



Frank Burns

State Representative

72nd Legislative District

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Spring 2018

2017 Year in Review



Burns welcomes AG Shapiro as ally in fight against heroin pushers

In July, Rep. Burns' good friend and former Democratic House colleague, current Attorney General Josh Shapiro, announced criminal charges against 16 drug dealers for selling \$7.8 million worth of heroin in Cambria and Blair counties. As someone who's been involved with Cambria County Crimestoppers' "Push out the Pusher" campaign since its inception, Rep. Burns is glad to have the Attorney General helping us rid our communities of these poison-peddlers. You can help, too, by calling the tip line at 1-800-548-7500. You'll remain anonymous and could collect a reward of up to \$8,000.

Burns brings additional \$15 million to 72nd District in past year

Rep. Burns prides himself on bringing money back to your community to help with important economic development and quality-of-life projects. Here's a recap of state grants and loans he's announced over the past year.

- **\$268,254 to Cambria County** to combat homelessness.
- **\$500,000 to Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center** for replacement of Conemaugh Ebensburg Ambulatory Care Center.
- **\$500,000 to Mount Aloysius College** for addition of Learning Center for Health Science and Technology.
- **\$60,000 to Forest Hills School District and \$40,000 to Central Cambria School District** for school resource and police officers.
- **\$9 million to Ebensburg Municipal Authority** for sanitary sewer improvements.
- **\$1.57 million to Reade Township Municipal Authority** for water lines and meter replacement.
- **\$129,000 low-interest loan to Cresson Volunteer Fire Co.** for a new pumper truck.
- **\$192,750 grant to Community Action Partnership of Cambria County** for its Head Start/Pre-K program.
- **\$100,175 to Cambria Township, \$85,672 to Cresson Township and \$86,132 to Jackson Township** from Community Development Block Grant funding.
- **\$400,000 grant to Jackson East Taylor Sewer Authority** for sewer line replacement.
- **\$1.9 million grant to Cambria County Airport** for development of Business Aviation Management Degree Program at **Saint Francis University**.

\$248,975 procured for fire, ambulance companies

A combined \$248,975 in grants was awarded to these 19 fire and ambulance companies through the Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program:

- Ashville Fire Co. – \$14,159
- Cambria Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$14,417
- Carrolltown Fire Co. – \$12,101
- Cresson Area Ambulance Service Inc. – \$7,448
- Cresson Volunteer Fire Co. – \$15,000
- Dauntless Fire Co. – \$15,000
- East Taylor Volunteer Fire Co. – \$14,931
- Gallitzin Fire Co. No. 1 – \$14,417
- Jackson Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$15,000
- Jackson Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$7,448
- John Carroll Area Ambulance Service – \$7,448
- Loretto Fire Co. – \$12,873
- Middle Taylor Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$15,000
- Patton Area Ambulance Assn. Inc. – \$7,448
- Patton Fire Co. No. 1 – \$15,000
- Portage Area Ambulance Assn. – \$7,448
- Portage Volunteer Fire Co. – \$28,490
- Reade Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$11,188
- Summerhill Twp. Volunteer Fire Co. – \$14,159

Grant writer hired by Burns in August has helped with \$6.5 million worth of applications

In the first six months of her tenure as a Grants and Development Specialist and Legislative Assistant for Rep. Burns, Brittany Blackham supported or developed more than **\$6.5 million in awarded or pending grant applications** in the 72nd Legislative District.



These include Redevelopment Capital Assistance Program grants of \$500,000 each to Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center and Mount Aloysius College, and a \$2,000 award from the U.S.D.A. Office of Rural Development for sewer work in Portage.

Blackham has been intimately involved in the development (writing and research) of another \$128,226 worth of grants that are pending. They are from DCNR, the Victim Compensation Assistance Program and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

On behalf of Rep. Burns, Blackham has also performed a support role for another \$5.46 million worth of grant applications, through PennDOT.

"In just her first few months, Brittany has done an impressive job, helping bring millions of dollars back to the district. She provides great value to taxpayers, as she also performs constituent service duties."
– Rep. Burns

If your municipality or entity would like to use Brittany's expertise to its advantage, please contact her at (814) 736-7339 at Rep. Burns' Portage office.



