



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JOHN J. SIPTROTH
189TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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P.O. Box 202189
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2189
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CONSTITUENT SERVICE OFFICE:
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P.O. Box 1188
Marshall's Creek, PA 18335-1188
(570) 223-2636
Toll Free: (866) 604-5578

WWW.PAHOUSE.COM/SIPTROTH

2007

DEAR NURSE-MIDWIFE,

For too long, Pennsylvania has lagged behind other states in fully utilizing its licensed health-care professionals who are not physicians. Barriers in existing laws and regulations limit your ability as a nurse-midwife to practice your profession to the fullest.

That is why I voted for House Bill 1255, which would allow you to have a greater impact when you provide care. This legislation is a key component of Governor Rendell's and House Democrats' "Prescription for Pennsylvania," an effort to reform the state's health-care system so all Pennsylvanians have access to quality, affordable coverage.

Pennsylvania is currently the only state that does not give nurse-midwives prescriptive privileges. Considering that nurse-midwives are already assessing the need for the drugs, and addressing ancillary concerns, it makes no sense. We need to encourage efficiency, not have you waste valuable time tracking down an authorizing physician.

Given that nurse-midwives deliver about 10 percent of the babies across this Commonwealth – a figure much higher in rural Pennsylvania – it is vitally important for you to be able to prescribe essential prenatal vitamins and other drugs necessary to ensure healthy pregnancies.

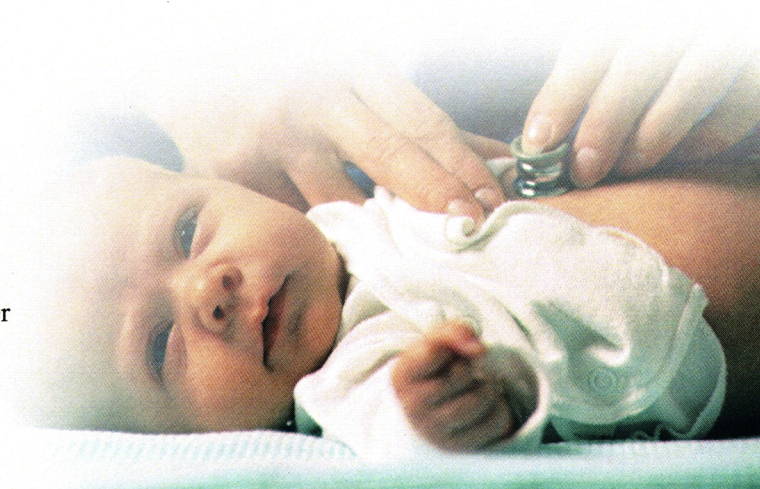
It's a key component to better access and quality health care. That's what this bill and the "Prescription for Pennsylvania" is all about. Together we can make this happen.

The House passed H.B. 1255 and sent it to the Senate, where it is awaiting action. Urge your state Senator to vote "yes" on this bill and send it to Governor Rendell to be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Rep. John J. Siptroth

P.S. Visit www.pahouse.com and log onto the Action Center to tell your Senator to support legislation to expand the scope of practice for nurse-midwives.





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DEAR NURSE PRACTITIONER,

For too long, Pennsylvania has lagged behind other states in fully utilizing its licensed health-care professionals who are not physicians. Barriers in existing laws and regulations limit your ability as a nurse practitioner to practice your profession to the fullest.

That is why I am supporting House Bill 1253, which would expand the impact you can have on health care. This legislation is a key component of Governor Rendell's and House Democrats' "Prescription for Pennsylvania," an effort to reform the state's health-care system so all Pennsylvanians have access to quality, affordable coverage.

As a certified registered nurse practitioner, you are currently prohibited from making health-care decisions that are well within your ability and training. If this legislation is signed into law, the barriers will come down. You will have the authority to order home health and hospice care, make referrals to dietitians and physical therapists, order respiratory and occupational therapy, and issue home-bound schooling certifications, among other things.

That is what this legislation and the "Prescription for Pennsylvania" is all about – better access to quality care for everyone. Together we can make this happen.

The House passed H.B. 1253 and sent it to the Senate, where it is awaiting action. Urge your state Senator to vote "yes" on this bill and send it to Governor Rendell to be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Rep. John J. Siptroth

P.S. Visit www.pahouse.com and log onto the Action Center to tell your Senator to support legislation to expand the scope of practice for nurse practitioners.





