hill Dr.
P.O. Box 235
Schnecksville, PA 18078
(215) 799-0187

31 North 3rd St.
Hamburg, PA 19526
(215) 562-3411

178 West Main St.
Kutztown, PA 19530
(215) 683-9199



Handy Guide to Senior Citizen Programs

1. Property Tax/Rent Rebates*

If you are:

- 65 years of age or older; or
- 50 years of age or older and a widow or widower; or
- 18 years of age or older and totally disabled; and
- your total income is less than \$15,000 annually (beginning with claims filed in 1986 for property taxes or rent paid in 1985);

You may be eligible for up to \$500 in a property tax or rent rebate...PLUS an inflation dividend grant.

2. Reduced Automobile Registrations*

If you are:

- retired;
- and have a total income not exceeding \$9,000;

You may be eligible for a reduction in the cost of your motor vehicle registration from \$24 to \$10.

3. PACE (Pharmaceutical Assistance) Program*

If you are:

- 65 years of age or older;
- and meet income guidelines (not exceeding \$12,000 for single persons and \$15,000 for married couples);

You may be eligible to pay \$4 for prescription medicines at your local drugstore OR through mail order pharmacy services. PACE identification card required.

4. Free Transportation

If you are:

- 65 years of age or older;
- and have a Medicare card, senior citizen transit identification card, or other proof of age;

You may be eligible for free transit service on local established route bus, trolley and rapid transit lines during off-peak hours on weekdays and all day on weekends and holidays. (Off-peak hours are those other than 6 to 9 AM or 3:30 to 6:30 PM on weekdays.)

5. Hunting, Furtaking and Fishing Licenses

If you are:

- 65 years of age or older;

You are eligible for reduced fees on hunting, furtaking and fishing licenses. A hunting or furtaking license would cost \$10.50, a lifetime hunting license \$50.50, a fishing license \$2.50 and a lifetime fishing license \$10.50. Proof of age is required.

(Free fishing licenses are available for Pennsylvania veterans with 100% service-connected disabilities.)

For further information on this program contact:

PA Game Commission - (717) 787-4250

PA Fish Commission - (717) 657-4519

6. Recreational Opportunities

If you are:

- 65 years of age or older;

You are eligible for free admission to Pennsylvania State Historical and Museum Commission museum, sites and properties. You are also eligible for reduced camping fees at state parks Sundays through Thursdays. Admission to state parks is free and most state park facilities are free for your use. For further information on this program contact:

Bureau of State Parks

(717) 787-8800

PA Historical & Museum Commission

(717) 787-3115

***Application forms and further information available at my local office.**



CAPITOL REPORT

from

Rep. PAUL SEMMEL

Harrisburg Office:
Box 162, Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 787-3017

3 Spring Hill Dr.
P.O. Box 235
Schnecksville, PA 18078
(215) 799-0187

31 North 3rd St.
Hamburg, PA 19526
(215) 562-3411

178 West Main St.
Kutztown, PA 19530
(215) 683-9199

SOLID WASTE CRISIS

Pennsylvania is facing a solid waste crisis, but little has been done to ease the situation. The increasing volume and variety of solid waste being generated throughout the state, coupled with the often inadequate existing methods of managing such waste, are creating conditions which threaten public health and safety by contributing to air, water and land pollution, to the waste of dwindling natural resources and to the general deterioration of the environment.

The Commonwealth lacks a comprehensive policy for dealing with our solid waste problem. Therefore, I have introduced legislation that would establish and maintain a "Solid Waste Resource Management Board" composed of people representing government and private industry. Members of the board would consist of individuals who can lend expertise from the different fields involved—local and county government, industry, engineering, natural resource conservation and resource recovery.

