

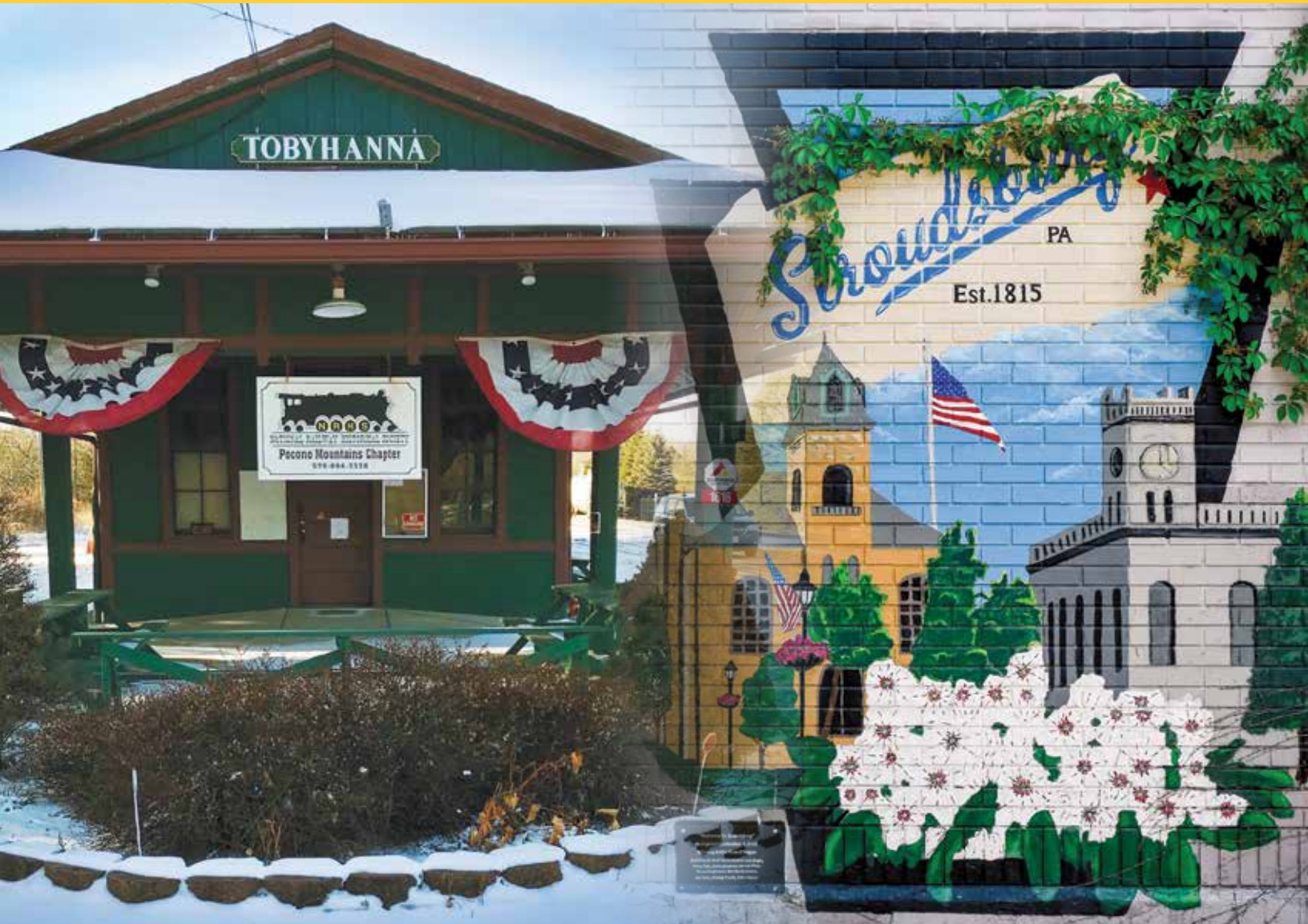
CAPITOL UPDATE

State Representative **MAUREEN MADDEN**

Representing the 115th Legislative District

Winter 2020

Monroe Matters 2020



Rep Madden brings home over \$7.5 million to Monroe County to move us forward.

Community: Working to build a better tomorrow – together.