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DEAR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT,

For too long, Pennsylvania has lagged behind other states in fully utilizing licensed health-care professionals who are not physicians. Barriers in existing laws and regulations limit your ability as a physician assistant to practice your profession to the fullest.

That is why I voted for House Bills 1251 and 1252, which would allow you to have a greater impact when you provide health care. This legislation is a key component of Governor Rendell's and the House Democrats' "Prescription for Pennsylvania," an effort to reform the state's health-care system so all Pennsylvanians have access to quality, affordable coverage.

Physicians in Pennsylvania are currently limited to overseeing two physician assistants and these bills would increase the number to four. We must allow doctors to oversee more assistants if we expect to help more patients have easier access to care for routine health exams and problems.

As you are well aware, better access yields earlier diagnoses and treatment when complications are fewer. This approach helps us cut health-care costs and avoid expensive emergency room visits that have too often become the only access for many Pennsylvanians.

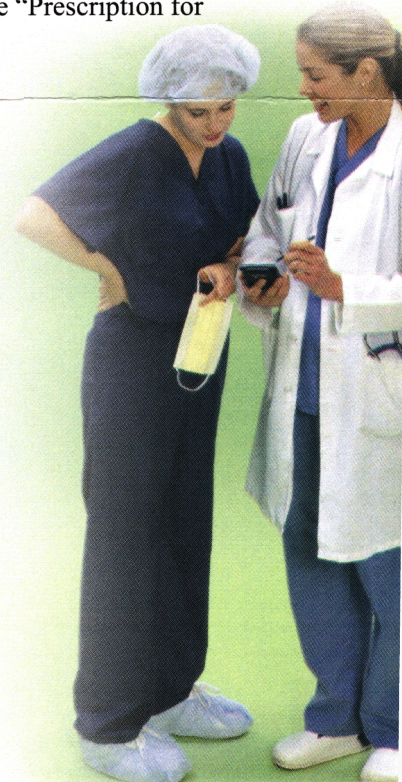
It's a key component to better access and quality health care. That's what these bills and the "Prescription for Pennsylvania" are all about. Together we can make this happen.

The House passed H.B. 1251 and H.B. 1252 and sent them to the Senate, where they are awaiting action. Urge your state Senator to vote "yes" on these bills and send them to Governor Rendell to be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Rep. John J. Siptroth

P.S. Visit www.pahouse.com and log onto the Action Center to tell your Senator to support legislation to expand the scope of practice for physician assistants.





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E-MAIL: rep.siptroth@pahouse.net

JUNE 2007

Dear friends and neighbors,

I hope the warmer weather has brought with it a chance for you to relax and spend time with family and friends. I have been busy in Harrisburg and here in Pike County working toward solving some of the state's most pressing issues.

Please read this newsletter to see what I have been doing to make our communities and state a better place to work, live and raise a family. Also, please complete the survey on Page 3 so I know how you feel about the important matters facing Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

John J. Siptroth
 John Siptroth

SEVERAL PIKE ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVE GRANTS

The following organizations have been awarded grants to make improvements to the services they offer.

- **Pike County Area Agency on Aging, \$5,000; for the multimedia center**
- **Pike County Area Agency on Aging, \$5,000; fitness equipment for seniors**
- **Pike County Area Agency on Aging, \$10,000; toward an all-wheel-drive vehicle**
- **Bushkill Volunteer Emergency Corps, \$10,000; new radios**
- **Pike County Advanced Life Support, \$10,000; toward a new ambulance**
- **Bushkill Outreach, \$10,000; for a walk-in freezer**
- **Dingman Volunteer Fire Company, \$10,000; fire suppression support**
- **Delaware Township, \$56,000; emergency communications equipment**

BUDGET PROPOSAL: A BLUEPRINT FOR TACKLING PA'S MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES

In February, Gov. Ed Rendell presented his 2007-08 budget proposal to the General Assembly. The \$27.3 billion spending plan is called Agenda for Pennsylvania Progress, and would address Pennsylvania's most critical challenges, as well as continue to invest in the initiatives that have already been implemented successfully in the Commonwealth.

