



# Senator Joe Scarnati



## REPORTS TO YOU

25TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT • SPRING 2014

### Keeping Our Schools Safe

Protecting our children is an issue of utmost importance for every school district across our Commonwealth. Recent incidents of school violence have made it clear that we need to do more to keep students and teachers safe in their learning environments. That is why this legislative session I led the effort to expand and enhance the Safe Schools Grant Program within the Department of Education.

To fund this program, we were able to secure more than \$8.5 million in the 2013-2014 budget for school safety initiatives. Schools will be able to utilize the monies to enhance violence prevention programs and emergency preparedness initiatives, as well as to employ School Resource Officers or School Police Officers.

I'm pleased that Act 70 provides schools with access to funding,

without placing any additional mandates on school districts. Safety needs are unique for each school district and this law allows for local control and decisionmaking.

The legislation is a major accomplishment for Pennsylvania's children, parents and educators and will ensure school districts have the resources they need to provide the greatest level of security possible at our schools.

Earlier this year a total of 191 safety grants were awarded for the 2013-2014 grant period. As we begin to work through Pennsylvania's annual state budget process for the upcoming fiscal year, I will continue to be an advocate for the Safe Schools Grant Program. Our children are our future and keeping them safe is of the greatest importance.



I recently had the opportunity to visit Keystone Central School District to announce School Safety Grants awarded for 2013-2014.

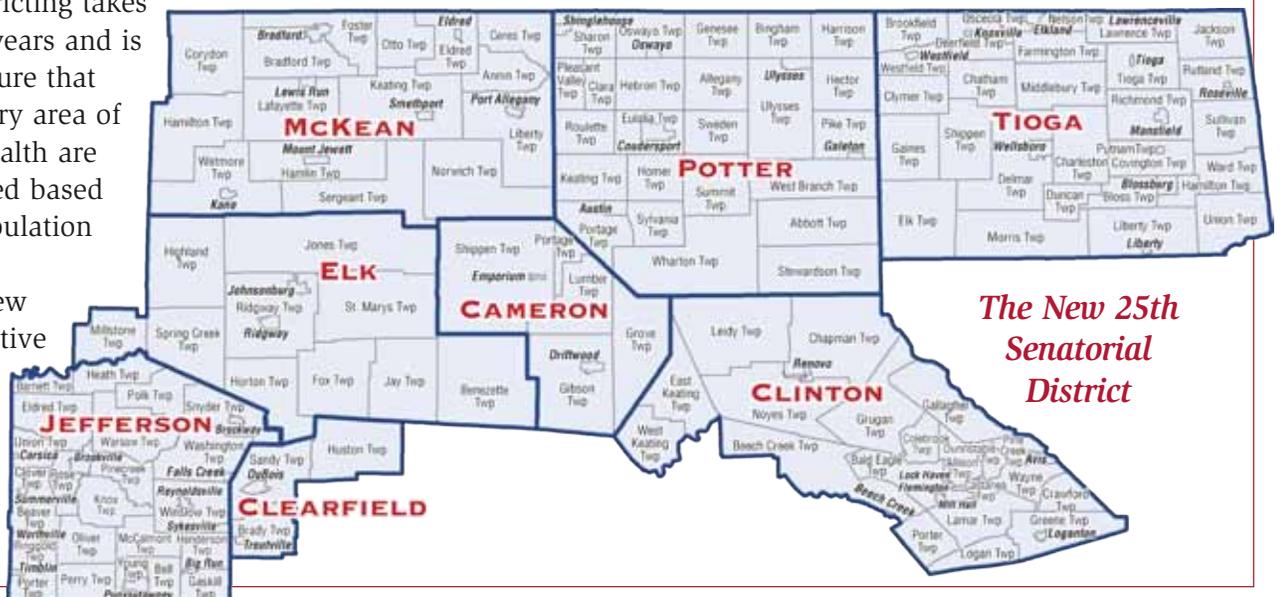
### Redistricting Plan Changes Boundaries of 25th Senatorial District

As a result of a new Legislative Reapportionment Plan my Senate district will slightly change. Redistricting takes place every 10 years and is intended to ensure that residents in every area of the Commonwealth are fairly represented based on accurate population fluctuations.

Under the new plan, my legislative district will remain the largest geographic

Senate district in Pennsylvania. The 25th Senatorial District will comprise all of Cameron, Clinton,

Elk, Jefferson, McKean, Potter and Tioga Counties, and parts of Clearfield County.



The New 25th Senatorial District

## Reduced-Fee Hunting & Fishing Licenses For Disabled Veterans

Pennsylvania's disabled veterans have made a tremendous sacrifice for our country and face many challenges as a result of their service. Providing them the opportunity to participate in hunting and fishing activities at a reduced fee is one way that we can thank them for their service and sacrifice.

The State Senate recently approved legislation to offer disabled Pennsylvania veterans reduced-fee hunting & fishing licenses. Senate Bill 1102, which I authored, would reduce the cost of fishing licenses for

disabled veterans to \$1 for an annual license. A companion bill, Senate Bill 1090, would also reduce the cost of hunting licenses for disabled veterans to \$1 for an annual license.

