

State Representative
John J. Siptroth

189th Legislative District



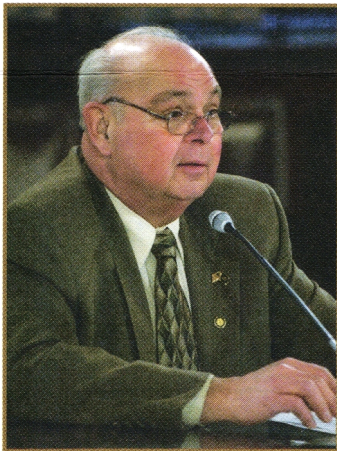
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WINTER 2009/10



Rep. Siptroth listens during an Appropriations Committee hearing.

New budget increases school funding \$300 million, protects volunteer fire departments, veterans' organizations and environment

I was frustrated that the state budget took too long to pass, but a bad fiscal plan would have been a disaster for the state.

I held my ground in opposing education cuts that would have eroded the quality of schools and shifted more of the tax burden to local homeowners. The new budget includes a \$300 million increase for basic education that should help to keep school property taxes in check. The Senate's budget plan did not include that increase.

The increase in basic education funding also will allow teachers to continue many quality programs that have resulted in significant gains in math and reading levels.

We also made significant cuts to the budget, spending less than we did last year and avoiding broad-based tax increases. Because I and other House members stood firm, the new budget does not include a proposed tax on the small games of chance that volunteer fire departments, veterans' groups and other community organizations use to raise money. Volunteer firefighters save Pennsylvania taxpayers an estimated \$6 billion per year.

We were also able to avoid many of the cuts in funding for veterans care programs that the Senate sought to impose.

The final budget also encourages economic opportunity while protecting the environment during drilling in the huge Marcellus Shale gas field. I worked with a group of environmentally conscious representatives to ensure that while the economic and energy potential of the gas field are developed, the extent of drilling and related operations are controlled to protect against adverse impact on the environment. We can still see the results of uncontrolled coal mining during the last century, and we're still working to clean it up and eliminate its effect on our waterways.

A better way to generate additional state revenue

I believe the best way to generate revenue is taxing the extraction of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation. Pennsylvania ranks 15th in natural gas production in the country. Of the top 15 natural gas producing states, we are the only one that does not charge a severance tax, except for California, which charges a conservation fee. Much of the Marcellus Shale natural gas will be leaving the state when Pennsylvania is close to full production.

A severance tax on natural gas would generate more than \$600 million per year after economic stimulus money

ends. We cannot afford to ignore this proposal. However, it isn't in this year's budget because the state Senate refused to vote for it. Instead, the Senate and several House members suggested leasing 390,000 acres of state forest land to gas companies. That would have destroyed huge amounts of state forest, just so they could say: "I did not vote for a tax increase."

The final budget compromise drastically scales back the forest leasing proposal and includes safeguards to protect these fragile lands for hunting, fishing, tourism and the benefit of future generations.

BE COUNTED

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau wants you to take 10 minutes to answer 10 questions. Your participation in the Census is required by law and vitally important because Census data directly affects how more than \$300 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and more.

All information you provide on the questionnaire, which will be mailed in March, is kept confidential. If you have any questions, please visit www.census.gov/2010census, or call the Census Bureau Call Center toll free at 1-800-923-8282. As always, you can call my constituent service office toll free at 866-604-5578.

NEW LAW WILL HELP MORE YOUNG ADULTS GET HEALTH INSURANCE

A new law I supported, Act 4 of 2009, will allow more parents to extend their health insurance coverage to their uninsured children through age 29. Many young adults are beginning their careers in jobs that do not offer benefits. Other young people are staying in school longer and pursuing advanced degrees. In either situation, this law gives many of them a way to secure affordable health-care coverage.

The law allows uninsured children through age 29 to be added to a parent's or guardian's employer-paid health coverage. It gives the policy holder – usually the parent's or guardian's employer – the right to decide if an adult child is added to the policy. I supported a House bill that would have let the employee make the choice, but the Senate would not agree to that. The new law also requires the employee to pay the cost of adding the dependent child to the coverage, with the cost determined by the insurer.

