



State Representative
John J. Siptroth
 189th Legislative District



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JANUARY 2008

Dear neighbor,

I want to first take this opportunity to thank everyone for all the get-well wishes I received from residents across the district who wrote me letters and e-mails and called my office while I was recovering in the hospital and at home from my heart attack before Christmas. The messages I received gave me strength and kept my spirits up after my surgery.

I also want to publicly thank the fantastic staff at the Pocono Medical Center and the Essa Heart and Vascular Institute. With the professionalism and knowledge exhibited by the staff, I was confident I was receiving the best medical attention possible.

I also hope that everyone had a relaxing and fun holiday to spend time with friends and family and reflect on all the things we're thankful for.

Please take a few minutes to review this newsletter and see the steps taken in Harrisburg recently to improve the quality of life in the Poconos. There is also a significant portion devoted to saving energy.

As always, if you have a state-related question or issue, please feel free to call or visit my constituent service office.

Again, thank you for making this job so enjoyable, and I look forward to continuing my service to you.

Sincerely,

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 189th Legislative District

REFORMING OUR STATE EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA

Monroe and Pike County school districts have been unfairly treated by Harrisburg when it comes to how much money they receive each year from the education budget. Our current formula is out of date, based on old census data and does not reflect the huge growth in student population that we are experiencing in the Poconos. I am leading the way to reform the funding formula so that more tax dollars are returned to this community for public education. The more we receive from the state budget, the less school districts need to raise locally through additional taxation.

H.R. 460 is the first step in changing the way we fund our schools. My plan would create a commission to examine the data derived from the recent state Board of Education's costing-out study of public education in Pennsylvania that will produce a new and more equitable formula for the Department of Education and the General Assembly to use.

I worked closely with state Rep. Beverly Mackereth, R-York. Many York County school districts are encountering similar growth funding problems to those of the Poconos. As local residents know, our school districts are underfunded. Their burden continues to escalate as student enrollment multiplies, fueled by families moving here from New York and New Jersey. The growth has had a devastating impact on local school budgets, and my legislation aims to ensure that districts like ours are allocated enough to manage their added costs.

It is Harrisburg's responsibility to ensure all of our children get started on the right foot, and adequate and equitable education funding is essential.

The commission would have four primary goals, including ensuring that:

1. State funds allocated for basic education are distributed both adequately and equitably.
2. The allocation of state funding addresses and is reflective of unique characteristics among districts, including changes in demography and needs of students.
3. The allocation of state funding is linked with measures of accountability.
4. School districts remain accountable for meeting state academic standards and attaining student proficiency.

My legislation calls for a 41-member commission that would have a diversified membership, including parents of students enrolled in public schools, as well as education experts, the business community and members of child advocacy organizations.

The commission would have several powers and duties, ranging from reviewing the data from the costing-out study to examining national trends and studying demographic patterns that impact the state. The group also would need to consider federal mandates like No Child Left Behind in addition to state regulations, standards and guidelines, and look for ways to maximize cost-cutting strategies and cooperation between nearby districts. It would need to develop at least two formulas for distributing the state's education funds.

Further, time is of the essence, so the commission would be on a stringent timeline. The members would have to meet within 60 days of being appointed, and the

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BREAKING NEWS ON PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives unanimously passed legislation (H.B. 1947) on Jan. 17 that would amend Pennsylvania's Constitution to allow for the total elimination of school property taxes for homesteads and farmsteads. This bill now goes to the Senate for consideration and must pass this year so that further action can be taken in 2009.

GROWING A GREENER PENNSYLVANIA

In recent years, financial incentives and revitalization programs have encouraged developers to reinvest in Pennsylvania's brownfields – to take the economic risk associated with reclaiming once-contaminated land for productive use. Since 1995, more than 2,300 sites in Pennsylvania have been revitalized, creating or retaining 40,000 jobs.

One of the most effective financial incentives is provided by Growing Greener. Voters overwhelmingly approved funding for the initiative two years ago and it's played a major role in reclaiming land that was once useless.

Growing Greener is also preserving farmland and protecting open space, rehabilitating state parks and hunting and fishing facilities, cleaning up abandoned mines and restoring watersheds, and building new and upgraded water and sewer systems. Thanks to the wisdom of the voters, Growing Greener has bridged the gap between growing the economy and protecting the environment.