Anti-bullying pledge supported

Rep. Burns spent a lot of time in 2017 talking about bullying to elementary and junior high school students, like these third- and fourth-graders at St. Benedict's School, and was proud to see them sign his anti-bullying pledge.

Headlines that say it all

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so Rep. Burns presents for your review some of the headlines and news stories that chronicle his legislative stands, initiatives and accomplishments in the past year.

Police back House bill introduced by Burns

BY JOHN FINNERTY
CNH STATE REPORTER

EDITORS NOTE: There have been 34 bills signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf this year, but that's just a fraction of the hundreds of bills introduced by lawmakers. In this continuing series, we take a look at some of the noteworthy pieces of legislation that haven't gotten much attention statewide.

UNDER THE RADAR State Legislation beyond the front page

officer or a correctional officer were injured while chasing a fugitive, Burns said.

The American Civil Liberties Union hasn't taken a formal position on the legislation. But Andy Hoover, a spokesman for the Pennsylvania chapter of the ACLU, said the increased penalties called for in Burns' bill are "excessive."

HARRISBURG — A state lawmaker from East Taylor Township wants to create tougher penalties for people who flee police.

The move is welcomed by the police union, whose leaders argue that fleeing suspects imperil the lives of cops and bystanders who have nothing to do with the situation.

The legislation would raise the penalty for fleeing a police officer by motor vehicle from a misdemeanor of the second degree to a felony of the third degree, said state Rep. Frank Burns, the author of the bill.

It would also create a new first-degree felony crime for cases when an officer is seriously injured or killed while chasing a suspect.

Inspired by a 29-year-old child, who was a head injury while chasing a suspect, Burns said, a Scranton officer was injured and fell down a fence and left behind a young child.

The legislation, HB 1857, was first introduced by Burns in the last legislative session, but died in committee. Burns reintroduced the legislation earlier this month.

The Fraternal Order of Police supported Burns' bill in his first attempt, and it's likely the group will back it again, said a representative of the FOP.

In some cases, in which an officer is wanted for a violation, that officers will be allowed to pursue them.

State rep calls for audit of city loan programs

By BRUCE SIMY
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Johnstown's past practice of writing off taxpayer-funded loans to active businesses has at least one state representative seeking answers.



State Rep. Frank Burns

State Rep. Frank Burns, D-East Taylor Township, sent a letter to Pennsylvania Auditor General Eugene DePasquale on Thursday asking for an audit of revolving loan programs across the state. He called the practice of writing off loans to active businesses "corporate welfare at taxpayer's expense" in his letter.

"On behalf of the taxpayers of Cambria County and across Pennsylvania, who ultimately foot the bill for these loan programs, and on behalf of job-seekers in Cambria County, who deserve and expect to see results after suffering through decades of economic decline and hardship, respectfully ask that you use your office's unique forensic resources to examine this situation, bringing out into the open any problems and possible solutions," he wrote.

Burns said his letter was prompted by Our Town's report earlier this month that Johnstown city administrators had written off more than \$1 million in loans to private businesses between 2002 and 2012. He noted concerns about the loan review committee being an "informal group" with a practice of meeting privately and not keeping minutes.

The representative of Pennsylvania's 72nd Legislative District also indicated that he would seek legislation to correct these practices statewide if necessary.

"As a state legislator, if (the auditor general's) examination includes any recommendations as to how we ca-

state law or the rules governing these programs to make them more accountable and ensure that huge sums are not written off in the future, I would look forward to being a prime proponent of any corrective measures," he wrote.

Susan Woods, press secretary for the auditor general, confirmed that DePasquale's office had received the letter from Burns. She said it will be "under review" for at least a few days.

Questions regarding the city's revolving loan program were first raised publicly by Councilman Jack Williams in 2015. City council eventually took action to try to recoup money on at least one of the loans that had been previously listed as written off.

In a recent interview with Our Town, new Johnstown City Manager Arch Litton said that writing off loans for active businesses was "not a common practice" in his

Burns announces \$1 million in state funding for local projects

State representative Frank Burns announced state grants totaling \$1 million for economic development projects that will create jobs and also improve the quality of life for Cambria County residents.

Burns worked to help secure \$500,000 for Cosmopolis Memorial Medical Center and \$500,000 for Mount Aloysius College from the state's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program.

