

Rep. ^{Rob} MATZIE

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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THE 16TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT SERVING BEAVER AND ALLEGHENY COUNTIES
Beaver County: City of Aliquippa; Boroughs of Ambridge, Baden, Conway, East Rochester, Economy, Freedom, Monaca, Rochester and South Heights; and the Townships of Harmony and Hopewell.
Allegheny County: Leetsdale Borough and Leet Township.

Matzie bill part of new voting law

Voting is one of the most important aspects of our democracy, and our laws should make it easier – not harder – to cast a ballot. Fortunately, a new law going into effect this year will do just that for Pennsylvania voters.

One major change is based on a bill I introduced to allow Pennsylvanians to cast their ballot by mail – an option previously available only if the voter provided an excuse.



Under the new law, casting a ballot is as simple as mailing a letter and eliminates the need to miss time from work and brave long lines or bad weather. Vote-by-mail eliminates the hassle for seniors, residents with disabilities or other mobility problems, people who travel for work, and anyone else who may find it difficult to get to the polls.

The system has multiple advantages over traditional voting and has proven to increase turnout, save taxpayer dollars and reduce the already-low chance of fraud. In fact, voting by mail is already in effect in many other states and Washington, D.C. Now, Pennsylvanians will have this important option.

In addition to voting by mail, there are other helpful changes to the law, including –

- **A permanent mail-in ballot list.** After requesting to be placed on this list, a resident will have a mail-in ballot application sent to them each year. If they complete and return the application, the county will send them ballots for all elections taking place that year.
- **An extended voting period.** Voters can now request a mail-in or absentee ballot up to 50 days before Election Day – the longest vote-by-mail period in the country.
- **An extended deadline.** Voters now have until 8 p.m. on Election Day to submit their mail-in or absentee ballots.
- **More time to register.** The deadline to register to vote is now 15 days before an election, instead of 30 days.

In addition to these changes, residents will see new voting machines that will keep our elections more secure by creating a paper trail.

The changes – **effective for the April 2020 primary election** – will remove barriers to voting and help ensure that more Pennsylvanians make their voices heard!

Agreement restores hope to PA health care consumers

There was much at stake this summer for residents of western Pennsylvania, who faced the frightening possibility of losing in-network access to their doctors when the consent decree between UPMC and Highmark Health ended. As the clock ticked down toward the June 30 expiration date, the state attorney general filed a lawsuit seeking to extend the decree, and I signed onto a legal brief supporting that lawsuit.

Fortunately, with less than a week to go, the two companies announced that they had entered into a 10-year agreement to make all UPMC facilities and doctors available to all Highmark patients for another decade.

Dear Neighbors,

While the new voting law will bring exciting changes this year, many of you have already experienced one of the most important ones: a return to paper ballots.

To some voters, casting a paper ballot in last November's election may have seemed like a step back in time. But paper ballots are more important today than ever, because they provide a critically important safeguard that electronic machines can't – a paper trail.

When Pennsylvania's voter registration system was targeted by hackers several years ago, the need for greater security became apparent, and the governor gave counties a 2020 deadline to switch to systems capable of producing a paper ballot.

I sponsored legislation to support that effort and require state funding to ease the cost burden to counties associated with purchasing the new equipment.

As my colleagues and I worked with the governor to address the funding issue, we also took up the task of modernizing and improving the commonwealth's outdated laws, including narrow timelines and other restrictions that made voting burdensome.

The result – Act 77 of 2019 – authorized \$90 million to help counties offset the cost burden of the new machines, while bringing other changes that will make casting a ballot more accessible and more convenient for Pennsylvania voters.

Rob

Education, jobs, clean water, healthy schools good starting points in budget plan

In early February, Gov. Tom Wolf delivered his budget address, unveiling his plan for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

I heard several aspects of the plan I can support. They include proposals to increase funding for education, expand workforce development and job opportunities, safeguard our state's drinking water and clean up lead and asbestos in our schools. These are priorities I share and investments I believe would greatly benefit western Pennsylvania.

Most importantly, the budget plan holds the line on taxes, so it would not impose any new burden on taxpayers.

Of course, the budget plan is just a starting point. In the months to come, I'll be working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to hammer out a budget that's best for our district and region.



Your tax dollars coming back to the district!

I will never stop fighting to bring your tax dollars back to the district. Since my previous report to you in the spring, our district has received more than \$5 million in grant funding, including:

- More than \$1.8 million to fund building and infrastructure projects.
- Nearly \$1.2 million to bolster workforce development and career readiness.
- Nearly \$1.2 million to combat opioid abuse, and services for victims of domestic abuse and child abuse.
- \$585,000 to support business and tourism projects.
- \$234,000 for school resources.
- \$160,000 to fund fire and EMS resources.

In addition to the grant funding above, schools in the 16th Legislative District received more than \$66 million in the 2019-20 budget – a great boost for education!

REAL ID bringing travel, other changes in October: Are you ready?

Enforcement of the REAL ID Act begins Oct. 1 and will bring immediate changes to air travel and visits to secure federal facilities, so it's important to prepare now.

Although getting a REAL ID-compliant driver's license or ID card is *optional*, you may want to consider getting one if you travel frequently. That's because once enforcement begins on Oct. 1, *you will no longer be able to show a regular state driver's license or identification card to board a commercial domestic flight*. Instead, you will need to present a REAL ID-compliant driver's license or identification card – or some other form of federally accepted identification, such as a U.S. Passport.

