



Dear Neighbor:

It's June, and the halls and hearing rooms of the state Capitol and the House and Senate chambers are buzzing with activity, and legislation expected to be part of the annual budget is starting to move.

Gov. Josh Shapiro is proposing a whopping \$48.34 billion budget for fiscal year 2024-25. That represents a \$3.7 billion increase in state spending, up 8.4% from last year. The governor's plan does nothing to address the Commonwealth's structural deficit. And to make matters worse, it proposes to spend the nearly \$16 billion state surplus and the Rainy Day Fund to balance the next several budgets.

Moving forward, these resources will be sorely needed to keep pace with our rapidly aging population and the rising costs of health care and other services for our elderly residents, as well as others in need.

While the governor's budget proposes a substantial increase in basic education funding, it provides no plan for improvements or accountability. His plan to improve higher education also lacks appropriate detail.

Having served on the House Appropriations Committee for many years and having worked closely on past budgets, I believe the governor's plan reverses the progress made by colleagues and me over the past several years to rebuild the state's reserves and position the Commonwealth to handle future economic downturns.

I am not supportive of the current proposed budget, but I will work with my House colleagues in an attempt to develop a more financially responsible plan that brings spending into line and protects the taxpayers, while still meeting key needs.

Sincerely,

Rep. Keith J. Greiner, CPA

Focusing on Students and Academic Achievement

Education funding accounts for more than one-third of total annual state spending. Each year, there is a real struggle in the General Assembly to ensure education dollars are truly spent on educating our children.

Last year, the Commonwealth Court ruled that Pennsylvania's method of funding public education is inequitable and, therefore, unconstitutional and puts the onus on the General Assembly to fix it. The court found that wealthier school districts receive a disproportionately higher share of state funding, while poor districts get far less.

Instead of taking all state monies appropriated to primary education and disseminating it through a per pupil formula that considers poverty, special needs, language barriers, consumer price index, etc., Pennsylvania House Democrats, unilaterally, advanced an aggressive education spending plan requiring billions of additional tax dollars. Worse yet, the plan would focus on systems, not students, and limits accountability in terms of academic performance.

Pennsylvania's per pupil spending has reached record levels at almost \$22,000, including federal, state and local sources, ranking us seventh in the nation. Despite this unprecedented level of funding, student academic performance statewide has declined year-over-year and remains below pre-COVID scores.

What is even more concerning is that this record level of spending has occurred while statewide student enrollment in public schools declined. Since the 2000 school year, enrollment in Pennsylvania public schools has declined by 136,000 students while district revenues soared by 134%. This demonstrates that simply throwing money at this issue is not the solution.

The basic education funding plan before us does nothing to fix our failing education system or to support school choice, which would provide a lifeline to students in failing school districts. I am not suggesting the solutions to solve Pennsylvania's inequitable per-pupil spending and plummeting student achievement scores are simple, but our schools must start out on equal footing with access to state resources based on logical multipliers that have broad bipartisan support.

By establishing clear guardrails and allowing the money to follow the student to their choice of state-accredited program that meets their specific needs, we will shift the focus of education back to where it belongs – on the student. Instead, our current system traps students in schools based upon their ZIP code that often fail to meet their needs.

In our ever-changing world, we simply cannot continue to throw more and more money at an outdated and ineffective education system. It is time to focus on students and chart a path that is fair, equitable and serves their academic needs. I wholeheartedly believe there is much room for negotiation for a real solution around the effective stewardship of children's academic success.



Junior Achievement's REAL Life Program at Ephrata High School

As a certified public accountant (CPA), I am impressed with the Junior Achievement's REAL Life program, a financial literacy and career readiness forum, which is a day-long program held at high schools. Earlier this year, I visited Ephrata High School where 11th-graders participated in various activities guided by local volunteers. With Junior Achievement of South Central PA CEO Tom Russell, I observed the students participating in budgeting activities intended to help them gain an appreciation for the importance that financial decisions will play in their lives as young adults. Other activities focused on career readiness, including interviewing skills and resume-writing tips. It was gratifying to see how engaged the students were in these activities, which provide the groundwork for the financial decisions they will have to make after graduation.