According to Burns, Cosmopolis Health System will use its grant to replace the Cosmopolis Ebensburg Ambulatory Care Center with a new building. It is currently anticipated that the new center will be built on a site located on Route 22 between the intersections with Route 219 to the west and Admiral Peary Highway to the east. Specifically, this grant will assist in funding additional site development activities, and the steel, concrete, roof, and glass portions of the overall project.

Burns said Mount Aloysius plans to use its grant to construct an addition to the Learning Center for Health Science and Technology and renovate 26,000 square feet of the existing building. The new addition will include labs, me-

ing, and nursing simulation suites, classrooms, faculty offices, and communal space for students.

"I am glad to see the state making meaningful investments in our region," Burns said. "From the jobs that will be created in the construction phase to the improvements being made for residents seeking access to health care and for students in their academic pursuits alike, the state is showing it can be a quality partner in maximizing the economic development opportunities of smaller communities."

"This is exactly the type of investment the state can and should make," he said.

RACP is administered by the Office of the Budget, for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. RACP projects are authorized in the Redevelopment Assistance section of a Capital Budget Itemization Act, have a regional or multi-jurisdictional impact, and generate substantial increases or maintain current levels of employment, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity.

RACP projects are state-funded projects that cannot obtain primary funding under other state programs.

Burns votes 'no' on bill to borrow \$1.5 billion

Largely because of its heavy reliance on borrowing \$1.5 billion against future tobacco settlement funds, state representative Frank Burns was a resounding "no" vote on Tuesday night's revenue bill, which passed the House 102-88.

Burns was one of 42 Democrats to vote against H.B. 542, citing his belief that large-scale borrowing, which has to be paid back with interest, doesn't equate to sound fiscal management.

"I don't even own a credit card because I know the dangers in borrowing money to pay debt," Burns said. "I'm in Harrisburg to represent the 72nd Legislative District, and my constituents don't want the state borrowing money that they, their children, and their grandchildren will have to repay."

Further, Burns said the revenue bill — technically known as a tax code bill — also contains \$85 million in tax hikes in tobacco, lottery, and

Rep. Burns to donate automatic COLA to local charities

As he's voluntarily done every year, state representative Frank Burns said he plans to once again donate the mandatory cost-of-living increase, or COLA, to local charities.

"As a fiscally conservative representative who understands that our region is struggling and people are cutting back to make

ends meet, I believe that the best use of this mandatory pay increase is to return it to the communities I serve," Burns said.

As prescribed by a law passed long before Burns was elected, state officials automatically receive a COLA increase, based on a cost-of-living index, effective Jan. 1.

This year and in previous budget impasses, Burns also refused to accept a state paycheck until the annual state budget was finalized. He said that he's traditionally gone without a paycheck as long as the state budget is unfinished, most notably during the nine-month impasse of 2015-16, as well as donated his automatic COLA to

local charities, because of a strong belief that legislators should set an example.

"I have always worked to put taxpayers first," Burns said. "The legislature has a lot more work to do in order to make the state more accountable to taxpayers. Donating this mandatory increase is the right thing to do."

Burns to hold luncheon honoring veterans Nov. 12

State representative Frank Burns is inviting our nation's heroes to his annual Veterans Day luncheon.

It will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 12 at Cresson Volunteer Fire Company, 223 Ashcroft Ave. The complimentary spaghetti meal will be served throughout the three-hour time frame.

"Our veterans put their lives on the line for the freedoms many of us take for granted," Burns said. "The least I can do is provide them a good meal to show our sincere gratitude."

In addition to delicious food, Burns and his staff will be on hand with information about various programs available for veterans and their families, including health care, education, and job placement services.

The following vendors are also sched-

uled to participate and answer any questions: American Legion District 20; Amv Zandt; Veterans Ebensburg Program.

"Then veterans a job to ones at qualify up." B

Veterans meal \$5 fee

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Rep. Burns invites governor to tour Ebensburg State Center

Fight of proposed legislation to close facility continues

Remaining concerned about the facility's future, state representative Frank Burns has invited Governor Tom Wolf to join a group of legislators on a tour of the Ebensburg State Center Friday, Nov. 17, by the Department of Human Services for 11 a.m.

