



STATE SENATOR **Daylin Leach**

Capitol Correspondence

Fall 2012

Sen. Daylin Leach and Norristown residents unveil the first mural in the new Arts Hill district.
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Dear Friend,

As we approach the end of another two year session, it seems an appropriate time to reflect and recap the legislative action in Harrisburg. This session has resulted in some policies that move Pennsylvania forward, and many that move the Commonwealth in exactly the wrong direction. To be honest, it has been a particularly challenging time in Harrisburg.

The most consequential legislation we took up this session was the past two years' budgets. Any state budget is an expression of a community's priorities. I voted against both because I felt that, on balance, those priorities did not accurately reflect our values. To me we retreated too drastically in terms of investment in public education, environmental protection, proven crime prevention programs and the safety net we provide for our poorest citizens. In particular, dramatic cuts to both basic and college education threaten to make our state far less economically competitive for years to come.

Outside of the budgets, we spent a lot of time working on a new law to regulate and tax the extraction of natural gas from Marcellus Shale deposits under much of our state. "Hydro-fracking" is a controversial process, and I believe we did not insist on adequate environmental protections. I also believe the law leaves a lot on the table in terms of potential state revenue, which would enable us to reduce cuts in public services. Additionally, the bill bizarrely erected barriers to doctors seeking information about the contents of fracking fluids in order to treat sick patients. I have since introduced legislation to repeal this misguided policy.

Several bills were proposed to make it more difficult for women to get the health care they need. I vehemently opposed a bill which would have required a woman seeking reproductive health care to get intrusive trans-vaginal ultrasounds, even if both the woman and her doctor did not feel such a procedure was needed. I also fought against proposals to de-fund Planned Parenthood, upon which millions of women rely for lifesaving breast, ovarian and cervical cancer screenings.

I never would have predicted that 2012 would have seen so many assaults on the integrity of our election process. First, we saw the obscene gerrymandering plans for both the state and federal legislatures pushed through by the majority. While we simply didn't have the votes to block the congressional plan, I, along with others, sued to have the state legislative plan thrown out on the grounds of being blatantly illegal. We were successful and, for the first time in decades, a bipartisan Supreme Court decision rejected a plan that would have disenfranchised millions of Pennsylvanians. I also successfully led the fight against a scheme to change how Pennsylvania apportions our electoral votes in presidential elections, and I have been the leading voice opposing a Voter ID law that will disenfranchise at least 758,000 of our fellow citizens. Voting is a constitutionally-protected fundamental right – we should ALL want to make it easier for Pennsylvanians to cast their ballots.

Finally, I am proud to be a leader in the battle to ensure basic civil rights to all Pennsylvanians and I am the author of legislation to put an end to the horrific crime of human trafficking.

I did find common ground with Governor Corbett on a few issues, including a sweeping prison reform bill which, as Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I enthusiastically supported. When fully implemented, this new law will save millions of dollars by imposing alternative sentences, other than costly imprisonment, on convicts who are not a threat to the community. I also worked with the administration to pass landmark economic development legislation, which will bring thousands of jobs to Pennsylvania. However, on most issues, I honestly believe the administration was inappropriately deferential to powerful interests at the expense of average Pennsylvanians.

In short, it's been a tough session, but one with some successes and some battles where we will live to fight another day. I am grateful to you for allowing me to be the person, as Teddy Roosevelt said, "in the arena whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again...but who spends himself in a worthy cause."

I am hopeful that next session will be even more successful for all of us than this one.

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601 South Henderson Road • Suite 208
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(610) 768-4200 • Fax: (610) 768-4204

HARRISBURG OFFICE

184 Main Capitol • Senate Box 203017
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E-MAIL

senatorleach@pasenate.com

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State Sen. Daylin Leach



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~ Legislative Update ~

■ Protecting Patients from Fracking Chemicals

As I mentioned in my letter opening this newsletter, I recently introduced legislation to allow Pennsylvania doctors to acquire information about the dangerous chemicals in fracking fluid being released into our environment, if they need such information to treat patients who may have been exposed to toxic poisons.

