



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Curt Sonney

Working for a Better Erie County, 4th Legislative District

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Dear Friends,

Like most of you, I am happy to see and feel the end of a harsh winter and now look forward to the blossoming of spring in our beautiful corner of the Commonwealth.

Spring in Harrisburg means another budget season. This is easily the most difficult negotiating period I have experienced since taking office in 2005, and legislators with more years under their belts than me have said the same thing. Some tough decisions and sacrifices will have to be made, thanks to our economy and past spending practices that I repeatedly voted against.

Thank you for taking time to read my newsletter. If you are receiving it via conventional mail and would prefer to receive an e-mail copy in the future, please visit my website, RepSonney.com, and register your name. At that time, you can also subscribe to have my weekly Headline Harrisburg legislative updates e-mailed to you by giving us your address.

I also need to thank you for sending me to the state Capitol once again. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the residents of the 4th Legislative District, as well as a responsibility I do not take lightly.

Sincerely,

Curt Sonney

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The Budget Process Begins

Governor Corbett's March 8 budget announcement took many of us by surprise in the level of severity with which he proposes to cut. That being said, every such proposal by each of Pennsylvania's governors down through the years has been nothing more than a starting point from which negotiations will take place. Those negotiations are underway with the recently-completed hearings held by the House Appropriations Committee of which I am a member.

The governor's intentions move us in the right direction. After years of spending habits that did not mimic those of the people who send us to Harrisburg, it is time to face the harsh reality that, as Gov. Corbett said, "The people have no more to give."

Sacrifices will have to be made and those sacrifices will in many cases not be easy. Decisions that affect lives will ultimately have to be made. One of his (and my) priorities is the health and safety of our citizens, which is why I was pleased with his desire to budget for two state police cadet classes this year and another next year.

While I agree that we need to tighten our belts in all areas including education, I was disappointed with the level of funding for our public schools and the governor's wish to increase the appropriation for welfare. House Republicans are pursuing legislation that addresses the fraud and abuse that Auditor General Jack Wagner has uncovered. It is my hope that these reform bills will return accountability to the welfare system, ensure that our welfare dollars reach the people that truly need them, and in turn free up further support for our education system.



In February, Erie County Vo-Tech traveled to the state Capitol as part of Career and Technical Education Month. I spoke with Britteny Roskie, who is studying to be a registered nurse. The school's display showed examples of culinary arts, childhood education, networking technology and health assistance.

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Answering Your Call For Environmental Reforms

In reaction to constituent requests being made of my office, I have introduced a pair of bills that amend the 1984 Oil and Gas Act with regard to environmental issues.

House Bill 1045 would mandate that any new, existing or expanded natural gas compressor station shall not exceed a noise threshold of a day-night level of 55 dBA. The operator of each natural gas compressor station would also be required to notify, in writing, all landowners owning property, with or without a residence, and within 2,500 feet of a proposed natural gas compressor station 60 days prior to starting construction of the station.

House Bill 1046 amends the act to require that no well site may be prepared or a well drilled within 330 feet from a surface property line. This would not apply to wells drilled into the Middle Devonian Marcellus Formation or the Oriskany Formation. My legislation would also adjust the amount of bonding required of the potential well operator.

Legislation I Have Introduced

Here is a list of some of the 17 pieces of legislation I have introduced to date in this session

House Bill 346: Removes principal and interest accrued from savings bonds from the definition of "income, with regard to the State Lottery Law

House Bill 349: Amends the Local Option Small Games of Chance Act to allow raffle tickets may be sold off the licensed premises in any licensed eating place, restaurant or retail dispenser

House Bill 351: Taps Pennsylvania's film tax credit to create a new tax credit for taxpayers who incurs expenses through drilling and construction of a qualified natural residential gas well

House Bill 839: Allows wine to be imported into and transported within Pennsylvania by out-of-State wineries

House Bill 840: Exempts anyone 65 years of age and older from paying per capita taxes



The Right To Defend One's "Castle"

I am a co-sponsor of House Bill 40, referred to as the Castle Doctrine legislation. The legislation is a step away from being passed to the state Senate by the House. It will be voted on final passage sometime after we return to session in April.

This legislation creates a presumption that an attacker or intruder intends to do great bodily harm to you and others inside of your home or occupied vehicle, and force, including deadly force, may be used to protect yourself, your family and others.

House Bill 40 does not endorse unlawful aggression; rather, it provides individuals with the necessary legal protection to respond to unlawful aggression. A citizen defending his or her home should not have to be forced into a legal analysis when someone is breaking down the door at 4 a.m.

Communicating with You Electronically

I have created a Facebook page as another tool by which we can communicate. Using Facebook to keep in touch is just another way of bringing the legislative process to the people of the 4th Legislative District. The General Assembly has heard the demand for more openness and transparency in state government, and my decision to initiate a Facebook page is a move in that direction. The web address for my page is

<https://www.facebook.com/repsonney>.



Giving Homeowners the Right To Choose

I also support House Bill 377, which would remove the sprinkler mandate from the Uniform Construction Code and return this decision on safety to the hands of the homeowner. The bill has been passed by the state House and is now being considered by the Senate.

No one will contest the fact that there is a safety component to this argument; however, the choice of whether or not to install a costly sprinkler system should be left up to those that "pay the bill." Our state's economy is struggling as it is. There is no doubt that this legislation has made Pennsylvanians think twice before building a new home. A definite reduction in building permits began late last year when the bill was signed into law.

Repealing this act will help to jump start the home building industry, and is a step in the right direction toward making Pennsylvania consumer friendly.

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