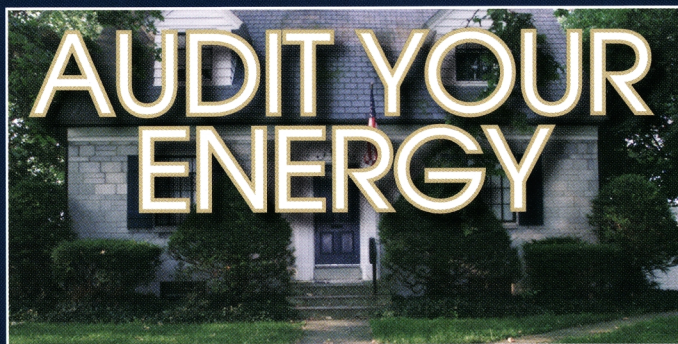


THOUSANDS MORE PENNSYLVANIANS GET THEIR RENT AND PROPERTY TAX REBATE

Last year we increased the earnings threshold for those seeking school property tax and rent rebates through the Pa. Lottery to \$35,000. We also extended the deadline for applications from July 30 to December 31. Following my public service announcement, my office, and those of every other local legislator, were inundated with seniors, widows and permanently disabled constituents who realized they were eligible for a rebate but had not yet applied. We sent out an additional 600 applications from my office alone, and the Dept. of Revenue is now processing these along with thousands more for people who will receive anywhere from \$250 to \$650 in rebates on taxes they paid in 2006. The deadline for rebates for 2006 has now passed, but the applications for rebates on taxes you paid in 2007 will be available in February. **Those that submitted an application last year will automatically be sent a new application by the Dept. of Revenue for the 2007 rebate.** If you do not receive one by the end of February, please call my office at 570-223-2636 and request one. As always, my staff is ready to answer your questions and assist you in completing and submitting your rebate application.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Replacing just 25 percent of the incandescent light bulbs in your home with energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs can cut your lighting bill by about 50 percent.
- Installing a programmable thermostat can save you about \$100 a year.
- Filling up when it's cooler outside, such as in the evening or morning, prevents gas fumes from heating up and creating ground-level ozone, or smog.
- "Topping off" your tank cancels the benefits of the pump's anti-pollution devices and increases the chance of harmful vapors being released into the air and for spilled gasoline to contaminate groundwater.
- If just one in 10 homes replaced its appliances with ENERGY STAR, air pollution would be reduced by 600 million pounds per year – equivalent to planting 1.7 million new acres of trees.



Visit my Web site and take the Home Energy Yardstick quiz. A home energy audit will help you find out which parts of your home use the most energy. Within five minutes, you'll know how your home energy use rates.

ALL HOMEOWNERS TO SEE PROPERTY TAX CUTS THIS YEAR

Budget Secretary Michael Masch has confirmed that 2008 will be the year that homeowners will see the first property tax cuts derived from gaming revenue. The property tax relief fund now contains more than \$576 million in proceeds from the Pennsylvania casinos that are now operating. This fund is expected to grow substantially as the casinos that are in the planning or construction stages begin operations. The slots revenue will be distributed to our school districts that must then reduce school property tax bills on a dollar-for-dollar ratio. In order to be eligible for school property tax cuts on your primary residence, you must have applied for the Homestead Exemption from the county assessors office. **Homeowners who have not already applied for the Homestead Exemption have until March 1 to apply in order to be eligible for the tax cuts being implemented in 2008.** If you pay your school property taxes to your mortgage company through an escrow account you will have to notify them when the school districts reduce their school property taxes as to the amount of the reduction so that they can adjust your payments accordingly.

FOCUS ON LEGISLATION:



We just completed the first year of the two-year legislative session, and in that time I introduced and supported several measures and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of Pennsylvanians by keeping them safe, investing in the economy and making Pennsylvania and the Poconos a better place to live, work and play.

Below are a number of measures I have supported or introduced that seek to meet these objectives.

H.B. 344 (Siptroth): would establish a separate cabinet-level department to oversee the affairs of Pennsylvania's 1.15 million veterans. By creating a new agency, state officials could address veterans' issues and concerns specifically and more effectively, improving outreach and giving each veteran the attention he or she deserves and assist in properly evaluating his or her needs.