Here are some highlights from the 2007-08 budget proposal:

- **\$965 million to repair roads and bridges, making them safer and smoother.**
- **\$850 million invested in energy independence to bring new clean-energy companies to Pennsylvania and save families and businesses billions of dollars in the next decade, while creating jobs.**
- **\$4.95 billion to support Pre-K through grade 12 education, with other investments in science, technology in our classrooms and dual enrollment classes.**
- **\$255 million in state and federal funds to implement Prescription for Pennsylvania, an extensive plan to improve access to and quality of health care in the state and rein in costs.**
- **More funding for state troopers to increase their number to 4,660 by September 2008.**

The governor's budget proposal is extensive, but with widespread cuts in federal funding, Pennsylvania is forced to make up the difference. As a new member of the House Appropriations Committee, I listened to weeks of testimony from my House colleagues as well as state agencies as they made their cases for funding.

If you want more information on the budget or the initiatives above, or would like to give your feedback, please visit my Web site at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth to send me your thoughts on the budget proposal or to sign up for automatic free updates on other topics of interest to you.



Rep. Siptroth speaks at a hearing at the Capitol.

SIPTROTH APPOINTED TO KEY HOUSE COMMITTEES

This session, my first full term, I have been appointed to serve on several House standing committees. I am serving on the Appropriations, Commerce, Local Government, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness committees.

In each of these committees I will be tackling and debating the merits of legislation that can affect the lives of Pennsylvanians across the state and in our community. These committees give me a stronger voice for the people of the 189th Legislative District on the issues that affect you most.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, which has the lead role in the House on the annual budget, I listened to weeks of testimony from members of the legislature and state agencies commenting on the various allocations in the governor's budget proposal.

Because of my extensive experience in local government, I will be able to help craft legislation that contributes to the governance of townships, boroughs, cities and counties and be helpful for our municipal leaders.

The Transportation Committee provides me a place at the table when examining legislation affecting the state Department of Transportation and the Turnpike Commission, and also to devise solutions for funding highway and bridge construction and repair, as well as mass transit.



SIPTROTH PROPOSES WIDE-RANGING LEGISLATION

■ REDUCING PROPERTY TAXES (no bill number available):

Gaming revenue has become a reality and property tax help is on the horizon. The school districts in our area have the highest projected figures in the state as far as relief. But I would like to do even more.

Escalating property taxes have become an increasing burden, especially on our seniors, since many of them are on fixed incomes. My plan to relieve this burden would freeze property taxes for seniors when they hit age 65. It would continue to reduce the amount that seniors pay by 25 percent every five years starting at age 70, with the end result being that homeowners 85 or older would pay NO property taxes.

I am working with legislative leaders to get this proposal to become a reality.

■ KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CLEAN (H.B. 1319):

I have introduced a bill that would provide for greater fines for people who dispose of trash on the side of our roadways and in our woodlands. The amount of litter has steadily increased in recent years, and I think a larger fine would be a better deterrent.

My bill would add \$700 to make the minimum fine \$750, and the maximum fine would increase to \$1,000 or imprisonment for no more than 90 days, or both.

The penalty for dumping litter on agricultural areas would also be increased to \$1,600 for a first offense.

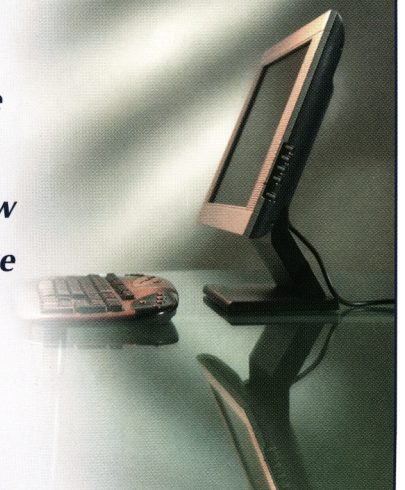
■ PROVIDING FOR OUR VETERANS (H.B. 344):

Pennsylvania is home to more than 1.15 million military veterans, nearly 10 percent of the state's population. I have introduced a bill that would allow the state to serve our former service members better. As of 2005, 18 states had a separate cabinet position for Veterans Affairs; I would like to see Pennsylvania be the next to create a separate agency.

Veterans' issues are growing in number and complexity, and a separate agency could provide better outreach to these residents as well as manage their needs and requests.