The board would be responsible for selecting one or more sites suitable for the establishment of facilities to convert solid waste into energy, synthetic fuels or reusable materials. They would also be charged with conducting a feasibility study of recovering methane gas from landfills. Other responsibilities include:

- Conducting a feasibility analysis on developing a project to convert agricultural wastes to synthetic fuel;
- Insuring public safety with respect to migration of combustible gas from disposal sites;
- Identify markets and encourage development of new uses for recovered materials and;
- Providing technical and financial assistance to support such projects with the approval of the General Assembly;

I believe that a well-coordinated governmental effort should be directed toward achieving an efficient process for the conversion of solid waste into energy, synthetic fuels and reusable materials.

Reaction policy-making is not productive for any government, be it federal, state or local. We must anticipate and plan and we must produce a comprehensive policy on solid waste if we ever expect to find solutions to the problems facing the citizens and the governments of the Commonwealth.

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT MY DISTRICT OFFICES

Whenever you have a state-related problem or question, please feel free to call my district offices or stop by for information. We provide many services including:

- Obtaining copies of birth and death certificates;
- Distributing applications for higher education grants;
- Securing applications for civil service jobs;
- Obtaining copies of House and Senate legislation;
- Arranging tours of the Capitol buildings and meeting with state officials;
- Providing assistance with motor vehicle problems, including driver's licenses and vehicle registrations;
- Assisting in arranging community improvement programs through state assistance;
- Providing information about and assistance with senior citizens programs, including **PROPERTY TAX AND RENT REBATE, REDUCED REGISTRATION FEES, AND PACE and;**



Helping to cut red tape in a variety of government related areas.

My district offices are located at 3 Spring Hill Drive, P. O. Box 235, Schnecksville, 18078; 31 North Third Street, Hamburg, 19526; or 178 West Main Street, Kutztown, 19530. The telephone numbers are 799-0187 (Schnecksville), 562-3411 (Hamburg), and 683-9199 (Kutztown).

REDUCED AUTO REGISTRATION FEES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

More senior citizens are now eligible for reduced automobile registration fees. The new law was expanded earlier this year.

Under the new law, retired persons receiving social security or other pension funds whose total income does not exceed \$14,999 will be eligible to pay only \$10 for an auto registration. The reduced registration fee also applies for class 1 and 2 trucks. However, only one reduced fee per family is allowed.

Certainly, this is a small savings but for those living on fixed incomes every little bit helps. The continuing success of the Pennsylvania Lottery is enabling us to extend such benefits to more elderly Pennsylvanians.

RADON CLEAN UP

I cosponsored legislation which is now law to provide \$3 million in low-interest loans to homeowners affected by radon gas.

The state Department of Environmental Resources also received \$1 million to develop workable, cost-effective means to reduce levels of radon gas in contaminated buildings. Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas which comes from the natural decay of uranium deposits in the ground.

THE INSURANCE CRISIS CONTINUES

Since my last newsletter/questionnaire legislation has been enacted that will provide additional liability protection to volunteers in organized youth sports programs and trustees and directors of other non-profit, community-minded organizations, such as hospitals, boy scouts, and libraries.

The new law will grant an added measure of legal protection against liability for civil damages to organized, non-profit sports programs conducted primarily for participants age 18 and under and to all such programs operated for the physically handicapped or mentally retarded, regardless of age. The same protection would be extended to the volunteer, uncompensated managers, instructors, coaches, umpires, referees and assistants who conduct, sponsor or participate in the programs.

The bill specifically defines eligible sports programs that are formally recognized by the United States Olympic Committee, National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic Union.

The sports volunteers and the organizations would be immune from liability unless the injured party could establish evidence that the standards practiced fell far below the acceptable standards and created a substantial risk of actual harm to the person or property of another.

Frivolous lawsuits had been taking its toll on volunteer organizations. Many individuals were becoming increasingly unwilling to donate their time because of the fear of significant financial loss.

I'm pleased that this law was enacted. Such sports programs not only teach children skills, but teach them a great deal about sportsmanship, about how to get along with others and about life.

Youth sports programs help our children grow in a healthy, happy and positive way.

SAVING MONEY FOR TAXPAYERS

Once again this year the General Assembly was able to cut the state personal income tax and increase spending to local school districts, because of a surplus in the state budget.