This would correct a provision in the recently passed Act 13, regulating the drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale, which requires doctors to sign a confidentiality agreement with the natural gas company to receive information about the chemical components of the fracking fluid. Some components of this fluid are deemed proprietary by the drilling companies and are not publicly disclosed. This is a problem in itself. We should know what poisons are being poured into our ground.

In my bill, Senate Bill 1514, a doctor or other medical professional would have access to the information needed to treat their patients and protect the public from harmful chemical compounds. It would make disclosure by drilling companies mandatory if they are asked to do so by a health professional and would not prevent the dissemination of that information if it would help treat patients or would protect public health.



■ Ban Shark Finning

It is estimated that shark populations along the Atlantic coast of the United States have decreased by 90 percent from their historic levels, and shark finning is the inhumane and illegal culprit behind this loss of marine life. The process involves poachers landing sharks in huge numbers, removing their fins, and then dumping them back into the ocean where they either suffocate or starve. The fins are most often used to make shark fin soup. Sharks play a vital role in the food chain, and their disappearance would cause irreparable damage to the natural ocean habitat. While the process of shark finning is illegal, the possession of illegally obtained shark fins is not. I am proud to partner with Sen. William Alloway (R-33) to introduce legislation to ban such products in Pennsylvania.



■ Human Trafficking

Iwrote briefly in my introductory letter about my legislation to fight the unimaginable crime of human trafficking in Pennsylvania. One of my bills, Senate Bill 338, passed both the Judiciary and Appropriations committees, and is now poised for a vote on the Senate floor. S.B. 338 would require certain businesses in Pennsylvania to post a small sign advertising the toll-free Human Trafficking Hotline number, which offers help to victims of trafficking in dozens of languages. Sadly, powerful Harrisburg lobbying groups have blocked this important law from getting a full vote in the Senate. I am working hard to ensure the Senate will act on S.B. 338 during our brief fall session.



Voter ID

I have introduced legislation to repeal the recently passed Act 18 requiring voters to show approved photo identification each and every time they vote. This law disenfranchises more than 1 million Pennsylvania voters who do not have or cannot obtain the proper identification. It will also suppress the votes of thousands of other citizens who simply will not jump through the hoops this law places between them and the ballot box. This law will severely impact groups including the young, minority voters and older Pennsylvanians who already have to struggle to exercise their right to vote.

Proponents of the law say that they are attempting to stop voter fraud in Pennsylvania elections but in the past 10 years not one single case of voter impersonation, the only type of voter fraud that ID laws prevent, has occurred in the Commonwealth. To solve this non-existent problem, Act 18 disenfranchises hundreds of thousands of voters. As I write this, there is a court case challenging the constitutionality of Act 18 and hopefully by the time you read this, a ruling will have been made striking down the law. In the meantime, I will continue to fight for repeal.



Sen. Leach speaks at the Voter ID Rally in Harrisburg.

Voter ID: What You Need (and Need to Know) to Vote this November

If Pennsylvania's new voter ID law is upheld, it will have a direct impact on citizens who exercise their right to vote. Starting this November, every voter will be required to show a valid form of identification in order to vote. If you do not have one of the approved forms of ID, the state can provide one to you at no cost. It's very important, however, that you don't wait until November to request one. Take the steps now to make sure that your vote counts in this year's General Election and all future elections.

All photo IDs MUST contain an expiration date that is current, unless noted otherwise.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF ID

The following forms of identification will be accepted in order to vote:

- **Photo IDs issued by the U.S. Federal Government or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:**
 - **Pennsylvania driver's license or non-driver's license photo ID (for voting purposes, IDs up to 12 months past the expiration date are valid)**
 - **Valid U.S. passport**
 - **U.S. military ID — active duty and retired military (a military or veteran's ID must designate an expiration date or designate that the expiration date is indefinite). Military dependents' ID must contain an expiration date**
- **Employee photo ID issued by federal, state, county or municipal government**
- **Photo ID cards from an accredited Pennsylvania public or private institution of higher learning**
- **Photo ID cards issued by a Pennsylvania care facility, including long-term care facilities, assisted living residences or personal care homes**
- **A valid-without-photo driver's license or a valid-without-photo ID card issued by PennDOT for individuals who have a religious objection to being photographed**
- **A new PA Voter ID Card (to be available at PennDOT's Driver License Centers beginning the last week of August)**

My staff and I are here to help you with any questions or concerns you may have. We can assist you to ensure that you have the proper documentation to obtain a state-issued ID, so please don't hesitate to contact my King of Prussia office at 610-768-4200 for assistance.