Be the first to know!

Want to know the latest news from Harrisburg? Want to see what is being debated in the House chamber? Visit my Web site – www.pahouse.com/Siptroth – to sign up for e-mail alerts and to view the PA House Access Center, where you can watch streaming video of floor debate and committee hearings as they happen.



FORM 189-0607P

Rep. Siptroth wants to hear from YOU!

Complete the survey, clip it out and mail it to Rep. Siptroth's Marshall Creek office, or fill it out online at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth.

1. Do you agree with a plan to increase the state's sales tax by 1 percent if ALL the revenue goes toward property tax relief? yes no
2. Do you support leasing the turnpike to generate funds for road and bridge construction and repair? yes no
3. Do you support raising the state gas tax to generate funds for road and bridge repair? yes no
4. Do you support making bars, restaurants and other public places smoke-free? yes no
5. Should the state aggressively pursue alternative energy research to reduce dependence on foreign oil suppliers? yes no

6. Have you visited my Web site? yes no

7. If yes, did you find it useful and easy to navigate? yes no

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

REFORMING THE LEGISLATURE: STEP ONE

It was clear that legislative reform was a top priority this session. The goals of making the state House more accessible, accountable and transparent were at the forefront.

Shortly after being elected House speaker, Rep. Dennis O'Brien, R-Phila., created the Speaker's Commission on Legislative Reform to establish a list of reform measures to be considered by the House. The result, House Resolution 108, was approved by the House on March 13.

The final package included measures that were encouraged and supported by residents of the 189th District. Some of the reforms include:

- All voting sessions are to take place between the hours of 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.; a three-quarters majority vote is required to continue working past 11 p.m.
- All House expenses, including payroll, are to be available electronically upon request.
- The Rules Committee, in the past used as an arm of legislative leadership, no longer has the ability to change legislation.
- All House votes, all committee votes and all public documents associated with proceedings of the House are to be posted on the Internet.
- So-called "ghost voting" is prohibited.
- A 24-hour waiting period is required before bills can be voted on.
- A brief description of legislation has to be read prior to debate and a final vote.

For more information on legislative reform, visit my Web site at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth.

PROGRESS ON MARSHALLS CREEK BYPASS ONGOING

Cooperation between several state agencies has averted some setbacks in completing the Marshalls Creek Bypass. However, environmental concerns and rising costs will delay the long-awaited project's completion. The new estimated date of completion is set for 2011.

Costs have been the largest impediment to the project. Rising fuel and construction costs have led the total price tag on the bypass to grow from \$55 million to \$102 million since 2000.

Additional delays arose from the concerns of environmental groups that resulted in a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling that the Department of Environmental Protection must abide by its own regulations regarding storm water discharge into streams of exceptional value. The bypass project has three planned discharges which consequently needed to be reviewed.

My goal is to complete this necessary project at a reasonable cost with as little impact to the environment as possible.

The good news is that Phase 1 is on schedule and there will be a minimal impact on Phase 2 of the project because of the cooperative efforts of the groups involved, including my office, PennDOT and DEP. All parties are committed to finishing the project to mitigate traffic congestion in our region.

CHECK OUT

MY MONTHLY
COLUMN IN THE
**COMMUNITY
EXPRESS.**





State Representative

John J. Siptroth

189th Legislative District

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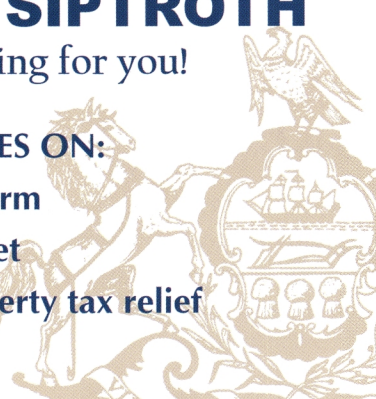
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LOOK INSIDE:
for important information on what
REP. JOHN SIPTROTH
has been doing for you!

CHECK OUT ARTICLES ON:

- Legislative reform
- The state budget
- Expanded property tax relief
- And more!



Rep. Siptroth presents grants to the Pike County Agency on Aging. He helped secure the funding from the state Department of Community & Economical Development.

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DON'T FORGET TO APPLY FOR YOUR PROPERTY TAX OR RENT REBATE!