Health coverage costs 33 percent to 50 percent less, on average, when a young adult is added onto their parents' plan instead of when they must buy health insurance on their own. In Pennsylvania, 37.5 percent of the uninsured are between the ages of 19 and 29. This new law should help many of them.



Rep. Siptroth, a Navy veteran, speaks at a Capitol news conference attended by Operation Free, a coalition of veterans that support efforts to reduce carbon pollution and oil dependency because they recognize those issues as threats to national security. Rep. Siptroth is a strong advocate of using renewable sources of power, such as wind and solar, and energy efficiency to reduce our use of carbon-based fuels.

PPL RATE CAPS COME OFF

Caps were removed from PPL's electric generating rates on Jan. 1. A law passed in 1996 deregulated the supply of electricity in Pennsylvania and capped rates at 1996 levels for a number of years while utilities recovered their infrastructure costs prior to the transition. The law is designed to eventually drive the price of electricity down by introducing more competition.

That competition is not sufficient yet, however, and I do not believe rate caps should have expired at this time. I would have preferred to see the caps lifted gradually. The good news is that the deregulation law allows consumers to choose which company generates the electricity they use. This may help lower utility bills for many households.

For example, when rate caps expired for Duquesne Light Co. in the Pittsburgh area, prices initially increased. But after competitors entered the market, prices dropped below what they were when the rate caps were in place.

You can review shopping guides and statistics for electricity service at the Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate at www.oca.state.pa.us.

Meanwhile, I will continue to support local energy technology companies, which can help bring more power to the market and make energy use more efficient. Some of these companies were highlighted at my Green Fair in November, which was attended by hundreds of people.

If I can be of assistance, please contact me by calling (866) 604-5578 or visiting my Web site at <http://www.pahouse.com/siptroth>.

REP. SIPTROTH SEEKS STUDY ON IMPACT OF REDUCING SIZE OF LEGISLATURE

I have introduced a resolution that would direct the Joint State Government Commission to study the impact of reducing the size of the state's General Assembly. Several bills have been introduced to amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to reduce the size of the Legislature. They range from modest to sharp reductions.

We should have comprehensive data about the potential impact that reducing the General Assembly would have. Under my bill, the Joint State Government Commission would consider cost savings to taxpayers, residents' accessibility to their elected representatives, legislative effectiveness and efficiency, and how rural and urban areas would fare.

Under H.R. 571, the commission would report its findings to the General Assembly by Dec. 10, 2010.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, Pennsylvania has the second-most representative districts and the sixth-most senatorial districts in the nation. Pennsylvania is the sixth-most populous state. It ranks 14th in constituents per representative district and seventh in constituents per senatorial district.

SUPPORTING REFORM

I have co-sponsored several reform measures offered by my colleagues in the House of Representatives. One of those measures would reduce the number of Senate seats from 50 to 37 and the number of House seats from 203 to 185. It also would "nest" five House seats within one Senate district. I believe this would reduce the size of the legislature, but avoid giving more populous urban areas greater power.

Another measure I support would create a legislative Reapportionment Commission, whose chairman would be a registered Pennsylvania voter who does not hold any elected position and who has held no political office for 10 years previously. This commission would redraw legislative districts to make them equal, contiguous and related to county and municipal boundaries. The plan would be posted on the Internet for every citizen to see and for any citizen to appeal. I believe this would end the practice of gerrymandering in the Commonwealth.

Finally, I am co-sponsoring a bill that calls for a referendum at the next general election on holding a constitutional convention.

PLANNED COMMUNITY STUDY UNDER WAY

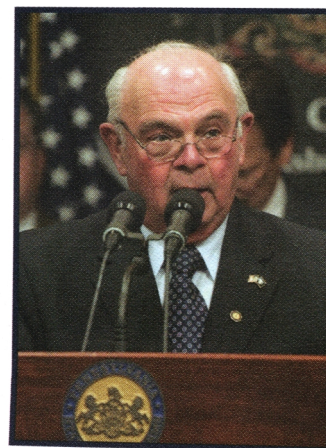
The nation's first study of planned communities, their infrastructure and how they can better access state funding is under way. It is the result of legislation I introduced.