AROUND the 17th DISTRICT

Sen. Leach's Featured Organization

Starting with this edition of *Capitol Correspondence*, I will highlight an important organization or non-profit in each newsletter that I feel serves our community in an important way. If you would like to suggest an organization, please call my King of Prussia office at (610) 768-4200 or senatorleach@pasenate.com.

The Soldiers Project PA

The Soldiers Project is a private, non-profit, independent group of volunteer licensed mental health professionals. The group provides free counseling and support to military service members who have served or who expect to serve in the Iraq and/or Afghanistan conflicts and to veterans of those conflicts, including active duty as well as members of activated Reserve or Guard units. Additionally, services are available to the families and loved ones of service members. To learn more about The Soldiers Project and how to become a volunteer, please contact The Soldiers Project PA at 215-242-7736, email thesoldiersprojectsoutheast@chc.edu, or visit www.thesoldiersprojectpa.org.



Kids' Fair

I would like to thank the families of the 17th District for participating in my 4th Annual Kids' Fair at the Elmwood Park Zoo. The children enjoyed complimentary face painting, pizza, water ice, and music provided by radio station B101. McGruff the Crime Dog, courtesy of the Upper Merion Township Police Department; Buzzy the Bee from B101 Radio; and the Saint Joseph's University mascot, Hawk, all joined us at the event. A lucky family also received free passes to Sesame Place! With such widespread community participation, this year's fair was a roaring success and I look forward to continuing the tradition next summer.



Residents of the 17th District hang out with Kung Fu Panda at Sen. Leach's 4th annual Kids' Fair held at Elmwood Park Zoo in Norristown.

DOG PARK DAY

I recently held my 4th annual Dog Park Day with local animal rescue *Finding Shelter* at the new Pet Village of Wayne, located at 107 N. Aberdeen Avenue in Wayne on July 29.

Constituents brought their dogs to socialize at the new facility and were able to learn more about *Finding Shelter* and the importance of adopting pets. Thank you to all of the constituents who made it out to the event. I would especially like to thank Grace Kelly of *Finding Shelter* and Dr. Len Donato of the Pet Village of Wayne for their help and contributions to this great event.

The Norristown Mural is Complete!

This summer I worked alongside Norristown residents and officials to create a mural at 201 Dekalb Street that acts as a gateway into the city's Arts Hill district. The ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 25 attracted a crowd of Norristown residents, artists and small business owners all dedicated to the city's thriving arts community.

I give my sincere thanks to the people and organizations that helped make the mural possible, including the Norristown Arts Council, the Norristown Municipal Council, the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Project, the Municipality of Norristown, the Norristown residents who attended the public mural meetings, and Philip Schettone and his family.





STATE SENATOR DAYLIN LEACH

Senate Box 203017
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3017



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The Affordable Care Act and You: A Fall Speaker Series

I am teaming up with representatives of the Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN) and health advocate/artist Theresa Browngold for an informative discussion about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and how this new law will affect you. I will be taking this program to senior centers around the 17th District and I hope you will be able to join me at a presentation this fall.

During this interactive one hour program, you will have the opportunity to speak directly to health policy advocates about the ACA and learn how this new law could impact you and your loved ones. Admission is free and light refreshments will be provided.

Dates and locations to be determined. Please contact Hally Ammons at 610-768-4200 or hammons@pasenate.com.

Thousands of Children's Anti-Bullying Guides Now Available

Guides produced with the help of DCED grant

I am working with the Norristown Initiative to take a stand against bullying in the community with the help of a Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) grant.

The grant money was used to produce 10,000 anti-bullying student learning guides, which will be distributed to elementary schools in Norristown this upcoming school year. The learning guides will also be on hand in my King of Prussia office and at community events throughout the year.

In today's society, we've seen a rise in the incidence of bullying in our schools and communities, but also a greater push for anti-bullying awareness. I am happy to contribute my efforts to this cause and I thank both DCED and the Norristown Initiative for their assistance. These educational guides will be a great asset in helping us encourage kids to treat each other with kindness, dignity and respect.