AROUND THE DISTRICT



TIN INITIATIVE IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE IN PEQUEA VALLEY

Recently, I attended a meeting of Pequea Valley's "Together Initiative Network" (TIN) at Factory Ministries. TIN is comprised of a broad cross section of community leaders, representing business, education, health, housing, social services and our faith community. Each provided updates on various issues under their respective areas of responsibility. Then the meeting was open to discussion, which focused largely on job development, education and housing issues. It was encouraging to learn about the numerous successes this group has had in the Pequea Valley area, and its vision to further improve the community. These leaders have proven just how much can be accomplished when a community comes together as a team.

GARDEN SPOT VILLAGE EXPO DRAWS ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD

This spring, my staff and I had the privilege of participating in Garden Spot Village's 23rd Annual Business Expo at which 86 local businesses demonstrated what they have to offer the residents and future residents of Garden Spot Village. We had a wonderful turnout! It was a pleasure to connect with so many new and familiar faces and to provide useful information on state programs and services, as well as the many services available through my legislative office, located in the West Earl Township Municipal Building. I enjoyed talking with the current and future residents throughout the day about their legislative interests and concerns. Thank you to Garden Spot Village for the opportunity to participate in this great annual event!



AKRON VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. CELEBRATES MEMBER MILESTONES

In late March, I was privileged to participate in Akron Volunteer Fire Company's annual awards banquet, where I presented certificates of achievement on behalf of the 43rd District to Sara Bucher, Justin Gehman, Harold Zimmerman and Ray Zimmerman for 20 years of service; H. Lynn Crills, Timothy Hoffman and Karen Leisey for 30 years of service; J. Lyn Beiler, Thomas Murray, Thomas Murray Jr. and Joseph Zimmerman for 40 years of service; and Diana Ross and Larry Ross for 50 years of service with the fire company. Thank you to all the volunteers, firefighters, fire police and auxiliary for your dedicated service and commitment to our community. Pictured with me are Chief Timothy Hoffman and Dale Miller, president.



HONORING NEW LIFETIME MEMBER OF EPHRATA PIONEER FIRE CO.

In April, I had the privilege of presenting a House citation to Matthew Hildebrand of Ephrata Pioneer Fire Co. in recognition of his 30 years of dedicated service and becoming the fire company's newest life member. Over the years, he has served as company trustee, driver, fire policeman and engineer. He has been very active and continues to show his support by helping with fundraising. Thank you, Matthew, and all the Ephrata Pioneer firefighters for your continued dedication to the community!



ELANCO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN NEW HOLLAND

Earlier this year, my staff and I participated in ELANCO Community Collaboration, a unique meeting of partnering organizations, spearheaded by CrossNet Ministries. Members from many community sectors discussed potential solutions to needs in the eastern Lancaster County area. Representatives from the school district, state and local government, emergency services, businesses, churches and other service entities came together to share their services and willingness to help where needed. We are extremely fortunate to have these incredible leaders who take the time to listen and offer their support and resources to serve the residents of eastern Lancaster County.



LIONS CLUB MEETS IN LEOLA

I had the pleasure of addressing a meeting of the Bareville, Leola, Leacock Lions Club at the Upper Leacock War Memorial Building. I provided an update on legislation I am sponsoring and highlighted some of the challenges before the state General Assembly during the past year. I always appreciate the invitation to attend their meetings and enjoy the company of this outstanding group of community volunteers. As always, I want to thank them for all they do for the Leola area. Pictured with me is Ken McCombs, club president.



HERITAGE DAYS OFFERS GOOD FOOD, MUSIC AND FAMILY FUN

Recently, I joined the festivities at Intercourse Heritage Days at the Community Park. The event featured an abundance of family-friendly activities, good food and fun, including a laser show in the evening! Here, I am pictured with Tina Sobers, Jeff Hausmann and Lori Harner, volunteers who helped serve breakfast sponsored by the Intercourse Fire Company. Spectacular weather led to a great turnout for this annual event!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

For more than a decade, I have championed legislation to establish an earlier Pennsylvania primary in presidential election years, giving Pennsylvania voters greater clout in choosing the nation's next president.