A recent study also indicated veterans of the Commonwealth receive less from the federal government as result of not having adequate representation.

If the plan is adopted, Pennsylvania would join 18 states that already have a Department of Veterans' Affairs in place. It has the support of more than 50 legislators, from every region and from both parties.

The bill is awaiting consideration in the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

H.B. 1320 (Siptroth): would encourage people to safely dispose of hazardous medical sharps, including needles, syringes or lancets used for testing or medicating, which are generated at home.

Sharps used outside a medical facility are put into a household's regular trash can, which poses a risk to other family members and also to sanitation workers who pick up the trash bags.

Under the bill, the state Department of Environmental Protection would be required to develop a program for the safe disposal of home-generated sharps. This could include a mail-back program, drop-off sites, curbside pickup or home destruction devices.

The bill passed in the House 195-1, and now awaits consideration in the Senate.

H.B. 1598 (Siptroth): would allow local emergency management coordinators to use blue emergency lights on their vehicles at specified times in order to help quicken response times.

If approved, the bill would allow emergency management coordinators to join volunteer firefighters, ambulance personnel, certified search and rescue volunteers, and others who have permission to employ the blue lights on their private vehicles when responding to emergencies.

The measure has been approved by a House committee.

H.B. 1957: would permit local police officers to use radar in certain circumstances and with reasonable restrictions. Radar use would be permitted only by full-time local officers who are employed by full-service police departments and who have undergone training that has been approved by both the Pennsylvania State Police and the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission.

The bill would make Pennsylvania consistent with all 49 other states, in which municipal police officers are authorized to use radar to enforce speed limits.

The local governing body would have to adopt an ordinance prior to local radar use in a municipality, and in those areas where local radar is approved, official warnings would be posted to notify motorists.

The bipartisan bill is currently awaiting consideration in the House Transportation Committee.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS LEGISLATION? LET ME KNOW – VISIT MY WEB SITE AT WWW.PAHOUSE.COM/SIPTROTH AND SEND ME AN E-MAIL.



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A NEW TECHNOLOGY TO SAVE ENERGY COMES TO THE POCONOS

Last November, the Poconos officially welcomed DMI Manufacturing to northeastern Pennsylvania at a ribbon-cutting at Stroudsburg's Burnley Workshop.

DMI Manufacturing produces energy conservation technology that has been shown to reduce energy consumption by an average of 20 percent in residential, commercial and industrial models of the company's Energy Bank Unit.

EBU is a system that uses a sensing device to monitor power consumption and then deliver corrected, conditioned and harmonically adjusted electrical power without spikes or surges to maximize power efficiency.

EBU is important because there is a growing search for energy-conservation mechanisms and smart-energy practices around the world. I have been committed and am engaged in a dialogue to develop a smart-energy policy in the Commonwealth and am excited that the Poconos can play such a big role.

This technology could positively impact not only local residents, but eventually residents statewide and beyond, and the Poconos has secured its place on the energy

conservation map. In this age of skyrocketing energy prices, DMI's technology could be helpful as a remedy for when utility rate caps expire statewide in 2009, as they did in Pike County last year.

Keep checking my Web site for updates on the progress or news about DMI Manufacturing.



Guy Lestician is a longtime inventor and resident of Rep. Siptroth's legislative district. He contacted Siptroth in 2006 asking for help in bringing his energy-saving technology to the attention of Pennsylvania's leaders. Siptroth offered assistance and promoted the technology with local and regional economic development agencies.

H.R. 460

Continued from page 1

commission would have to produce an interim report within six months, and then deliver its findings to the governor, the president pro tempore of the Senate and speaker of the House within one year from its first meeting date.

The legislation was approved unanimously by the House Education Committee and was adopted by the full House, 192-2. It now moves to the Senate for consideration. I will continue to fight for a fair share of education dollars and growth supplements through my position on the House Appropriations Committee as we begin budget hearings in February.



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JULY 2008

Dear neighbor,

Please take a few minutes to review this newsletter to see what I'm doing in Harrisburg and the community to improve the quality of life in the Poconos. Check out legislation I'm working on, especially initiatives that work toward solutions for the current energy situation. Finally, find out about upcoming events in the area.