The new budget enacted in July provides for a personal income tax cut to 2.1 percent, starting September 1. The corporate income tax was reduced as well, to 8.5 percent.

More than 2.2 billion dollars will be distributed to local school districts this year, which is about six percent more than last year. This includes an additional \$40 million that is a one-shot deal, because of the state surplus.

	1986-87	Increase
Hamburg Area School District	\$2,482,424	\$204,198
Kutztown Area School District	\$1,847,856	\$155,495
Northern Lehigh School District	\$2,883,941	\$236,688
Northwestern Lehigh School District	\$2,445,998	\$192,775
Parkland School District	\$3,531,913	\$168,124
Whitehall-Coplay School District	\$2,254,228	\$100,608

Other highlights of the budget includes:

- Appropriating \$3 billion in federal funds for general fund programs;
- Distributing \$1.4 billion for highway and bridge maintenance programs;
- Sets up an independent council that will collect data on health care costs and quality at medical facilities and;
- Redesigning \$190 million in economic development programs that were enacted two years ago.

Overall, I'm very pleased with the budget that was passed. The spending rate is lower than the rate of inflation, taxpayers received a break and we were able to increase aid to local school districts.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE 187TH DISTRICT

One of the most important jobs of a legislator is to assist in expediting highway and bridge improvement projects. I am happy to note that a number of important restoration projects are scheduled in the near future in the 187th District. I am hopeful that they will be completed without delay.

The projects include:

- I-78 Rehabilitation from the Berks County line to Haafsville.
- In Kutztown Borough and Maxatawny Township there will be signal improvement projects taking place. In the borough the work is scheduled along Main Street from Schaffer Lane to Willow Street. In Maxatawny Township work is scheduled for the Route 222 and Topton Road traffic light.
- Bridge replacement is also scheduled for Hillside Road Bridge over Mill Creek, and Short Lane Bridge over Saucony Creek.
- In Greenwich Township bridge replacement is scheduled for T-787 bridge over Maiden Creek and also the bridge over Mill Creek.
- In Albany Township, Stumps Bridge over Kistler Creek is scheduled to be replaced.
- The Mill Creek Bridge in Tilden Township is scheduled to be replaced.
- MacArthur and Mickley Road intersection in Whitehall Township. Work will include checking the signals, minor widening and signing.
- MacArthur and Schadt Avenue intersection. The traffic signs will be checked along with minor widening and new signs will be installed.
- Resurfacing is scheduled on Route 145 from the Whitehall Township Building to Egypt.
- Another project in Whitehall Township is also scheduled on Third Street from Park to Bridge Street.
- A 1.4 mile stretch of Main Street in Whitehall Township will be resurfaced from Church to Second Street.

UPGRADING FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS

I am supporting legislation aimed at upgrading fire safety standards in child day care centers, protecting volunteer firefighters from liability lawsuits and assisting arson investigators in their investigations.

There is an urgent need for these fire-safety measures. If these measures are adopted they would go a long way protecting children in day-care centers, and the public-at-large.

The first proposal would require that any facility in Pennsylvania offering day care for children be equipped with a working smoke detector in the kitchen and on each level in the building. It would also require that kitchens and other cooking areas in the building have a suitable fire extinguisher.

A companion bill would set fines of not less than \$20 or more than \$100 for each day care provider if found to be in violation of the state fire code.

Presently, not all child care providers are required to register with the state, and those that are registered do not have to meet any safety standards. The legislation that has been proposed would require all providers of child care in Pennsylvania, no matter how many children are involved, meet the Welfare Departments' fire safety standards. The bill would also give the Welfare Department authority to examine all child care homes to insure compliance with fire safety regulations.

Another bill that I'm supporting would exempt volunteer firefighters and other volunteer emergency service providers from liability for civil damages while performing rescue services.

This legislation is targeted as a very real problem in Pennsylvania. A number of fire companies in my district alone cannot readily find liability insurance coverage. It's another aspect of liability insurance crisis which is a critical problem for the state. The need for this bill is obvious. If volunteer rescue workers and organizations are required to risk their lives for others and are then subject to liability, we will eventually lose our volunteer network.