The Joint State Government Commission is speaking with planning commissions, community associations and others as part of this study. The commission plans to determine:

- The number of private communities in each county and municipality.
- The amount of state and local taxes their residents pay per year.
- The amount and condition of infrastructure in these communities.
- Whether these communities should be allowed to access state money to improve infrastructure.
- Whether there are ways for the state to make sure these communities receive adequate services at an affordable cost.

I have been approached by representatives from private communities because roads, bridges, dams, wells and wastewater systems are becoming obsolete and overused as these communities grow. Many of these communities are not wealthy and lack the money to fund these often expensive repairs. Although residents in these communities support state funding programs with their tax money, they are often ineligible for many funding programs.

The study will form the basis for a series of legislative proposals I intend to write to help these communities and their host municipalities access more state funding.



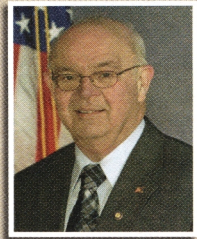
Rep. Siptroth participates in a Capitol news conference expressing concerns about a plan to lease more than 200,000 acres of state forest land for natural gas drilling. The lawmakers were ultimately able to defeat the proposal.



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Marshalls Creek bypass moves ahead

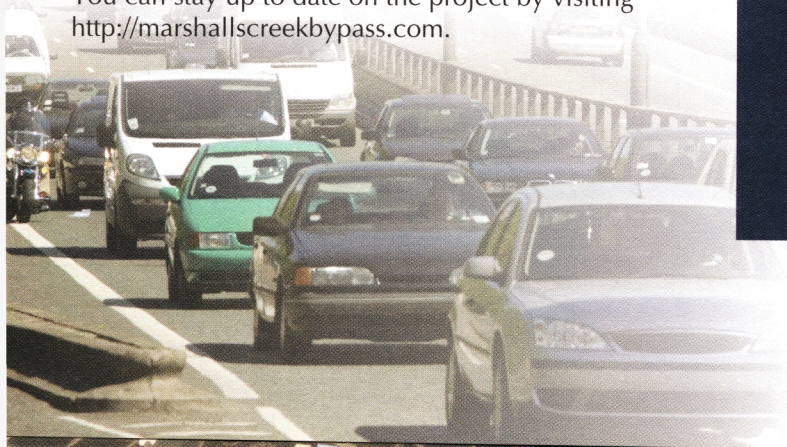
I'm continuing to work on permitting issues with the federal government for the Marshalls Creek Bypass. Once those issues are resolved, the project should go out to bid in the spring.

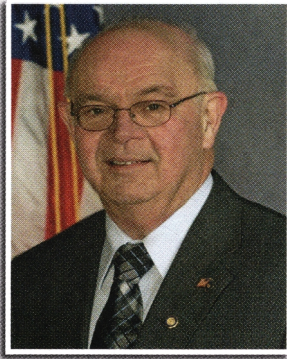
I was happy to see the Marshalls Creek Park and Ride open late last year. I hope it will help ease traffic congestion in the area by encouraging commuters to share rides. I want to thank the many state and local offices who helped make the 418-space park and ride come to fruition. That was an important step, but a lot of work remains ahead. I will use my position on the House Transportation Committee to advance the project.

You can stay up to date on the project by visiting <http://marshallscreekbypass.com>.



Rep. Siptroth gets a seasonal flu shot during his Monroe County senior fair in October. He also hosted a senior fair for his Pike County constituents. Hundreds of seniors were able to get flu shots and information about important state programs.





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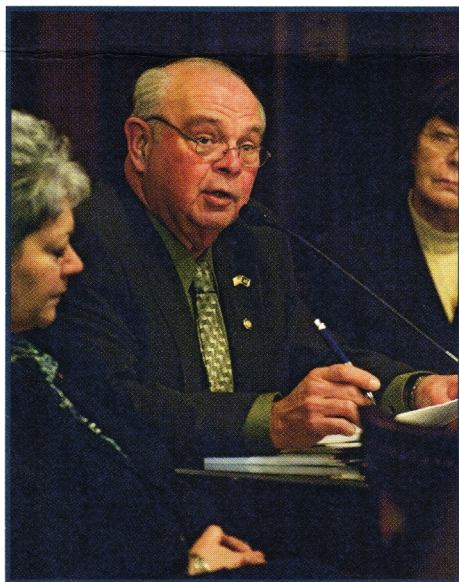
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SUMMER 2010



New budget invests in basic education, holds the line on taxes

I voted for a \$28 billion budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year that holds the line on taxes while continuing to build on Pennsylvania's commitment to properly fund basic education.