Several weeks ago, Burns made note of his prior visit to the facility when he vowed to fight proposed legislation that would close the center, which serves nearly 225 mentally and physically disabled adults and employs more than 700 caregivers.

Burns said he was invited to participate in the Nov. 17 tour, which was arranged at the request of other legislators, since the facility is located in Burns' 72nd

Legislative District. Burns said he plans to attend but thought it wise to invite the governor as well.

Burns said he took this course of action because, "As I have recently discovered that legislation may not be required in order to close the Ebensburg State Center or other facilities like it, the last thing we want is to wake up one morning and be blindsided with news that it's a done deal."

In his letter to Wolf, Burns said, "I believe this tour would provide you with valuable insights as to the special challenges faced by some of the commonwealth's

Rep. Burns announces funding opportunity for local firefighters

By Amber Stieh
of Mainline Newspapers



State representative Frank Burns suits up on April 23 at the Cambria County Fire School in Patton as Cambria County Fire School chairman John Hawksworth explains some of the rescue scenarios firefighters train for at the school. Photo by Amber Stieh.

On Sunday, April 23, state representative Frank Burns paid a visit to the Cambria County Fire School in Patton to speak with area firefighters about a new bill he is working on to try to help fund their fire department recruitment.

"I'm working on a bill to help fund their fire department recruitment. Everyone agrees it's a good idea, but it comes down to getting the funding. The bill will be a good use of tax dollars into the region."

Senior Recruitment Scholarship Act, also H.B. 48, would provide scholarships to fire ambulance service, and encourage volunteer firefighters' appropriations of tax help cover schooling issue for many volunteer companies across the

months, maintain active volunteer status, have graduated from high school or have received a high school equivalency diploma, and have enrolled in a degree-producing curriculum at an institution of higher education within a 50-mile radius of the volunteer organization.

As a student, the recipient must be a legal resident of the commonwealth, maintain a 2.0 GPA, and apply for all federal, state, and other grant aid before receiving funds from this bill to cover the remaining costs.

SEE OPPORTUNITY, PAGE 5A

Burns elected chairman of Northwest Delegation

In 2017, Rep. Burns completed the first year of his two-year term as chairman of the House Democratic Northwest Delegation.

Previously the delegation's vice chairman, Burns assumed the top role after being selected by his peers in the group. The delegation devises strategy and promotes ideas – including legislation – of mutual benefit to the areas that its members represent.

Burns again refuses paycheck during unresolved state budget

As has become his custom, Rep. Burns once again refused to cash a paycheck during the wrangling between legislative leaders and the governor that delayed full implementation of the 2017-18 state budget.

Burns has traditionally gone without a paycheck as long as the state budget is unfinished, and this past year was no exception.

“This letter will confirm that my office is holding your paychecks from July 1 until the rest of the budget is passed.” – House Comptroller Mary-Jo Mullen in an Aug. 2 correspondence

Burns knows that if you don't do your job, you don't get paid. He's willing to live by that same standard, even when the holdup takes place above his level.

Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!

500 construction jobs in Jackson Twp.

About 500 construction jobs and 100 permanent, on-site jobs will be created by a \$900 million, gas-fired power plant coming to Jackson Township. Being built by Boston-based Competitive Power Ventures Inc., the plant near Vinco should be operational by the end of 2019.

251 new jobs in Lower Yoder

In April, Rep. Burns announced that 251 full-time jobs were coming to Lower Yoder Township, as the result of Convergys Corp., a global customer management service provider, investing \$2.7 million and leasing a nearly 27,000-square-foot facility.

That announcement came on the heels of a House Democratic Policy Committee public hearing on economic development that Burns hosted in Ebensburg, which dealt mightily with job creation efforts.

“I chose economic development to focus on for a reason – and that reason was to bring new jobs to our area,” Burns said at the time.

50 construction jobs for Cresson

In March, Rep. Burns announced that 40 to 50 construction jobs and several permanent positions would be created by the state Department of Environmental Protection's decision to build an acid mine drainage treatment facility in Cresson.

The project will help restore more than 20 miles of streams, while also repurposing a coal refuse pile in Cresson Township.

Representative Frank Burns' offices can help you with:

- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Problems with the Department of Human Services (food stamps, medical and income assistance)
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Complaints and problems with insurance companies
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups
- Information about federal, state and local government agencies



Any problem with state government!