



Capitol Correspondence

from

State Senator

Daylin Leach



Serving Delaware and Montgomery Counties

Summer 2015

Dear Friend,

As I write this, we are preparing to enter the final, intense budget negotiations. As you may know, the Pennsylvania Constitution requires that we pass a budget for the new fiscal year by the end of the previous fiscal year, which always falls on June 30th. Over the past several years, we have often passed our budgets later than that. This can result in a shutdown of certain government services. The reason the budget is sometimes late is often the subject of misconceptions and misreporting, so let me see if I can break it down.

If the budget is not passed by the legislature, and signed by the governor by June 30th, it's not because we didn't bother to do it, or because we haven't been doing our jobs, or because we were focused on other things. There is one reason a budget does not get passed on time. It is because the legislature and the governor disagree on what the budget should contain.

This is particularly likely to happen when we have divided government (as we do now), with the legislature controlled by one party and the Governor's Office controlled by another. There is simply a philosophical difference to be worked out. Eventually, the differences are always resolved, but it is a difficult process because the stakes are so high and the difference so stark.

There are certainly a few things that I am standing firm on. I believe we need to fund education appropriately and pass a new funding formula that guarantees every child, in every zip code, a quality education. I believe we should not be the only state in the nation that allows out-of-state corporations to come and take the energy from our ground and not be required to pay anything for it. And I believe we have to do far more to restore economic development funding and our social safety net, which has been decimated in recent years.

Hopefully all of this won't take too long. But if you hear that we are at a standoff, and the budget is going to be late this year, know it is because we are working hard to ensure that we do right by Pennsylvania. I will be keeping everyone posted as the process unfolds. Wish me luck!



www.senatorleach.com

 State Sen. Daylin Leach



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May I Help?

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Legislative Update

Minimum Wage Update

Full-time workers should not have to live in poverty, but that's exactly what's happening in Pennsylvania. Thousands of our family members, friends, and neighbors work as hard as anyone else but are forced to scrape by making only \$7.25 per hour, our state's minimum wage. To remedy this problem, I have introduced a bill, **Senate Bill 836**, which would raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour is a big change, but it is necessary because the purchasing power of the minimum wage has atrophied over the years. Though costs continue to increase, Pennsylvania has only raised the minimum wage once in the last 16 years. If the minimum wage had kept pace with the increasing productivity of workers, it would now be over \$21 per hour. It would be far higher if it had kept pace with the growth in CEO pay, which has grown hundreds of times over in the last few decades. My bill would tie the minimum wage to inflation so that we no longer have to rely on legislators to adjust it from time to time. Under my

proposal, over two million Pennsylvanians would immediately get a raise.

My bill would also eliminate the tipped minimum wage, which is currently \$2.83 per hour. The typical tipped worker is among the most exploited and impoverished type of worker in our Commonwealth. They are continuously subjected to wage discrimination based on factors like their gender and race. My bill would



compel their employers to pay them just like any other employee. They would receive at least \$15 per hour and no longer have to rely on the whims of their customers.

An economy that forces full-time workers to toil in poverty is clearly in need of repair. While corporations shower their executives with extravagant bonuses, lavish benefits and golden parachutes, they force their own employees to supplement meager wages with government assistance programs, all at the taxpayers' expense. It's time for employers to pay their fair share and for workers to get a fair shake.

Shark Fin Ban

On May 11, 2015, my bill to ban the sale of illegally obtained shark fins in Pennsylvania passed unanimously through the Senate, and now awaits action in the House Judiciary Committee.

This bipartisan legislation, which I was proud to introduce with my Republican colleague Sen. Richard Alloway, would prohibit the sale and possession of shark fins and work in concert with an existing federal ban on shark finning.

Marine biologists estimate that 73 million sharks are killed annually for their fins, and that shark populations along the east coast have declined as much as 90 percent from sustainable levels.

Despite their fearsome reputation, shark attacks on humans are extremely rare, and sharks play a vital role in balancing our ocean ecosystem.



Medical Cannabis Update

I am excited to report that I have made significant progress in Harrisburg on one of my top issues: medical cannabis. After many hearings, community meetings, and lobbying days, the Senate passed **Senate Bill 3** on May 12th. The vote was overwhelming and bipartisan, 40 yes votes and only 7 no votes, reflecting the hard work of my Republican co-sponsor, Senator Folmer, and the advocates. The bill is similar to the medical cannabis bill that Senator Folmer and I introduced last session, **Senate Bill 1182**, which also passed the Senate but was not taken up in the House due to time constraints. Senate Bill 3 now sits in the House Health Committee.