During my tenure, there have been no broad-based tax increases in the state's budget.

In negotiations with the Senate, we were able to secure a \$250 million education increase that will send more state dollars to our local school districts and reduce the need for school boards to seek that revenue from homeowners.

I and House Democrats wanted a \$355 million increase for education, but because the Senate Republicans rejected or delayed alternative funding sources for this year's budget, such as a Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction tax, we compromised and accepted a lower amount.

The budget includes a funding formula for basic education subsidies that compares each district's adequacy target as identified by my costing-out study to its actual spending. The difference between these two figures is the district's "adequacy gap."

Rep. Siptroth, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, makes a point about the budget.

The funding formula, first used in fiscal year 2008-09 as a result of my legislation, calls for the state to phase in \$2.6 billion in new state funding to help fill the adequacy gap, with an emphasis on aiding school districts that have the highest local tax levels and the greatest needs. Most states directly fund 50 percent of public education. In Pennsylvania, the state's share is 32 percent, which is one reason why local taxes are high.

The budget was not without painful cuts – cuts that made me cast my vote reluctantly. Nearly every line item was cut, including the House of Representatives. Key public health programs, libraries and environmental protection sustained cuts.

Next year's budget will bring more difficult choices. The state will likely be facing a multi-billion-dollar deficit because of the loss of federal stimulus money and a transportation and pension funding crisis.

Basic education subsidies in the 189th Legislative District

School	2010-11 subsidy	Dollar increase over last year	Percentage increase
Delaware Valley	\$14,412,679	\$946,101	7.03%
East Stroudsburg	\$13,419,105	\$935,759	7.5%
Pleasant Valley	\$22,736,142	\$445,807	2%
Stroudsburg	\$10,000,084	\$196,080	2%

SCHOOL AED LEGISLATION ADVANCES

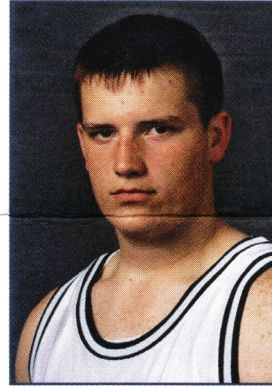
Ten years ago, 15-year-old Greg Moyer died in Pike County from an undetected heart condition during halftime of his first high school varsity basketball game.

Greg might still be with us if the school had an automated external defibrillator and someone trained to use it. His parents, John and Rachel Moyer, have worked since his death to get AEDs in all schools and have established a fund to make the devices available in other public places.

The Moyers' work led to Act 4 of 2001, which established a program in the Department of Education enabling schools to obtain AEDs. I have introduced House Bill 1803 to build on Act 4 and prevent more deaths.

Under my bill, an AED and at least one school employee or emergency responder trained to use the device would have to be present at all school events. It would allow the state Department of Education to accept and distribute donations of AED and CPR equipment and instructions.

My bill has won approval from the House Education Committee, and I'm hoping it passes the House this fall.



Greg Moyer



Rep. Siptroth presents Rachel and John Moyer with a copy of House Resolution 707, a Resolution designating April 25, 2010, as "Gregory W. Moyer Day" in Pennsylvania.

SIPTROTH'S GREEN TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION BILL WINS HOUSE APPROVAL

My bill aimed at reducing the state's energy costs and its carbon footprint while creating good-paying, green energy technology jobs was passed by the House of Representatives in July.

Under House Bill 2601, the secretary of the Department of General Services could direct a state agency to test the effectiveness of a technology or process for 30 to 60 days if it promotes energy conservation or renewable energy technology.

For a technology to be considered, it must be proven to be safe. Sufficient research and development must have taken place, and the technology would have to have the potential to be used commercially two years after the agency tests it. The testing would be done at no cost to the state; the technology company would bear the cost.

If the technology were shown to reduce energy use, reliance on fossil fuels or greenhouse gas emissions, its use could be expanded to all state agencies.