Two other bills that have been introduced to help fire officials track arsonists by requiring that burn victims suffering burns over five percent of their body be reported to the state burn registry. The registry would be supervised by the State Police Commissioner, Secretary of Health and the State Fire Marshall. The registry would assist in the prevention and prosecution of arson offenses and provide a data base for investigations.

Often arsonists are burned by the fires they ignited. By requiring that individuals who have severe burns are reported by medical personnel to state police fire marshalls quickly, we may apprehend more arsonists.



QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

During my tenure as your state representative, I have found that an excellent method of communication with district residents is through annual questionnaires. I look forward to seeing your responses to a variety of issues affecting all of us throughout the district and the state. My last questionnaire netted over 1,600 responses from individuals throughout Berks and Lehigh counties.

These results assist me in my efforts to better represent and reflect the concerns of the 187th District when I cast my votes in Harrisburg.

The liability insurance crisis is on everyone's mind these days. Many municipalities and non-profit organizations are having difficulty obtaining coverage, and if they do obtain coverage it often is very expensive. Several pieces of legislation have been introduced to remedy the problem. One measure would have plaintiffs and their attorneys pay for all municipal legal expenses and fees arising from such a suit, nearly 80 percent of those responding to the questionnaire favor such legislation.

Another crisis facing legislators is health care cost containment. It's a problem that is affecting every resident in the state. In regards to a question concerning health care, almost 97 percent responding are covered by some type of health insurance plan. A companion question regarding Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) revealed that 75 percent of the individuals are familiar with the term.

Eighty-five percent of the respondents believe that the federal Constitution should be amended to require balanced budgets. On the other hand, a question that was more evenly split dealt with giving the president the right to a line-item veto. Fifty-five percent feel the president should have the authority, while 45 percent oppose the idea.

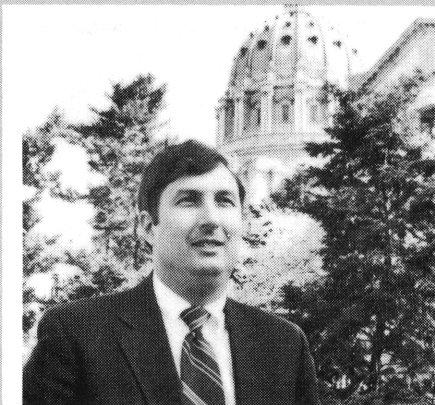
An overwhelming majority of residents throughout the 187th District believe that random road checks should be allowed to combat the problem of people driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Opponents of the measure believe that the road checks are inconvenient and violate people's individual rights. The question netted almost 63 percent yeas and 37 percent nays.

Binding arbitration for public employees — more than 77 percent believe that the General Assembly should have the power to provide for binding arbitration on public employees' labor contracts. The House has passed such a measure, and it's now before the Senate. The measure, an amendment to the state Constitution, must be adopted in its identical form by two consecutive sessions of the General Assembly and then be ratified by the voters of Pennsylvania.

Smokeless tobacco has become a major alternative for people wanting to quit smoking but still enjoy the flavor of tobacco. National studies have indicated smokeless tobacco can present definite health risks. Proponents argue that tobacco companies are using television to appeal to young people, because of the use of sport stars in promotions. Opponents feel that banning television ads would violate the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing free speech. In a question I posed to residents of the 187th district, an overwhelming 70 percent said that ads promoting the use of smokeless tobaccos should be banned from television.

Once again this year the state has realized a surplus in the general operating fund. Similar to last year, I asked respondents what we should do with the surplus. Fifty-one percent believed that we should cut the state's personal income tax and return money into the pockets of residents. Seven percent urged me to vote for a cut in the state's corporate income tax, and 29 percent believed that the legislators should increase the aid to local school districts. Twenty-two percent of the respondents felt that more money should be put into economic development and only 9 percent of those responding believed that the state should put more money into social programs.

I would like to thank everyone who took time to respond to the questions that I posed. These results help me in serving you, the people of the 187th District while I represent you in Harrisburg.