More than \$7.5 million in grants returning to the district, region

One of Rep. Madden's more important jobs as your representative is ensuring that your taxpayer dollars return to the district or region to improve life for residents. If she doesn't fight to bring our tax dollars back to our community, they go to someone else's district. Rep. Madden is happy to share the news of the following grants:

- Child victims protected – **\$47,000** grant for the Child Advocacy Center of Monroe County for services to child victims and their non-offending caregivers in the community.
- Keeping pedestrians and bikers safe – **\$500,000** to Stroudsburg for bike and pedestrian improvements to the downtown area.
- Keeping schools safe – **\$100,000** in safe schools targeted grants to prevent and reduce violent incidents, to purchase safety and security-related equipment and to provide for training and compensation of school resource and police officers.
- Pocono Municipal Airport – **\$150,000** to ensure the local airport obtains the equipment it needs for safe operation – a huge aviation transportation economic investment.

- New YMCA building – **\$1 million** for the Pocono Family YMCA for a new facility. It will provide adequate parking and up-to-date programmatic spaces, including a natatorium, gymnasium, childcare spaces, community spaces, wellness spaces, and a location for sports activities.
- Affordable housing – **\$305,000** to help fund various affordable housing opportunities throughout Monroe County.
- Keeping our students safe – **\$680,726** to East Stroudsburg and Stroudsburg school districts to help our young people stay safe and feel safe while they are learning.
- East Stroudsburg fixing Middle Dam – **\$2.4 million** to improve water service to thousands of people due to failing water lines.
- Essential projects – **\$1.85 million** for various projects and awards throughout the district.
- Mervine Road upgrades – **\$521,616** to replace structural beams so motor vehicles and pedestrians can continue accessing the road.

Exchange students: Rep. Madden was pleased to host foreign exchange students participating in International Exchange of North America (IENA) and Alliance Abroad. "Rep. Madden, thank you for the informative discussion. It was such a neat opportunity for our participants to hear first-hand from a legislator about American civic engagement and political issues," said Pamela Zulick, Director of IENA. Before beginning their day of community service at the Mountain Center, students enjoyed breakfast and asked Rep. Madden questions about the federal and state government. The students described their own experiences living in their native countries of Ecuador, South Africa, and Jamaica. Rep. Madden was impressed by their interest in American elections and highlighted the importance of voter turnout.



Rep. Madden is honored to be appointed as an East Stroudsburg University Legislative Fellow for the 2019-20 Academic Year

Legislative fellows are selected by a committee of faculty and administrators, and jointly by the university president and the president of the Association of Pennsylvania

State College and University Faculties at the beginning of each academic year.

Rep. Madden's legislative priorities are to create economic opportunities, including raising the minimum wage, strengthening public education through equitable school funding, and protecting the environment. Rep. Madden reintroduced the Workplace Freedom Act (HB 1178), which would strengthen collective bargaining and inform workers of their rights. Rep. Madden also introduced legislation that would ensure all employees have the same workplace protections against harassment and discrimination, regardless of the size of their employer or type of work.

In addition, she is a co-sponsor of legislation which would establish safe staffing levels for nurses to protect patients across Pennsylvania.



Stroudsburg's musical talent stops by the state Capitol for a performance



It was so nice welcoming members of the Stroudsburg Music and Arts 4-H Club to the Pennsylvania State Capitol, who did a fantastic job playing great tunes. The members are very talented young students and I am so proud of their musical ability.

■ Rep. Madden, House Democratic Policy Committee look at college affordability

Rep. Madden led a House Democratic Policy Committee hearing at East Stroudsburg University to discuss college affordability. She was joined by many of her legislative colleagues from across the state to hear testimony about the financial concerns of college students and how the state can assist in lowering the cost of a college education.

Rep. Madden said one of the most troubling challenges students and families are facing is the skyrocketing cost of higher education. She said we need to make college more affordable for students because Pennsylvania's per capita funding for higher education ranks 47th in the nation. Rep. Madden said nearly 70% of Pennsylvania students graduate with debt and she believes we must close the gap that has made getting a college degree unattainable for many low- and middle-income students.



Constituents gather at town hall meetings in the district to discuss property tax reform.