Any Pennsylvania veteran eligi-

ble for disability compensation as determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs would qualify for the \$1 licenses. Veterans certified as having a total disability would continue to qualify for free licenses. Pennsylvania currently offers \$1 hunting and fishing licenses to certain active duty military personnel as well.

Senate Bills 1102 and 1090 were passed by the Senate and sent to the House of Representatives last October and I am hopeful that they will become law in the near future.



## Child Protection Enhancements Signed into Law

The two-year effort to strengthen Pennsylvania's child protection laws reached a major milestone late last year with the enactment of 10 bills aimed at preventing child abuse and punishing perpetrators.

This important effort began when the legislature created the Pennsylvania Task Force on Child Protection in December of 2011. The panel held a series of public meetings to explore the best

course of action and then released its legislative recommendations in November 2012.

Child protection bills that have been passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor are all intended to close loopholes in current law, provide stronger protections for children, and ensure that when abuse is suspected it is reported to authorities.

Several of the measures were targeted to address the tragic circumstances when child abuse goes

unreported. Other reforms ensure that child abuse cases are handled in a coordinated, responsible manner to improve the sharing of information among agencies that handle cases of abuse.

Harmful acts against children can leave lasting scars that impair their healthy development. Passage of these bills is a significant step forward to help guard our children.



# New Transportation Funding Plan Invests in Pennsylvania's Future

Residents expect and deserve to have confidence in our Commonwealth's transportation systems and over the past several years it has become clear that crucial improvements are needed. In October, the General Assembly took a major step forward in improving our aging and deteriorating transportation infrastructure by passing Act 89 of 2013, which will make critical investments in Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure over the next 10 years.

In the coming months transportation projects will begin across the state, making massive improvements to our Commonwealth's transportation infrastructure. It is vital that state government protects our citizens through providing access to a strong transportation network. With over 120,000 miles of roadways and more than 32,000 bridges, Pennsylvania ranks the fifth largest in state-maintained road systems in the United States. At the same time Pennsylvania is currently among the worst states in the nation when it comes to the conditions of our roads and bridges.

It has been more than 16 years since Pennsylvania enacted a meaningful transportation funding program, but the decision to make these investments was not taken lightly. Our goal with Act 89 was to balance the need for a safe and reliable transportation foundation, with the desire to ensure that transportation costs are not burdening to working families.

In addition to advancing public safety, this investment will have a huge impact on economic development in the 25th Senatorial District. The plan will help ensure that industries, like the Timber industry, which employs nearly 60,000 Pennsylvania residents, will no longer have to face the uncertainty and risk associated with state road closures and bridges being weight listed.

A substantial portion of the transportation legislation also focused on dirt and gravel roads. Through the investment, dirt and gravel roads across Pennsylvania will see environmentally and economically sustainable improve-



ments made. This will greatly benefit our region and the four million Pennsylvanians who travel rural roads every day.

Another important portion of the investment will be made in our railroads, which are helping to reduce congestion and pollution, but in some areas are currently antiquated and struggle to meet existing demand.

Safe and reliable transportation

isn't simply a matter of personal convenience. It's about jobs, economic development, quality of life and safety. This new law provides commonsense, well-thought-out funding mechanisms that are fair and reasonable and I'm pleased that shortly our region will begin to see crucial improvement projects take place.

## EITC Program Helping Students

During my time in the Legislature I have been a strong supporter of the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC), which provides companies with a tax credit for funds donated to approved scholarship and educational organizations.

The program provides area businesses with an opportunity to get involved in their community while helping to give children and parents more educational options.

Thanks to community-minded sponsors, more than 20,000 children across Pennsylvania are benefiting from EITC scholarships. In North Central Pennsylvania, recently more than \$71,000 in scholarships have been awarded by the Bridge Educational Foundation and local businesses.

I'm pleased that this program continues to be a successful way to help provide students with increased learning opportunities.





*I was recently awarded The American Conservative Union (ACU) Foundation 2013 Conservative Award for leadership in supporting economic growth, limited government and individual freedoms. I'm pleased to receive this award for my support of conservative principles on a wide range of issues during the 2013 legislative session.*



*On January 7th I was unanimously re-elected by my Senate colleagues to serve as President Pro Tempore for this year. In 2014 it is my pledge to continue to make decisions that will strengthen our communities, provide for family sustaining jobs and ensure Pennsylvania will remain a strong Commonwealth for future generations.*



## New Kane District Office Opened

To better serve residents of the 25th Senatorial District, I have opened a district office in Kane. My office staff there are available from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, to provide answers to constituents' questions regarding state government programs and offer assistance with state-related issues.

The Kane office is now the third district office in the 25th Senatorial district, joining the offices in Brockway and Wellsboro. More information on office locations and constituent services can be found on my website at [www.senatorsarnati.com](http://www.senatorsarnati.com).

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