HEALTH CARE UPDATE from **Rep. PAUL SEMMEL**

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Dear Friend:

Fall 1986

Health care, it's on everyone's mind these days. There's good news and bad news regarding the subject. The good news is that more and more people are living longer, healthier lives, because of the advances made in medicine. However, costs continue to escalate because of the technological methods being employed, as well as the increasing cost of malpractice insurance for doctors and nurses.

The Legislature has been studying the subject for sometime trying to determine how to reduce the constantly increasing costs. Several proposals have been introduced, and a few have been adopted into law, including one that requires insurance companies to pay for treatment of alcoholism and another setting up a council to study and collect data on health care cost containment.

In an effort to bring you up-to-date on what the Legislature is attempting to do to reduce health care costs and to provide information on how you and your family can help, I am providing you with this Health Care Update. I trust that it will be useful. Reducing health care costs is the responsibility of all Pennsylvanians and I encourage you to do your part.

Sincerely,

Paul Semmel
State Representative
187th District

HEALTH CARE COST CONTAINMENT LEGISLATION ADOPTED

Before adjourning for the summer recess, the governor signed a measure that will create a 21-member council responsible for collecting and publishing data on the cost and quality of health care services. It will also conduct a study of the medically indigent population, determining the most appropriate method for delivery of services to that population, and submitting a plan for indigent care to the legislature. Additionally, the council will provide information on proposed mandated health benefits and encourage research and demonstration projects.

Under the proposal, the Health Department may study and publish reports on health care services for various groups and the need for financing health care services for these groups. It could also study and report on short-term and long-term fiscal and programmatic changes in the health care delivery system.

The council will consist of the secretary of health, secretary of public welfare, the insurance commissioner, six business representatives (including one from small business), six labor representatives, a consumer, a physician, representatives of a hospital, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, a commercial insurer and a representative from a health maintenance organization. The council's duties will include:

- Developing a computerized system for data collection, analysis and dissemination;
- Establishing a uniform claims and billing form to be used by all data sources and providers for services covered by the legislation;
- Issuing reports and making available raw data to any purchaser, publishing monthly lists of all raw data reports prepared, including the names of parties to whom the council has provided the report;
- Promoting competition in the health care and health insurance markets.

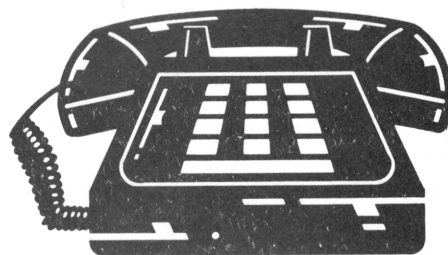
The council will also make annual reports to the legislature on the rate of increase in the cost of health care and make recommendations on the need for further health care cost containment.

Using the data collected, the council will issue quarterly reports listing comparisons among all providers of payments, charges, admission rates and effectiveness. The comparisons will be grouped according to provider quality, service effectiveness and according to diagnosis and severity.

The council will also be required to provide special reports and a means for computer-to-computer access to raw data to any purchaser who desires to buy this detailed material.

HOTLINE FOR PARENTS

Since the cocaine death of Maryland basketball star Len Bias, a COCAINE hotline has been established for concerned parents and users. Callers should dial 1-800-COCAINE. There are more than 2,000 callers to this number per day. Up to five million people in the United States use cocaine regularly. Last year alone 600 deaths were linked to cocaine. If you have any questions, the 800 number provides a competent research staff to help you.



SEAT BELT USAGE PAYS OFF

Emergency room reports at LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah, prove once again that the use of seat belts reduces the extent of injuries. A survey of 159 patients involved in motor vehicle accidents showed:

Number Not Wearing Seat Belts:	138 (87 percent)
Total Hospital Charges:	\$428,575.08
Average Charge Per Patient:	\$3,105.62
Number Wearing Seat Belts:	21 (13 percent)
Total Hospital Charges:	\$6,276.67
Average Charge per patient:	\$298.89



A Colorado study showed hospital costs for auto accident victims were more than 300 percent higher among patients not wearing seat belts. Hospital officials estimated savings in hospital charges would have been \$239,000 if 60 percent of the patients had been buckled up.

