



State Senator **Pat Vance** Legislative Report



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Information on committee meetings, sessions and background on individual members can be found on the Internet at www.legis.state.pa.us

Fiscal Issues Dominate Agenda

SPENDING RESTRAINT

The fiscal year 2007-08 budget proposed by the Governor in February contained numerous new programs and spending increases. While many of the proposals may be worthwhile, they would result in significantly increased expenditures. As the General Assembly considers the budget, it is essential that spending be limited to hold down the overall growth rate.

HOLDING THE LINE ON TAXES AND BORROWING

The Governor's budget proposal contains tax and fee increases in addition to new borrowing. The proposal includes a 16.7 percent increase in the rate of the sales tax as well as new energy, payroll and oil company taxes.

He also proposes more than one billion dollars in new borrowing for his Energy Independence Fund and the Jonas Salk Legacy Fund (for med-

ical research). Although the concepts behind these initiatives are commendable, repayment of the bonds would require new taxes or transfers of funds from existing programs.

These broad-based tax and borrowing proposals would continue to put Pennsylvania on the wrong course. Cumberland and York residents seem to agree, as I have received a significant amount of correspondence opposed to the Governor's tax proposals.

HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE FUNDING

The Transportation Funding and Reform Commission identified the need for millions of dollars in additional funding to preserve and improve highways and fix structurally deficient bridges. Funding options that have been proposed so far include leasing the turnpike, tolling interstates, increasing the oil company

Continued on back



Pennsylvanians Against Underage Drinking held its Youth Rally Day recently. Sen. Pat Vance addressed the group, which included participants from Boiling Springs High School. The youth urged legislators to enact stricter laws related to underage drinking.



Bills Introduced to Increase Information, Consumer Protections in Residential Facilities

An astonishing 73 percent of personal care homes in Pennsylvania are operating on expired licenses. These are facilities which provide varying levels of care for a vulnerable population of disabled and elderly individuals.

This surprising statistic was uncovered while I was questioning the Secretary of Public Welfare, Estelle Richman, during her confirmation hearing. As a result of this and the pressing need to improve deficiencies in the long-term living system, I have introduced several pieces of legislation to enhance consumer protections and access to information.

The Long-Term Living Facility Licensure Information Act, Senate Bill 811, requires the Department of Aging to coordinate and maintain a publicly accessible Internet website with licensing

and certification information for nursing homes, personal care homes and domiciliary care homes. Individuals requiring the services of these facilities will have access to information enabling them to make informed decisions for themselves or loved ones. This includes information on violations of statute and regulation as well as corrective actions taken by the facilities.

Senate Bill 667 will add a layer of protection for nursing home residents by requiring criminal background checks for employees. Facilities will be prohibited from hiring individuals previously convicted of violent crimes and will be required to wait ten years from the date of conviction before hiring individuals convicted of other specified offenses.

Finally, in an effort to increase consumer choice and clarify the types of services that may be delivered in certain types of long-term living facilities, I have introduced legislation to license assisted living facilities. Senate Bill 704 provides for a level of care between two existing licensure categories – personal care homes and nursing homes. It will help consumers make decisions that best suit their current and future expectations.

UPDATES, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ONLINE



Budget Updates

Due to deadline constraints, this newsletter had to be published before the 2007-08 state budget was finalized. Budget updates will be available on my web site at www.senatorvance.com after its adoption.

If you would like to be notified when budget information is posted, please visit my web site and click on the rectangle labeled "Sign Up For E-mail Updates."

Vance Legislation

A complete list of legislation I have sponsored is available on my web site. The list will be updated periodically and includes a brief description and the status of each bill.

Aging & Youth Committee

As committee chairman, it is my priority to make it easier to find information on committee meetings and hearings. On my web site I have posted links to committee agendas and testimony. You can also access video of public hearings.

Highway Construction Updates

You can find links relating to highway and bridge projects on my web site. You can also access information about the regional transportation plans affecting Cumberland and York counties. These are long-range plans that identify future projects in the planning stages.



Sen. Pat Vance recently joined Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff in presenting the Brymesser Farm in Monroe Township with the Century Farm Award. The award recognizes Pennsylvania families who have been farming the same land for 100 years. Brymesser Farm is a sixth-generation dairy farm operating since 1881. Pictured, from left, are Rep. Jerry Nailor (R-Mechanicsburg), Sen. Vance, Secretary Wolff and Sheldon Brymesser.

Fiscal Issues Dominate

Continued from front

franchise tax and increasing various PennDOT fees.

The needs are real – especially for bridge repairs. However, before raising new revenues it is important to ensure that existing revenues are used efficiently and cost-saving reforms are implemented. The proposed use of any new revenues must be thoroughly explained.

MASS TRANSIT

The Transportation Funding and Reform Commission also identified a

need for additional mass transit funding. Under existing distribution formulas, Philadelphia (SEPTA) and Allegheny counties receive the bulk of state funding for public transportation - 66 percent and 24 percent, respectively. The remaining 10 percent is divided over the rest of the state.

The percentage of mass transit funding that comes from the state is above the national average. Any plans to increase funding should include structural reforms of the transit agencies as well as increased user fees and a higher local share of funding.