



Capitol Correspondence

from

State Senator

Daylin Leach



Serving Delaware and Montgomery Counties

Fall 2011

Dear Neighbor,

I am dedicating this newsletter to one of the most critical issues we face as a state and as a nation: campaign finance reform.

In order to run for political office, a candidate in a competitive race must raise a lot of money. Many of the potential donors he or she approaches are individuals who have a sincere desire to make Pennsylvania a better place. But larger donations often come from corporations or special interest groups that have a direct stake in the policies adopted by our elected officials. Unsurprisingly, that stake usually involves a specific economic interest.

This method of funding campaigns creates the appearance, and sometimes the reality, of a direct relationship between campaign contributions and votes for or against specific legislation. At the very least, it undermines public confidence in the honesty of the political process. People believe their elected officials are bought off. This is profoundly unhealthy and corrosive to our governing process.

It is a national problem, but it is compounded in Pennsylvania. Our state is one of only a few with absolutely no limits on campaign contributions. If you wanted to contribute to a candidate for president of the United States, you could donate only \$5,000. However, if you wanted to contribute to someone running for governor or state Senate, you could write a check for \$10,000, or 250,000, or \$3,000,000!

That much money changing hands is simply unhealthy for our democracy. If any donor gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to a candidate, what do they expect of that candidate? What does that candidate owe that donor? Do you feel confident that your elected official will put your well-being ahead of the well-being of his or her big donor, even if that donor doesn't live in their legislative district and you do? Whose call will that candidate answer if elected? Yours or theirs? The fact that these questions are naturally in the minds of our citizens makes it difficult for them to believe that our system is fundamentally honest.

These are the rules that exist, and anyone who runs for office must raise and spend money if they want to win, unless they are an independently wealthy self-funder. I myself have gone through the fundraising process as I've run for three terms in the House and one in the Senate (although I've never raised money in such large increments). But the system is broken, and I have a few legislative proposals I hope will make things better. I will be discussing them in detail in this newsletter. They include public financing of elections and, in the alternative, contribution limits and instant online disclosure. If we don't want our political system to become completely beholden to the highest bidder, we must find solutions now.

■ **Public Financing of Campaigns**

■ **Around the 17th District**

■ **Reader Survey**

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Public Financing of Campaigns

As I mentioned on the cover of this newsletter, I have introduced legislation that would establish a public financing system for political campaigns in Pennsylvania. Essentially, this would prohibit candidates for most offices from raising money, and instead it would provide a set amount of public funding for the purpose of running political races.

The theory behind public financing is that requiring elected officials and political aspirants to ask for money from the very people who they are ultimately supposed to regulate is inherently corrosive to the political process. Public financing would end this problem. In the future, elected officials could make decisions about what the best policy is on a given issue without worrying about how this will affect their ability, or that of their opponent, to fundraise for the next campaign. Further, regardless of what an elected official actually, subjectively considered when voting on legislation, public financing would end even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The other thing public financing would do is level the playing field. Currently, those special interests with

a great deal of money can drown out average people. Their money buys them access, influence, and an unfair advantage in crafting legislation. If we remove money from politics, every citizen can have an equal voice and full confidence that an issue was decided on its merits rather than to please a big donor.

Some question the wisdom of providing precious taxpayer dollars to political campaigns. But while this is a reasonable objection, at the end of the day it is, in my view, penny-wise and pound-foolish. While public financing would cost some money, we would save far more money in subsidies and tax breaks that were not passed to please campaign contributors. It would be much, much cheaper in the long run.

This is admittedly an aggressive approach to a critical problem. There are less aggressive steps we could take, such as limiting the size of contributions and improving our disclosure rules. And I would support these proposals as important steps in the right direction. However the only way we will completely purify our political system is to remove the need to ask special interests for money completely.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION APPROVED BY SENATE COMMITTEE

I am happy to announce that my human trafficking hotline bill has been approved by the Senate Labor and Industry Committee.

That bill, Senate Bill 338, would require posting of the Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline in establishments with a liquor license, those offering massage services, spas, hotels and motels found to be a nuisance, adult entertainment clubs, and places of transit. The Department of Health and Human Services funds the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) hotline – a free resource for the community to report suspicious activity that may be trafficking-related. The hotline is free to call, and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This resource saves lives and comes at no cost to the Commonwealth or its citizens.

Senate Bill 338 will now move to the full Senate for consideration.