As always, if you have a state-related question or issue, please feel free to call or visit my main constituent service office or satellite office, or visit www.pahouse.com/Siptroth.

Sincerely,

John J. Siptroth
189th Legislative District



FIXING OUR ROADS & BRIDGES

Correcting the deficiencies in our local transportation infrastructure is a priority for me. I will continue to fight for an equitable share of state funding for our local roads and bridges through my position on the House Transportation Committee.

I have been relaying your complaints about the poor quality of the surfaces on certain Pike County state roads to the state Transportation Department and have been successful in getting it to make improvements on SR 2001 in Delaware Township and in Lehman Township. I will continue to push for the reconstruction of Milford Road in Pike County, for which PennDOT has set aside \$12 million over the next three years. I have also continued to request that work be done on Bushkill Falls Road, Raymondskill Road and several other state roads which you have identified as particularly poor and am working with PennDOT to have these issues addressed.

In Monroe County, I am happy to report that PennDOT is now improving drainage along Hollow Road in preparation for significant repair and repaving next year. In the ongoing redesign of the Marshall's Creek Bypass, I have asked if PennDOT can break out the construction of the new Park & Ride so work can begin on this part. I anticipate reviewing a full redesign of the Bypass project in a few months. PennDOT has budgeted \$2 million toward the first stage of the new plan. In the interim I have requested repairs on Marshall's Creek Road and at the Marshall's Creek lights. In the West End, PennDOT is investing \$3.5 million, generated under Act 44, for work on Route 33 and will also be repairing state roads throughout the area. Please continue to send me your issues with state roads in the 189th District and I will ensure that PennDOT is notified.

As PennDOT is engaged in work on many roads this summer, please be patient if you experience delays and be mindful of the road workers when travelling through construction areas.



UPCOMING EVENT ...

GREEN FAIR

PLEASE JOIN ME AT MY GREEN FAIR AT THE SHAWNEE INN & GOLF RESORT IN SHAWNEE ON DELAWARE

Sunday, Sept. 14

The event is free of charge and will run from noon to 5 p.m.

Vendors will feature environmentally friendly products and showcase alternative-energy solutions and sustainable agricultural programs.

Several state and local organizations will provide information on energy conservation, organic gardening, water testing and the care of septic systems.

Workshops and educational instruction on a range of green issues will be available for people of all age groups.

Vendors will include:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Burnley Workshop & DMI | Kreative Kuisine Home of Organic |
| Cherry Valley Community Supported Agriculture/Josie Porter Farm | Millers Paint |
| Del River Basin Commission (DRBC) | Monroe County Commissioners |
| DEP | Monroe County Conservation District |
| DEP - Swiftwater branch | PASA and BUY LOCAL campaign |
| Earthlight Supply | PEEC |
| Edge of the Woods Outfitters | Penn State Cooperative Extension |
| Gorilla Solar | Richards Tree Farm |
| Heat Shed | Rodale Institute |
| | Sun Spot Solar & Heating |



Rep. Siptroth joins animal advocates and other legislators at a recent news conference.

REP. SIPTROTH SECURES FUNDING FOR VARIOUS LOCAL PROJECTS

Over the last year, I have secured grants totaling nearly \$280,000 for 27 different projects and organizations in Pike and Monroe counties such as public libraries, independent living centers, schools and youth programs.

Among those grants, the Monroe County SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic received a total of \$30,000 to make upgrades to its facilities and I was able to successfully support \$20,000 of funding for the Pike County Humane Society.

I have long advocated for animal issues, and sponsored several pieces of legislation relating to animal rights. Below are two House bills I sponsored and another measure I supported.

House Bill 2447 would create a source of income for local Humane Societies and SPCAs through a \$2.50 additional fee for dog licenses. This will help keep our local groups from closing their doors!

House Bill 2547 would add Humane Society Police Officers (HSPOs) to the list of people who are given limited civil immunity in Pennsylvania. This will lower the cost of insurance and enable counties to hire more officers to come to the aid of abused and abandoned pets.

I also supported House Bill 1065, which would protect dogs from being chained outside all day in all climates. Aside from issues relating to food, water and adequate shelter, dogs are social animals and should not be isolated from companionship for long periods or denied affection or the opportunity to play.