After sponsoring House Bill 51 last year to move the 2024 presidential primary election to the third week in March failed to make its way through the legislative process in time, I re-introduced the legislation in November. House Bill 1857 would amend the Pennsylvania Election Code to move our presidential primary election from the fourth Tuesday in April to the third Tuesday in March. Other states holding primaries that day include Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kansas and Ohio. My bill establishes an effective date of Jan. 1, 2028, to ensure ample time for the next presidential election cycle.

As the fifth most populous state in the country and an important swing state, Pennsylvania should play a more significant role in selecting our nation's president. Currently, 38 states hold their primaries or caucuses ahead of us. By the time we cast our votes here in the Commonwealth, our candidates in the presidential race have essentially been determined. My legislation would raise Pennsylvania's profile and give voters greater leverage in deciding who our candidates will be. House Bill 1857 is pending action in the House State Government Committee.

MY OTHER BILLS INCLUDE:

- **House Bill 1238** — Would extend the \$50 million Pennsylvania Rural Jobs and Investment Tax Credit (RJTC) program, which provides growth capital for small, rural businesses and creates family-sustaining jobs in rural communities.
- **House Bill 1364** — Would permit licensed professionals to receive advisory opinions from licensing boards concerning the meaning or interpretation of a law or regulation pertaining to the licensee. Such advice could prevent mistakes and costly penalties. Under current law, licensing boards are not permitted to offer guidance.
- **House Bill 1631** — Would repeal a law that authorizes counties and cities to levy a tax of up to 4 mills on certain income-generating assets, including mortgages and other interest-bearing obligations and accounts, certain public and corporate loans, and shares of stock not subject to capital stock or bank shares taxes. Interest by taxing authorities to impose the tax has dwindled to zero amid challenges to the constitutionality of similar measures in other states. My bill would eliminate it here in Pennsylvania.
- **House Bill 2019** — Would allow for the optional abolishment of the office of elected auditor in townships of the second class, an option already available to first-class townships and boroughs. Most second-class townships contract with a certified public accountant for annual audits. Elected auditors are not involved. My legislation would also enable boards of supervisors to set salaries of roadmasters and other positions that may be held by a supervisor to avoid a supervisor setting his or her own salary.
- **House Bill 1267** — Would update the PA 529 Tuition Account Program and College Savings Bond Act to align with a change in federal law permitting the accounts to be used for K-12 tuition, in addition to post-secondary expenses.
- **House Bill 1584** — Changes to the federal tax code created a new cap on the itemized deduction of state and local taxes for certain taxpayers. This led to unfair treatment of certain Pennsylvania taxpayers as compared to their peers in surrounding states and has hurt the Commonwealth's competitiveness. Under my bill, Pennsylvanians would have the ability to reduce their federal tax liability related to the taxes they pay to local and state jurisdictions. The proposal would not have any impact on the Commonwealth's tax revenues, nor would it raise taxes on any Pennsylvania taxpayer.
- **House Bill 1777** — Would strengthen Pennsylvania's farmland preservation program and agricultural economy by helping eligible nonprofit entities to invest in farmland preservation efforts. Doing so would ease the burden on taxpayers and ensure Pennsylvania retains its ability to feed its citizens.
- **House Bill 1824** — Would provide nonprofit organizations with a clear financial reporting standard that is aligned with federal requirements and raises the threshold for an audit. The bill specifies when a review or audit by a certified public accountant is required.

Application Deadline Extended for 2023 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

The deadline for senior citizens and Pennsylvanians with disabilities to apply for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2023 has been extended to Dec. 31.

Income limits for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program increased this year to \$45,000 for both homeowners and renters. If you were earning too much to qualify before, you may be eligible now. Remember to exclude 50% of Social Security when determining your income. The law I supported to expand the program also increased the maximum rebate to \$1,000.