Around the 17th District

Good Government Seminar

Each year, Senator Leach is proud to host his Good Government Seminar for high school students from the 17th District. This event allows students to interact directly with elected officials, advocates and other government officials in a day-long seminar intended to introduce young people to the workings of the state legislature. The event is held at Cabrini College each year. The date for this year's seminar is Friday, March 9, 2012.

If you are a school official and would like your students to participate, please contact Hally Ammons at 610-768-4200 or hammons@pasenate.com

Visit My District Office to Donate Toys!

During the holiday season please stop by my office to donate new toys for children in our community. We will be collecting toys for the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation until December 15th. Contribute today!

Sen. Leach stands with the St. Joe's University Hawk and children of the 17th District at his 3rd Annual Kids' Fair held at the Elmwood Park Zoo.



Veterans' Trip

This fall, nearly 200 veterans joined me for a tour of Brandywine Battlefield and Longwood Gardens for my 2011 Veterans' Trip. Though the weather was somewhat dreary, it didn't dampen our spirits and we had a great day touring the battlefield and celebrating our nation's military history. I'd like to personally thank Longwood Gardens and Brandywine Battlefield for hosting us, as well as the veterans who joined us on the trip and event co-sponsor New Horizons Senior Center of Narberth.



Sen. Leach stands with two constituent veterans during his third annual veterans trip to Longwood Gardens and Brandywine Battlefield.

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Communication is essential to make our representative democracy work. That's why I am asking that you take a moment to fill out the questionnaire below and mail it back to me as soon as possible. Your opinion is important as I continue to strive to represent the views of the people of the 17th Senatorial District.

1. In an era of tight budgets, if you had to pick one area where we should be investing more, what area would you choose?

- A. Environmental Protection
- B. Education
- C. Addressing Poverty
- D. Law Enforcement
- E. Transportation
- F. Other _____
- G. I do not support investing more in any of these areas.

Comments:

2. Some states such as New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Vermont have either legalized same-sex marriage or created a legally recognized alternative known generally as civil unions. Other states have gone in the opposite direction and passed constitutional amendments prohibiting recognition of same-sex unions. How do you feel?

- A. I support allowing same-sex couples to marry freely in Pennsylvania just as heterosexual couples do.
- B. I prefer allowing civil unions with all the rights of marriage but not calling these unions "marriage."
- C. I oppose any legal recognition of same-sex relationships.

Comments:

3. Many people think that the property tax, which is the tax we use to fund public education, is unfair and disproportionately burdensome to people with fixed incomes. There are a number of proposals to replace the property tax with another tax. Others think that the suggested replacements are less fair than the property tax. How do you feel?

- A. I support replacing the property tax with a higher sales tax.
- B. I support replacing the property tax with a higher income tax.
- C. I support keeping the current property tax system in place rather than raising another tax to replace it.

Comments:

4. Recently, legislation has been introduced which create a system of "vouchers" for some public school students to go to private schools, which would be paid for by using the state money allocated to their school and transferring to the chosen private school. Some argue that this program would give parents a choice and an opportunity to escape failing public schools. Others argue that this would drain public schools of resources, harming the children left behind, and not provide true choice since space in schools accepting vouchers would be limited. Do you:

- A. Support the proposal to provide taxpayer-funded school vouchers?
- B. Oppose the proposal to provide taxpayer-funded school vouchers?

Comments:

5. Pennsylvania has had a death penalty for the most serious crimes on the books for many years. But only 3 people have been executed in Pennsylvania in the past 50 years, and all three asked to be put to death. Some argue that it costs millions of dollars to retain the death penalty and that it is immoral to execute people, either as a general proposition, or because of the large number of people on death row who have been exonerated when DNA showed they were innocent of their crimes. Others argue that having the death penalty on the books provides an effective tool for prosecutors and that execution is appropriate for the most heinous crimes. Which view most closely reflects yours?

- A. I oppose the death penalty in all circumstances and feel it should be abolished.
- B. The death penalty is too expensive and should be abolished because it is not worth the resources.
- C. I support the death penalty and believe it can be made to work as an effective deterrent.

Comments:

6. There has been a recent proposal to change the way Pennsylvania selects its members of the Electoral College. Currently it is a winner-take-all system in 49 states. The proposal would change it to award one electoral vote to each congressional district a presidential candidate wins, with two to the candidate who wins the entire state. Some argue that this change would more fairly apportion electoral votes according to the proportion of votes in the state and to ensure that Philadelphia doesn't drown out the votes of more rural areas. Others argue that this is an attempt to rig the election by awarding electoral votes by gerrymandered congressional districts, and that Pennsylvania would lose all of its clout as a swingstate. Which view most closely reflects yours?