I continue to be inspired by the

advocates working on this issue. They are mothers of kids with seizure disorders, veterans with PTSD or traumatic brain injury, and cancer patients. At a time in their lives when they are dealing with immense physical and emotional pain, they are still able to tell legislators their stories and push them to allow access to a potentially life changing medicine for their kids, themselves, and others.

The bill would set up a governing board to establish a system to grow, process and distribute medical cannabis to patients with certain conditions whose physicians believe would benefit from it. While it is a very detailed bill, the bottom line is that sick Pennsylvanians would get the help they need.

This session, we have given the House plenty of time to act. Furthermore, Governor Wolf is a champion of the issue. I am happy to report the significant progress we are making to bring medical cannabis to Pennsylvania, but we remain a long way from the finish line. I am hopeful that my next legislative update to you will include passage of this important legislation.



Safe Harbor for Victims of Human Trafficking

In May, Senator Greenleaf and I introduced "Safe Harbor" legislation designed to help law enforcement identify the child victims of human trafficking and avoid prosecuting children who have been forced to perform illegal activities. This new legislation, **Senate Bill 851**, follows Act 105 of 2014 (S.B. 75), which rewrote the Commonwealth's human trafficking statute to better enable prosecutors to bring charges for human trafficking and increase penalties for traffickers.

There is no such thing as a child prostitute. There are only victims and survivors of child rape. Our bill would establish a non-punitive response for juvenile sex-trafficking victims and provide them with specialized services and support to address their trauma. Juveniles involved in sex-trafficking are already considered crime victims under international and federal law. Pennsylvania must advance anti-human trafficking reforms such as this legislation to protect these innocent children.

Over 100,000 children are exploited through prostitution in the United States each year. Adults psychologically manipulate these children, often with the use of illegal drugs. As a consequence, children have been charged with prostitution, drug possession, loitering, and other offenses that are inherently related to prostitution.

S.B. 851 would require law enforcement to report to the Department of Human Services any encounter with a minor who has been subject to sexual exploitation. The Department would develop and implement a state-wide protocol to deliver safe long-term housing, education, life-skills training, and counseling to the children who have been exploited. The bill would require that police be trained to identify and assist sexually exploited children. Most importantly, the bill would require that sexually exploited children be diverted from the criminal justice system to more appropriate human services.

District Spotlight

Welcoming Villanova Law School's New CSE Institute to the 17th District

I would like to introduce you to the new Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) at Villanova Law School, located in the 17th District. Prof. Michelle Madden Dempsey, faculty advisor to the CSE Institute, and Shea M. Rhodes, director, are jointly responsible for launching the CSE Institute. Their mission is to educate and provide technical assistance to those who respond to commercial sexual exploitation in Pennsylvania, promoting victim-centered, multidisciplinary collaboration. The CSE Institute has personally assisted my office and other legislative offices, as well as the broader community, with the knowledge needed to improve the Pennsylvania legal system's response to commercial sexual exploitation, in order to support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Their work is focused on data collection, education, training, legal research, and technical assistance. The CSE Institute aims to create a community in which every human being is treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. Please contact my district office staff for more information about connecting with this new venture in the 17th District or visit their website at www.cseinstitute.org.



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Around the District



In April, I recognized two local librarians at my 7th annual Librarians of the Year Awards celebration held at the American Reading Company. We honored the 2015 Public Librarian of the Year, Eileen Plociennik of Bala Cynwyd Library, and the 2015 School Librarian of the Year, Wendie Sittenfield of Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy. I was thrilled to recognize Eileen and Wendie and honor all librarians. Their work often goes uncelebrated, but librarians can change the lives of children and adults alike.

Senator Leach recognized Wendie Sittenfield (left) of Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy and Eileen Plociennik (right) of Bala Cynwyd Library as the 2015 Librarians of the Year.



COME TO THE FAIR! COME TO THE ZOO!

STATE SENATOR DAYLIN LEACH
 With Co-Host
Mercy Suburban Hospital

Kids' Fair
 An Expo at the

Free to children and their families of the 17th Senatorial District

August 6, 2015 • 5:30 - 7:30 PM
Elmwood Park Zoo
1661 Harding Blvd. • Norristown, PA

- State, Federal & Local Agencies
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- Face Painters
- Free Admission
- Free Fingerprinting

RSVP by July 31: 610-768-4200 or E-mail: kidsfair2015@pasenate.com

RSVP early with your name, address & number of children and adults attending
The Kids' Fair is limited to 1500 people.