The program is open to residents age 65 years and older; widows and widowers 50 years and older; and people with disabilities 18 years and older. Remember – you do not need to pay anyone for assistance to apply for the rebates. Apply online at my.path.pa.gov, or contact my office for assistance. For additional information, visit <https://bit.ly/3uar0oa>.

Rebates will be distributed beginning July 1, as required by law.



State Representative

KEITH J. GREINER, CPA

Proudly Serving the 43rd Legislative District

P.O. Box 202043, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2043

FOLLOW ME ONLINE!

 **RepGreiner.com**

 **/RepGreiner**



HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP WITH STATE-RELATED ISSUES? CONTACT MY DISTRICT OFFICE!

DISTRICT OFFICE: 157 W. Metzler Road (West Earl Township Building), Ephrata, PA 17522 • **717-588-2044**

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 218, Brownstown, PA 17508

HARRISBURG OFFICE: 49 East Wing, P.O. Box 202043, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2043 • **717-783-6422**

Local Fire, EMS Companies Receive State Grants

Thirteen fire and ambulance companies in the 43rd Legislative District were awarded nearly \$257,000 in state grants through the 2023-24 Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Grant Program.

As a former firefighter, I know how much we rely on our firefighters and EMS personnel to respond to emergencies here in Lancaster County and across the Commonwealth. It is imperative they have the proper equipment and staffing to ensure they are there for us in our times of need.

The grants may be used for construction or renovation of a unit's station, the purchase or repair of equipment, training, debt reduction, education and public outreach, as well as staff recruitment and retention efforts.

This year's grant recipients are:

- **Akron Vol. Fire Co.**..... \$15,396
- **Bareville Fire Co. No. 1**..... \$14,812
- **Ephrata Community Ambulance Assn. Inc.**..... \$15,000
- **Farmersville Fire Co.** \$15,785
- **Garden Spot Fire Rescue** \$29,952
- **Intercourse Fire Co.**..... \$14,423
- **Lincoln Fire Co. No. 1**..... \$29,952
- **Martindale Vol. Fire Co.** \$14,618
- **New Holland Ambulance Assn.** \$30,000
- **Pequea Valley Fire Dept.**..... \$29,812
- **Pioneer Steam Fire Engine Co. No. 1** \$16,757
- **Upper Leacock Fire Co.**..... \$13,840
- **West Earl Fire Co. No. 1**..... \$16,174



Swearing-in Lancaster County Firemen's Association 2024 Officers

Earlier this year, I had the honor of swearing-in the 2024 Lancaster County Zone 3 Firemen's Association officers at Martindale Fire Co. Zone 3, which includes the following fire and emergency services companies in the 43rd District: Bareville, Farmersville, Garden Spot Fire Rescue, Martindale and Upper Leacock fire companies, as well as New Holland Ambulance.

The association's mission is to provide training and education to volunteer firefighters to enhance their professionalism and capabilities, and to protect citizens from the devastation of fire, environmental hazards and the effects of natural disasters.

Officers pictured with me from left to right are Troy Weaver, Tony Groff, Lavern Zimmerman, Nelson Shirk, Duane Leinbach, Earl Witmer, Steve King and Larry Martin.

Get Ready for REAL ID

The deadline for enforcement of the federal REAL ID Act is set to begin on May 7, 2025. As of that date, you will have to present a federally accepted form of identification to board a commercial domestic flight or visit a secure federal building that requires ID at the door. Federally accepted forms of identification include a Pennsylvania REAL ID driver's license or ID card, a U.S. passport or passport card, or a military ID. While all Pennsylvanians must comply with the new law, obtaining a state-issued REAL ID is not mandatory. PennDOT will continue to offer standard-issue driver's licenses and photo IDs.

Full enforcement of the law has been delayed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was hindering efforts to process REAL ID applications across the country. To learn more about REAL ID and how to obtain one, visit www.penndot.gov/REALID.