My bill is a win-win for the state and would create new jobs here in the 189th Legislative District. I look forward to quick passage in the Senate.

DEADLINE EXTENDED TO APPLY FOR PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE UNTIL DEC. 31

Applications for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program are available in my office. The deadline to apply for the rebate has been extended until the end of this year. The program provides rebates of up to \$650 to qualifying homeowners and renters.

To qualify, homeowners must have a household income of \$35,000 per year or less and renters \$15,000 per year or less, be 65 or older, a widow or widower 50 or older, or 18 or older and permanently disabled. As always, only half of an applicant's Social Security or federal Railroad Retirement Tier I income is counted against the income limits.



HOUSE TACKLES TRANSPORTATION FUNDING CRISIS

I am a member of the House Transportation Committee, which held hearings across the state this spring to find solutions to the transportation budget funding gap caused by the federal government's decision to reject tolling on Interstate 80. These hearings were bipartisan because both parties agree this issue needs solutions.

My concern now is where the new revenue will come from and how it will impact you. I also want to know how much of that revenue will find its way to Monroe and Pike counties.

Testifiers at the hearings suggested a number of solutions, from raising vehicle registration and/or oil franchise fees to a fuel-tax increase. There was even a suggestion of charging motorists for using restricted high-speed lanes on some of the state's interstates. Charging motorists for the amount of miles they drive was suggested, but this would certainly negatively impact commuters in my district.

All the options are difficult, but eventually we must choose one, or several of them, because a study has determined that Pennsylvania needs another \$3.5 billion a year to maintain its highways, bridges and mass transit systems.

Without adequate funding for transportation infrastructure, our roads and bridges will continue to crumble. Weight restrictions on major bridges will force trucks onto secondary roads, and interstates will see increased lane closures, bringing commerce and tourism to a standstill.

On a positive note, the state Department of Transportation agreed to spend \$24 million of Act 44 money that has been generated by higher Pennsylvania Turnpike fees to repave Interstate 80 from Bartonsville to Delaware Water Gap. The decision was made after PennDOT executives were invited to see the poor condition of the highway. Work is expected to begin this fall.



Rep. Siproth listens to public testimony in a committee hearing.

MARSHALLS CREEK BYPASS WILL HELP THE REGION

The final phase of the Marshalls Creek bypass will begin this summer and is scheduled to be completed in October 2012.

This part of the project will relocate Route 209 as a two-lane highway around Marshalls Creek and improve intersections with secondary roads. When complete, it should cut commuting times for area residents, reduce traffic volume on secondary roads in Smithfield and Middle Smithfield townships and improve travel safety in the region.

I fought very hard to keep this project alive and funded. I will continue to use my position on the House Transportation Committee to push for funding to improve local roads and to ensure that Monroe and Pike counties get our fair share of state transportation money.

Previous phases of the project included intersection improvements, construction of a 400-space park-and-ride lot and improved storm water management along Route 209 north of Marshalls Creek.



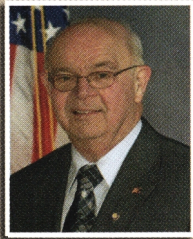
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Inside:

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Green Living Fair

Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 22
 Shawnee Inn, Shawnee-On-Delaware.
 Expanded event this year with more local businesses and demonstrations.

Monroe Senior Fair

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 10
 West End Fairgrounds
 Fairgrounds Road, Gilbert
 Free parking and admission at both fairs, along with services and information geared to seniors.

Pike Senior Fair

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 23
 Delaware Township Building, Wilson Hill Road

PLANNED COMMUNITY STUDY ADVANCING

The nation's first statewide study of planned communities that is the result of House Resolution 350, which I introduced, is well under way.

The Joint State Legislative Commission is gathering comments from planning organizations, municipalities and boards of directors of communities.

Residential subdivisions remain the most popular form of housing development for home builders and local governments in Pennsylvania. Because the majority of citizens in the 189th District live in these communities, I would like to know what infrastructure problems they face and how we prevent future communities from experiencing the same issues of inadequate infrastructure without necessary financial resources to correct them. Based upon the findings of this study, I will craft appropriate legislation to address the consensus of concerns.



Rep. Siptroth greets Lehman Intermediate School students at the Capitol.