In Rep. Madden's nearly four years in the Pennsylvania House, the Speaker of the House has never brought a Republican nor a Democratic bill aimed at property tax relief to the House floor.

With new interest in the Senate, Rep. Madden plans on introducing new legislation. She understands the burden that crippling school property taxes place on many of her constituents, especially on low-income families and senior citizens. Many senior citizens have had no choice but to sell their homes because they no longer can afford school property taxes, which only continue to increase.

Rep. Madden strongly believes that hardworking Pennsylvanians deserve relief from burdensome school property taxes. This is why she is introducing legislation that would implement a \$2,000 rebate for homesteads and farmsteads to reduce or eliminate school property taxes.

With this rebate, it is estimated that over 2.3 million households will receive total school property tax elimination. To fund the rebate, the legislation would establish a 0.98% surtax on the personal income tax (PIT).

While this would result in slightly higher income taxes, Rep. Madden believes the benefit to homeowners through property tax relief will ensure that we are protecting our vulnerable families and senior citizens.



Garden to Table: The Mountain Center hosted a delicious community meal organized by Pocono Services for Families & Children, St. Luke's Hospital, Pocono Mountain School District, Chartwells and East Stroudsburg University. The plant-based foods from their backyard garden fed about 100 teachers, staff, parents, students, grandparents and kids from the area. There is nothing like a tasty, colorful meal with the people you care about. We look forward to participating in this continued partnership to promote a healthy and sustainable future.

■ *Career and technical education bill signed into law*

Rep. Madden said her support for a statewide educational program that expands access to career opportunities for students has taken another step toward helping students make good decisions about their future. Gov. Tom Wolf signed Act 76 which makes the governor's PAsmart website part of the law and established provisions that support career and technical education and workforce development in Pennsylvania.

Rep. Madden continues to be a staunch supporter of the career and technical education programs in Pennsylvania that offer students the opportunity to develop skills through hands-on learning experiences and classes, which can lead to good-paying, family-sustaining jobs.

She said the state is investing much of its resources, such as \$70 million in funding for the workforce development initiative, with \$30 million into job training.

You were seen around the district!



It's a pleasure seeing many of the people I represent at public meetings, community functions, and school district and neighborhood meetings. If we haven't met in person, I hope we do so soon.



Pocono Mountain School District Update:

■ Rep. Madden supports legislation for better workers' rights at a state Capitol rally

Rep. Madden joined union officials and House and Senate colleagues at a Capitol news conference to promote her legislation, HB 78, and a series of other bills designed to strengthen workers' rights in Pennsylvania.

Rep. Madden's legislation would allow public sector workers to form a union with a simple majority card check vote, rather than the lengthy, bureaucratic process that workers must go through now.

She said it's time to stand up to all those who would deny hardworking Pennsylvanians the right of a paycheck that reflects the dignity of their hard work, and that she is proud to stand and fight with union members for as long as it takes.

Participating in the news conference were members of the State Employees International Union and Pennsylvania AFL-CIO and AFSCME.

Rep. Madden said workers deserve to earn a decent living wage, work in a safe environment that is free of harassment and intimidation, and the right to form and join a union. She first introduced the legislation in 2018 in response to the Janus v AFSCME U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Janus vs AFSCME was a landmark labor law decision by the high court, which ruled that collecting mandatory union fees in the public sector violated the First Amendment rights of workers.

The Pocono Mountain Board of Directors requested fact finding late in 2019 in which the neutral fact finder reported that the district is not meeting their fiduciary responsibilities and that outsourcing the transportation department won't solve their problems. However, outsourcing is still on the table.

The transportation department at Pocono Mountain had 150 bus drivers and 12 mechanics. Today, it has 105 bus drivers and 5 mechanics with many more submitting their letters of resignation every day. Why? Employees are working under uncertain circumstances, with their employer belittling the work they do every day by continuing to threaten outsourcing of their jobs. The employees who have chosen to stay are dealing with pressure that no one should have to endure.

The district has not secured enough permanent and substitute drivers to accommodate when current employees get sick and must call off work. This resulted in schools being closed for two days in December with the district blaming the bus drivers for not coming to work while ill. Safety of our students should be the top priority of all parties. The idea that a school district would blame a bus driver for putting the safety of our kids first and using sound judgement to know when they are not well enough to get behind the wheel of a bus is unconscionable.