The same requirements will apply for visits to secure federal facilities and military bases. Please note, however, that you do *not* need a REAL ID to visit regular federal buildings like the post office, vote, apply for or receive federal benefits, or gain access to hospitals and health clinics.

You can learn more – including how to apply, what documents are needed and the cost of a REAL ID – by visiting dmv.pa.gov.

A meeting with some future leaders



It was an honor to meet with civic-minded members of the Keystone Boys State leadership development program, including (from left) Jackson Thomas, Derek Scott, Logan Erickson, Frank Smith and 1st Sgt. Carl Curtis, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired).

2019
By the numbers

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Rob Matzie
BEAVER/ALLEGHENY COUNTIES

130
Bills & Resolutions Sponsored

8,814
People Helped

900+
Votes Cast

Nearly \$10 Million
Brought Back to the District

PAHouse.com/Matzie

Seniors ride free!

Seniors 65 or older: Remember that you can ride free on all Beaver County Transit Authority fixed routes with a Free Senior Transit Identification Card.

The card is honored by all Pennsylvania transit providers and can be used throughout the state. It can also be used for reduced-fare transportation on DART – the door-to-door, advanced reservation, shared-ride system.

Download an application by visiting www.BCTA.com and scrolling down to the “Free Senior Transit Program” under the “Programs” heading. Then, return your completed application to the Rochester Transportation Center, located at 200 West Washington St., Rochester, 15074. The center is open Monday through Friday, from 5:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

If you don't have a card, you can still ride for free in Beaver County by showing the driver a government-issued, proof-of-age document with your date of

birth, such as a driver's license, non-driver ID card, or U.S. Passport. Be aware, however, that this accommodation may not be available outside Beaver County.

Another free transportation option for seniors is the ConnectCard, issued by the Pittsburgh Port Authority. The card can be used for all Port Authority vehicles, including the bus, light rail and inclines, and is accepted beyond Allegheny County, by other transit agencies statewide.

The ConnectCard is optional, and you can still ride free with a yellow or blue PA Senior Transit ID card. Please note, however, that bus drivers will no longer accept a Medicare card as eligibility to board a vehicle.

My district office can help you apply for a ConnectCard, but please be sure to bring proof of age. To learn more, call my district office at (724) 266-7774.

Matzie bill protects the public from pyramid schemes

As pyramid schemes grow more sophisticated, our state law needs to be updated to properly protect consumers. That's why, as Democratic chairman of the House Consumer Affairs Committee, I introduced legislation to strengthen and improve Pennsylvania's outdated anti-pyramid law.

My bill, which the House passed unanimously last June, would clarify the current law by highlighting the difference between legitimate direct-selling companies and fraudulent pyramid schemes. The bill would also provide the necessary teeth to strengthen law enforcement efforts so the criminals behind these schemes can be effectively prosecuted.

The bill now heads to the state Senate for consideration. It's my hope that we're on our way to stronger anti-fraud protection that clamps down on fly-by-night operations that attempt to target innocent citizens.



Slugging one out for charity at the annual Capital All-Stars Legislative Softball Game. The event has raised more than \$200,000 for food banks, pantries and soup kitchens statewide since 2013.

Protecting patients, lowering the cost of prescription drugs

As third parties hired by health plans to set drug prices, pharmacy benefit managers are vested with a lot of power. They decide which drugs are covered by managed care plans and how much to reimburse the pharmacies that fill those prescriptions.

Unfortunately, instead of operating for the benefit of Pennsylvania's patients and taxpayers, some of these third-party companies are operating with their own interests in mind – to the detriment of Pennsylvania consumers.

For months, we've been hearing reports of PBMs operating in bad faith – particularly regarding the state's Medicaid program – by overcharging patients, wasting taxpayer dollars and forcing local pharmacies out of business by setting unfair rates that leave these mom-and-pop businesses unable to compete with large chains.

That's why I introduced legislation that would bring oversight and transparency to the pricing practices of these middlemen. Last November, the House unanimously passed my bill, which now heads to the state Senate for consideration.

Thankfully, we're one step closer to holding these powerful middlemen companies accountable for their actions that affect the health and well-being of our citizens and the financial viability of the community-owned pharmacies on which they've come to rely.

Rep. Rob Matzie named 'Legislator of the Year'

Last fall, I was honored to be named "2019 Legislator of the Year" by the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association. The award is given to an elected member of the General Assembly who has demonstrated legislative leadership and support of the pharmacy profession.

I'm humbled to have received the award in recognition of my efforts to combat predatory pricing practices by pharmacy benefit managers. Our work will not be done, however, until Pennsylvania's consumers enjoy fair pricing and free access to the pharmacies of their choice.



It was an honor to be named "2019 Legislator of the Year" by the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Association. Presenting the award were Angela Zaydon (left) and Patricia Epple (right).



In September, I joined workers, union representatives and other advocates at the Beaver County Courthouse to rally in support of the Beaver Valley Power Station.



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Matzie secures funding for Old Economy Village



In December, I attended a check-presentation ceremony at Old Economy Village, which received a \$35,000 grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development to expand its tourism marketing. Joining me in Ambridge for the ceremony were (from left): Michael Knecht, site administrator at Old Economy Village; Barbara Hicks, president of Friends of Old Economy Village; and Jason Weber, office manager and marketing staff.



After the ceremony, I had the opportunity to discuss other initiatives at the site with Michael Knecht. As an appointed commissioner of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, I am proud that this site is in the 16th District.