Time is running out to apply under the program's new guidelines

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program has been expanded to include thousands more Pennsylvania seniors and disabled residents. Both the income eligibility limits for homeowners and the maximum rebate amount for both homeowners and renters have been increased.

The income limit for homeowners was raised from \$15,000 to \$35,000, and the maximum rebate increased from \$500 to \$650. Applicants can continue to deduct half of any Social Security or federal railroad retirement benefits from income when determining their eligibility.

Residents 65 or older, widows and widowers 50 or older, and permanently disabled people 18 or over are eligible for a rebate if they meet the income guidelines.

Applicants can receive a rebate only on a residence they occupied during the period for which they are applying. Applications must be filed by June 30, 2007.

To get an application, please visit my office in Marshalls Creek or visit my Web site – www.pahouse.com/Siptroth – or call 570-223-2636.

REP. JOHN SIPTROTH'S PIKE UPDATE



State Representative
John J. Siptroth

189th Legislative District



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OCTOBER 2007

Dear neighbor,

Summer has come and gone, and the weather will soon get colder, but I hope you found time to relax with family and friends. I spent a lot of time traveling around the district during the General Assembly's summer recess and I used the time to talk with residents about their concerns and priorities for their government.

I also hosted a well-attended senior fair with neighboring legislator Rep. Mike Carroll, and everyone seemed to have a good time – the event gets better every year!

The legislature returned to Harrisburg in late September and it is back to business for the working families of Pennsylvania. One of the first priorities is a return to energy independence issues that will be examined during a special session completely dedicated to energy policy.

I hope you will look inside this newsletter for an update on property tax reform – which is my top priority – as well as news on the state budget, some local events and legislation I have introduced to prevent littering in our communities.

Sincerely,

John J. Siptroth
 John Siptroth

WORKING TOWARD REFORM: PROPERTY TAXES

Everyone agrees consistent increases in school property taxes are overwhelming, in many cases unfair and sometimes unmanageable. There is less agreement on what to do about the burden of rising property taxes. I thoughtfully consider every property tax reform proposal that crosses my desk. Some have potential; some do not.

I was among the first co-sponsors of a bill that could reduce property taxes by 40 percent as soon as next year. House Bill 1600 would replace a considerable portion of school property taxes for homeowners by raising the state sales tax from 6 to 6.5 percent, and by raising the state Personal Income Tax from 3.07 to 3.29 percent.

Under the legislation, Pennsylvania's income tax rate would still be lower than the top income tax rates in all six neighboring states, according to the Federation of Tax Administrators. Neighboring New Jersey has an income tax rate of 8.97 percent.

While other taxes would increase slightly, the proposal is good news for everyone. All homeowners would be eligible for relief under the plan, not just seniors, but a greater percentage would go to those who need it most.

The bill has widespread support, with co-sponsors from both parties and from regions across the state. I think that makes thorough consideration and possible passage more likely.

PROPERTY TAX/ RENT REBATE: PROGRAM EXPANDED, DEADLINE EXTENDED

The deadline to apply for the state Property Tax/Rent Rebate program has been extended to Dec. 31, 2007, for property taxes or rent paid in 2006. The program is funded by the state lottery and is open to senior citizens 65 or older, widows or widowers 50 or older, or persons 18 years or older with a permanent disability.

This year under the program's new guidelines, eligible participants can receive a rebate of up to \$650 based on their property taxes or rent paid during 2006. Household income for homeowners cannot exceed \$35,000, but only half of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, or federal Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits count toward the limit. The eligibility limit for renters remains \$15,000.

If you have questions about the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program, please contact my constituent service office at 4 Jay Park in Marshalls Creek, or call 866-604-5578.

FIGHTING CRIME NEEDS TO BE A COMMUNITY PROJECT

Residents in our communities, those who have lived here for generations and our new neighbors, all share a concern regarding the growing level of crime. Crime isn't a problem just in the Poconos and Pennsylvania's big cities, but in areas across the state.

Crime causes community anxiety to grow, especially in regard to gang activity and violent crime.

There are many reasons for the rise in criminal activity, and we as citizens must partner with police and other officials to use new and innovative methods to reverse the trend.

The House Majority Policy Committee has created a Public Health and Violence Prevention Task Force to examine ways to protect Pennsylvanians by reducing crime and violence in

communities of all sizes across the state.