The Pocono Mountain Educational Support Professionals Association is working to negotiate a contract that is fair and keeps the transportation services in house.

FREE AARP Tax Assistance

The 2019 Schedule for AARP and IRS-VITA/TCE Tax Program.
February 1 – April 15, 2020 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 Noon

Day	City	Address and Phone Number
Mondays	Tannersville	Rt. 611 St. Luke's Ambulance Building 570-629-2620
Tuesdays	Middle Smithfield	147 Municipal Drive, Municipal Blinding 570-223-8920
	Stroudsburg	Rt. 611 Hughes Public Library 570-421-0800
Thursdays	Stroudsburg	Rt. 611 Hughes Public Library 570-421-0800

Please Bring the Following Items:

- A form of identification and social security cards for yourself and any dependents
- All insurance information
- 2018 Tax Return
- All necessary documents for 2019 returns

The Monroe County Area Agency on Aging
724 Philips Street, Suite 102, Stroudsburg, PA 18360-2224
Office Hours: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday-Friday, On-call 24 hours a day.

The Area Agency on Aging provides a variety of services to Monroe County residents age 60 and older. **Services include:** Information & Referral, Transportation, Senior Center, Pre-Admission Screening, Legal Advice, Ombudsman Service, Medical Assistance Waiver, Apprise, Primetime Health, Home Delivered Meals, Protective Services, Personal Care, Care Management, Family Caregiver's Support Program, Friendly Visitor, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

For more information about these and other community services, call **570-420-3735** or toll-free **1-800-498-0330**.



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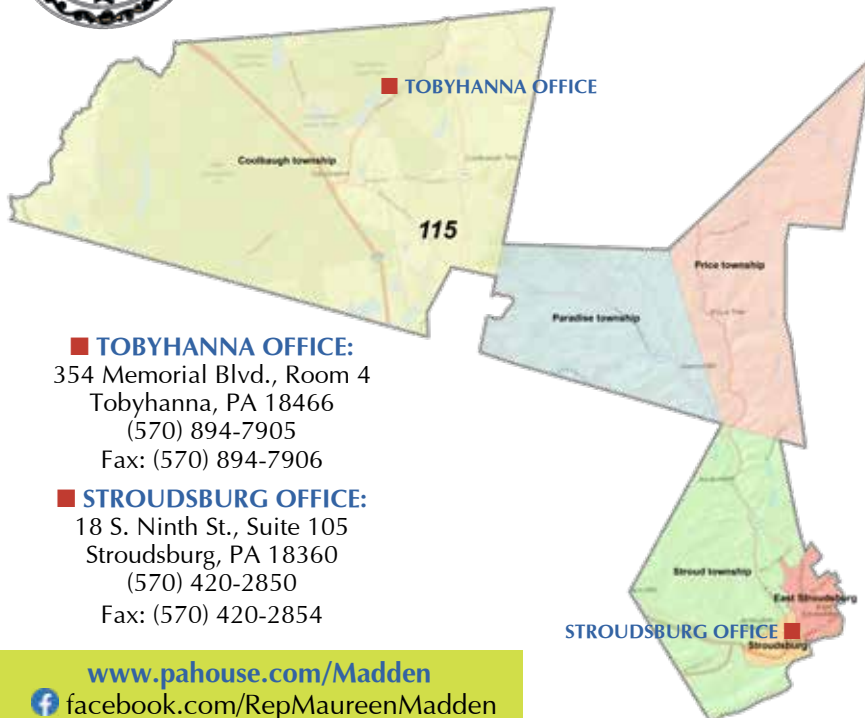
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Artists for gun reform

Recently, amazing local artists displayed their work, all focused on one theme, gun violence in America. Monroe County artists and activists, in association with Ceasefire PA, March for Our Lives and Students Demand Action, presented an evening of art, entertainment and exposition to protest gun violence in America.



Speakers included Jonathon Hanover from Ceasefire PA, and Linda Kozic, survivor of the 2013 Ross Township shooting that killed her husband and two other men and seriously injured her and two others. Rep. Madden also spoke on the current atmosphere for reform in Harrisburg.