Rep. Siptroth is joined by representatives from various organizations that received grant money.

FOCUS ON LEGISLATION:



Below is a list of bills I introduced, along with explanations of the bill language.

House Resolution 169 would direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study the feasibility, cost analysis and consequences of a local property tax freeze and the gradual elimination of local property taxes for senior citizens, and to make recommendations on alternative financing methods for school districts. It was reported out of the House Finance Committee in June.

House Bill 1319 would provide for minimum and maximum fines for littering. It was amended before being voted out of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee to include specific guidelines for how the fines would be imposed.

For 5 pounds of trash or less, the fine would be between \$50 and \$300, or between \$100 and \$500 for a second or subsequent offense. For between 5 pounds and 100 pounds of trash, fines would be between \$300 and \$500. For a second or subsequent offense, the fine would be between \$500 and \$1,000.

People caught dumping more than 100 pounds of trash would be subject to a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000, or between \$1,000 and \$2,000 for a second or subsequent offense.

Two thirds of any fine over \$300 collected for an offense that occurred in a county that has established a litter board or other such authority would be transferred to the litter board.

House Bill 344 would change the name of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to the Department of Military Affairs and create a separate Department of Veterans Affairs to actively aid veterans, their dependents, surviving dependents and beneficiaries in obtaining or maintaining privileges, rights and benefits to which they are entitled under federal and state laws. The bill also would create a Veterans' Home Hall of Fame to recognize and honor the military achievements of outstanding veterans who have completed honorable, active duty military service and who reside or resided in the geographic region served by the veterans' home. It has been referred to the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, which held a public hearing on the bill in June.

House Bill 2549 would give the Department of Environmental Protection authority to designate high hazard and unsafe dams, and to administer grant funds for projects related to fixing them. The bill passed the House in June and awaits Senate consideration.

Act 47 of 2008 (H.B. 2158) would authorize the Department of General Services, with the approval of the Department of Transportation and the governor, to grant Pike County 3.3 acres of land in Milford, which includes PennDOT's Pike County maintenance facility, in exchange for 13.5 acres in Blooming Grove Township. The exchange serves as a solution to Pike County's problems with personnel space and storage constraints and provide additional parking areas. The legislation became law in July.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS LEGISLATION? LET ME KNOW –
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2008-09 STATE BUDGET MAKES INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION, ENERGY

Again this year, we were able to secure a budget that has no tax increases yet provides significant investments for Pennsylvania's future.

House Democrats led the fight to make education a priority, with significant increases allocated to the growing school districts in our area; enacted policies that will reduce our reliance on foreign fuels and invest in alternative fuel production here at home; and made a commitment to build our economy and repair and upgrade our infrastructure.

EDUCATION

For the first time in nearly two decades, the new budget introduces a more predictable and fair education funding formula. Last fall, I introduced H.R. 460 to encourage action on the costing-out study the legislature commissioned in the previous session.

The almost unanimous passage of that resolution in the House in January prompted the governor and lawmakers to create a new funding formula to better direct state education dollars to the districts where they are needed most.

My district includes some of the fastest-growing school districts in the state, and area schools will receive between a 7 percent and 10 percent increase in their basic education funding, much higher than the statewide average of 3 percent.

We also reinvested in early education programs that help kids get off to a good start, and continued the Classrooms for the Future technology program, which will help bring learning into the 21st century.

Education was by far the biggest winner in this year's budget, and I am pleased to have cast my vote to invest in our children now so that we can build a foundation for our future.

ENERGY

This budget makes significant investments in renewable energy initiatives that will create jobs, reduce our reliance on foreign oil and make Pennsylvania a leader in the production of biofuels. With the \$650 million in funding outlined in the Energy Independence Fund, state biodiesel production incentives and subsidies, and investments in ethanol production, I am very excited about the direction in which Pennsylvania is heading on the energy front. I have been working with a number of local companies engaged in the research, development and manufacture of alternative-energy solutions and power conservation technologies who will benefit from this new investment.

Additional information about these and other components of the 2008-09 state budget are available at www.pahouse.com.



Rep. Siptroth joins Gov. Rendell at the signing of the education funding bill.