With these statistics, I would hope that motorists throughout the district and the state would consider buckling up on a **voluntary** basis. This would go a long way in helping to reduce health care costs.

FIGHTING ALCOHOL ABUSE

The governor recently signed legislation into law requiring health insurers to provide coverage for the treatment of alcoholism. This means that, for the first time in Pennsylvania, alcoholism will be formally recognized as a treatable disease.

Statistics indicate that the average untreated alcoholic uses other health care benefits about 10 to 12 times a year more than the general public but never receives treatment for the root cause of his or her health problems.

National studies have shown that in states which provide mandated alcoholism benefits, worker productivity is improved, sick time is lessened and less work time is lost, thereby benefitting employers and taxpayers.

The new law provides coverage for both inpatient and outpatient services, as well as detoxification and rehabilitation treatment. Under the latter two types of treatment, lodging and dietary services, medical laboratory testing, cost of drugs, medicines, equipment use, supplies and outpatient counseling services will be covered. Treatment will have to be certified by a physician and will require referral to a health care facility licensed by the Health Department. Reasonable deductible or co-pay plans may be applied to benefits, with terms at least as favorable as those for general physical illnesses.

An alcoholic, as defined by the National Council of Alcoholism, is "a person who is powerless to stop drinking and whose drinking seriously alters his normal living pattern." The disease affects all classes of society but most alcoholics are found in middle class homes and executive offices. Contrary to popular belief, only three percent of today's alcoholics are derelicts.

Statistics from Blue Cross and Pennsylvania Blue Shield indicate that an estimated 8 to 10 million Americans are either full-fledged alcoholics or are headed toward a drinking dependency. They also point out that alcohol abuse is costing the American economy an estimated \$76 billion a year in deaths, injuries, lost work days and rehabilitation.

The problem drinker is susceptible to the risk of death from disease, accident or violence at a rate approximately two to six times greater than the general population.

Alcohol abuse is costing the taxpayers of this state a great deal of money. Curbing the abuse would go a long way to reducing health care costs throughout the Commonwealth.

THE RABIES SCARE... IT'S FOR REAL

The rabies epidemic that originally hit several counties near the Maryland border continues to spread northeast. At this writing, Pennsylvania has confirmed 330 cases of rabies thus far in 1986. That figure compares to 137 in the same period during 1985. It's apparent that the epidemic is indeed becoming worse. The state's high mark for rabies was in 1946 when 499 cases were confirmed. At the current pace, that mark will be eclipsed.

Figures from the state health department indicate that rabies is spreading to the northeast. Those counties hit hard by rabies in 1985 are experiencing a decline in the number of new cases, while counties previously untouched by rabies are reporting cases of the disease.

Lehigh and Berks counties at this writing have not had any confirmed cases yet this year. However, last year there were four confirmed cases. Berks County had no confirmed reports in 1985.

I would urge all pet owners to make certain that their animals are properly immunized against the dreaded disease. In addition, any strange acting animals should be avoided but observed, if possible, and reported to proper authorities. Cleanse any animal bite thoroughly and seek immediate medical attention. When the General Assembly returns to session this fall, I'm hopeful that legislation will be enacted to deal with the rabies epidemic. I've supported legislation which would require all cats and dogs in affected areas to be immunized against rabies. This bill has passed the House and is currently before the Senate for review. Similarly, the Senate has passed a rabies bill that is pending House review in the fall. This bill would make it mandatory for all dog owners to have their pets immunized before they can be licensed. I'm hopeful that there can be a meeting of the minds on this issue to resolve the problem for the safety and well-being of all Pennsylvanians.

A **rabies hotline** has been established and is in service 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. That number is 1-800-692-7254. There is also an emergency service telephone number which is in effect evenings, weekends and holidays. That number is (717) 737-5349.