The task force held a public hearing in Allentown last month to examine crime and violence in medium-sized cities. It included testimony from officials from a variety of public and private sector organizations.

During the dialogue, the committee has explored the unique challenges stemming from crime in midsized cities. For example, aside from common safety and health issues, there are also economic concerns. In the health-care sector, hospitals incur enormous costs from crime and crime-related injury. Crime-based injuries also take up valuable time, limiting the time that doctors can provide care to other patients.

Continued on page 4

STATE BUDGET AGREEMENT MEETS WIDESPREAD DEMANDS WITHOUT NEW OR INCREASED TAXES

The end of June and beginning of July was a trying time at the Capitol in Harrisburg. Despite the lengthy negotiations I am proud of the final product, which makes much-needed strategic investments with **NO** new or increased taxes.

Health care:

Reforming our health-care system is a top priority for me. As part of the budget package that passed, nurse practitioners, midwives, physician assistants and dental hygienists are permitted to practice to the fullest extent of their training and skills. This change improves accessibility and increases preventative care, which discourages people from going to the emergency room, where care costs more. Currently, Pennsylvanians are statistically more likely than the average American to go to the emergency room.

Treating hospital-acquired infections costs millions of dollars each year, and those costs are passed on to the rest of us through higher premiums. The health-care plan includes a new law that provides quality improvement payments to facilities that reduce infections, making Pennsylvania the only state in the nation to require hospitals to meet specific benchmarks to reduce infections. Hospital-acquired infections

are avoidable – many hospitals across the nation have joined forces to develop standards and practices that have helped to virtually eliminate HAIs in their facilities. Pennsylvania is now taking the lead to cut the incidence of HAIs, encouraging prevention and instituting accountability among state-licensed health care providers to ensure they are doing their part to reduce infections.

Transportation:

This year's transportation package was agreed to just weeks prior to the devastating bridge collapse in Minnesota. Poconos residents know the reality of our crumbling roadways and bridges. Monroe County alone has more than 90 bridges in need of fixing. However, the dedicated funding in the new budget package starts to make the much-needed improvements in our transportation infrastructure, while also supplying funds for public transit systems in communities across the state.

Transit projects will see more funding than they have in past years, and we

established a dedicated funding source for mass transportation that will grow with inflation.

Revenue generated under the new plan, which includes increased tolls on the turnpike as well as tolls on Interstate 80, will deliver an average of \$946 million per year, with \$411 million going to mass transit systems statewide, \$500 million going to state roads and bridges, and \$35 million per year (a 10 percent increase) to counties and municipalities to repair and maintain roads and bridges not owned by the state.

Instituting tolls on I-80 is controversial but necessary to generate funds needed to repair our ailing roadways. It is the intention of the legislature to establish the toll system so that it has a minimal effect on the residents who depend on it for daily travel; it aims to capture revenue from truckers and out-of-state tourists. Three-quarters of the traffic on I-80 is from out-of-state.

SIPTROTH SUPPORTS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Although I was disappointed by the relatively small increases in basic and special education allocations for our schools and voted against the final education budget bill, I was pleased that the package included a new investment in educating our young children.

Under the new initiative Pre-K Counts, 11,000 more children will have access to pre-kindergarten programs that are demonstrated to have a lifelong effect on academic and career success.

The program is being funded with \$75 million, and participating communities will have the option for full-day or half-day quality pre-kindergarten programs in a school-based, child care center, Head Start or nursery school program throughout the school year.

I have been a longtime supporter of such initiatives and have

been able to assist local groups in securing funding for their community programs, including:

■ **Pocono Healthy Communities Alliance:** \$5,000 for PHCA to expand the special needs materials at their Child Care Professional Resource Center, which includes a lending library of games, toys, instructional videos and educational materials and is used by parents, childcare professionals, therapists and others.

■ **Early Care and Education Coalition of Pike County:** \$5,000 to purchase administrator tools to make planning and programming more efficient. The mission of the ECEC is to provide the children of Pike County access to early learning systems that maximize a child's growth and development to promote future success.



Rep. Siptroth joins a group of local AARP members who visited the Capitol in Harrisburg during the organization's annual lobbying day. Also joining the group is state Rep. Mike Peifer.