- A. I support changing the way we choose presidential electors from winner-take-all to one per congressional district.
- B. I oppose changing the way we choose presidential electors from winner-take-all to one per congressional district.

Comments: _____

7. Over the past year, a number of proposals to raise revenue were taken off the table because Governor Corbett has taken a pledge, written by a political activist who lives in Washington, D.C., never to raise taxes or fees. Some argue that this sort of pledge allows voters to understand a candidate's position on an issue and hold them to their promise once in office. Others argue that such pledges don't take into consideration circumstances which may not be predictable, and place a pledge to an outside interest ahead of the interests of the people of Pennsylvania. Which view most closely reflects yours:

- 1. I would encourage elected officials to sign pledges such as the no-tax pledge so I know I have their word.
2. I would discourage elected officials from signing pledges written by outside groups and would rather they approach each issue on its merits.

Comments: _____

8. Abortion is a contentious issue and the arguments on both sides are well-known. Tell me which statement most closely reflects your views.

- A. I believe a woman's body is her own and I would oppose any efforts by the government to interfere with this private decision.
B. I am generally supportive of a woman's right to choose, but do believe that some restrictions on when or where abortions may be obtained, or at what age a woman may decide on her own to get an abortion are appropriate for the government to impose.
C. I believe that an abortion should only be legally available in very limited circumstances, such as when a woman is raped, or in the case of incest or when the life of the mother is in danger.
D. I believe life begins at conception and that the government may appropriately prohibit abortion in all circumstances.

Comments: _____

9. Recently, there has been much talk and some action on what is commonly known as "tort reform". Some argue that our legal system is awash in frivolous lawsuits and that undeserving people are gaming the system. This is hurting our economy and requires the government to limit the ability of people to sue and the amount they can recover if they do. Others argue that tort reform is an effort by wealthy special interests to avoid responsibility when they negligently or intentionally cause an injury, and that innocent people will suffer as they are no longer able to get their doctor bills paid or otherwise be compensated for their injuries. As a general matter, which statement most closely reflects your views?

- A. I believe we should limit the right to sue and the amount that can be recovered if a suit is successful to stop frivolous lawsuits and improve our economy.
B. I believe that we should preserve our civil justice system, protect innocent injured people, and hold negligent corporations who harm others responsible by allowing them access to the courts and full compensation if they prove their case.

Comments: _____

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Intern in Sen. Leach's Office

Are you interested in the world of Pennsylvania politics and public policy? Would you like to make a difference in your community? Are you hard-working, motivated and open to new opportunities? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, I may be looking for someone like you.

My King of Prussia office is now accepting interns for the Spring 2012 semester. If you are enrolled in school – or plan to be – please consider filling out an application. Internships are fun and rewarding, especially when you're working with people who care about the work they do each day.

For more information or to apply, please call Hally Ammons at (610) 768-4200 or visit my Website, www.senatorleach.com

Bill Encouraging Corporate Activism One Step Closer to Becoming Law

I'm happy to announce that my legislation that would change the structure of business in Pennsylvania has been unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill, Senate Bill 433, would create a new class of business that would provide for the recognition of Benefit Corporations ("B-Corps") – businesses that have the ability to more positively impact their communities and create a new incentive structure to encourage corporate activism. The Benefit Corporation class would reclassify the fiduciary duties of corporation directors, allowing them to take non-financial interests into consideration when making decisions for the corporation.

S.B. 433 would allow companies that aim to make a positive social and environmental impact on their communities to make those "for benefit" operations part of their corporate mission. Other corporation classes do not currently allow directors to take not-for-profit benefits into account. Under the new corporate classification model, Benefit Corporations could not be held liable for lost monetary value as a result of socially-conscious decisions made.

Under the bill, the process of becoming a Benefit Corporation is entirely voluntary and based on shareholder desire. If a business chooses to become a Benefit Corporation, it must provide yearly disclosures of the public benefit efforts the company has undertaken to shareholders.

I am happy that my colleagues in the Senate approved this measure, as it will help Pennsylvania businesses take charge and make an impact on their surrounding communities if they so choose. Once this bill is signed into law, corporations will finally be able to do the right thing and incorporate charitable endeavors into their missions without the fear of legal repercussion.

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