Rep. Siptroth presents a ceremonial check to Roxanne Powell for the Pocono Healthy Communities Alliance.

FORM 189-1007

ARE YOU A MILITARY VETERAN?

Complete the survey, clip it out and mail it to Rep. Siptroth's Marshalls Creek office, or complete it online at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth.

As a veteran and a member of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, I am very interested in finding out more regarding the veterans living in the 189th Legislative District. If you are a military veteran, please complete the questionnaire below and return it to my office or complete it online at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth.

I will use the information to keep you informed of new legislation and the benefits you may be eligible for from the state. If there is more than one veteran in your home, please check both boxes beside your response.

1. I served in the:

- U.S. Army
- U.S. Navy
- U.S. Marine Corps
- U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Pennsylvania Army Guard, Air Guard, or Reserves

2. I served in:

- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- First Persian Gulf War
- in either Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom
- I am a veteran who served in a time when there was no declared conflict

3. I am a 100 percent disabled, honorably discharged veteran

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____



Make sure to read my monthly column in the Community Express!



Rep. Siptroth has helped several area organizations secure grants for operational expenses and to make needed improvements. These photos are from a few local ceremonial award presentations.



Rep. Siptroth was able to discuss state issues and constituent concerns with many of the residents who attended his second annual Senior Fair, co-hosted by state Rep. Mike Carroll.



www.pahouse.com/siptroth

Do you have questions about information in this newsletter, or are you curious about how Rep. Siptroth may be able to help you or your organization? Check his Web site www.pahouse.com/Siptroth for information or to sign up for free e-mail updates with the latest information from Harrisburg.





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CUTTING BACK ON DINNER TIME TELEMARKETING CALLS

You may need to renew your Do Not Call registration

When the "Do Not Call" registry was established in 2002, more than a million Pennsylvanians registered within the first two weeks and millions more have registered since.

If you're not on the list yet, you can sign up at any time by calling 1-888-777-3406 or online at www.nocallsplease.com.

Once you've signed up to be on the list, you can expect to stop receiving calls about 30 days later. You can register both land line and mobile phones.

If you've already registered, it may be time to renew your registration. Initial registration is only valid for five years, so the sooner the better to re-register.

If you need further information or assistance, visit my constituent service office at 4 Jay Park in Marshalls Creek, or call 866-604-5578.

LEGISLATION UPDATE:

Many ideas for new regulations and laws come from constituents who contact me. Here are some of the bills I have introduced this session to improve the quality of life in the Poconos and across the state.

H.R. 169 – would institute a study to determine if a plan I introduced to freeze property taxes for seniors and gradually eliminate them in stages would be feasible for Pennsylvania. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee would also perform a cost analysis for the plan. The resolution is in the House Finance Committee for consideration.

H.B. 1319 – would increase the fines for littering. The minimum fine would increase by \$700 for the first offense, so that the minimum fine would equal \$750. The maximum fine would be \$1,000 or imprisonment for no more than 90 days, or both. Fines for dumping litter in agricultural areas also would be increased by \$700, up to a maximum of \$1,600 for the first offense. The bill is in the Judiciary Committee.

H.B. 1079 – would tighten regulations over the mortgage industry by updating the Mortgage Bankers and Brokers and Consumer Equity Protection Act. Changes would include an annual licensing fee, as well as license limitations and suspensions. The bill is in the Commerce Committee.

H.B. 1016 – would further define indecent assault and toughen the penalty structure for those found guilty of sexual assault. The bill is being considered in the Judiciary Committee.

H.B. 1320 – would create a program urging people to safely dispose of medical sharps (needles, syringes, etc.). When disposed of in household trash they pose a risk to family members and sanitation workers.

FIGHTING CRIME

Continued from page 1

In even smaller communities like some of those in the Poconos, crime costs can obliterate a hospital's budget. When our hospitals and emergency room staff are treating crime-inflicted wounds, there are fewer resources remaining to deal with other health problems. These reasons make it essential for the entire community to take a stand against violence together because, in a way, victimization from one violent crime can multiply.

If you want to learn more about the Public Health and Violence Prevention Task Force, or learn about how you can become a partner in preventing crime in our communities, visit my Web site at www.pahouse.com/Siptroth and e-mail me. You can also stop by my office in Marshalls Creek for helpful brochures about stopping gang violence.