

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

MARCH 2021

GREG VITALI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 166TH DISTRICT

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Apply Online for Property Tax/Rent Rebate

Applications for the 2020 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program can now be submitted online at www.mypath.pa.gov. Previously, applications could only be submitted by mail.

This program provides a state rebate on 2020 property taxes or rent to income-eligible residents who are 65 or older; widows and widowers 50 or older; and people with disabilities 18 or older. The maximum standard rebate is \$650.

To be eligible, your household income must be \$35,000 or less if you are a homeowner,

or \$15,000 or less if you are a renter. When applying, only count half of your Social Security or federal railroad retirement Tier I benefits toward your total income.

You can obtain information about the program, an application and free help applying through my district office or on the state Department of Revenue's website at www.revenue.pa.gov. The state will begin mailing rebate checks on July 1. The deadline to apply for this program is June 30, 2021.

Household Hazardous Waste Collections

There will be a number of household hazardous waste collections in southeastern Pennsylvania in 2021. Here are some upcoming events nearby.

- Saturday, April 24, Emergency Services Training Center, 1600 Calcon Hook Road, Sharon Hill, PA 19079
- Saturday, May 8, Montgomery County Community College, Enter at 595 Cathcart Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422
- Saturday, June 12, Rose Tree Park, 1671 N. Providence Road, Media, PA 19063
- Saturday, June 12, Temple University-Ambler Campus, 1431 Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002
- Saturday, June 19, Abington Junior High School, 2056 Susquehanna Road, Abington, PA 19038
- Saturday, June 19, Delaware County Community College, 901 Media Line Road, Media, PA 19063

All events will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., rain or shine. Household hazardous waste includes household products labeled poisonous, toxic, flammable, caustic, corrosive, reactive or explosive. Items containing Freon and electronic waste will not be accepted.

For additional dates and to register for an event in Delaware County, call the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority at (610) 892-9627 or visit <https://www.delcopa.gov/recycle/hhw.html>.

For additional dates and more information about collections, please call Montgomery County Recycling at (610) 278-3618 or visit www.montcopa.org/637/Recycling-Information.

Registration is required for all events and can be done on the website.

COVID-19 Vaccine Resources

Here are some COVID-19 Vaccine and Testing Resources:

Delaware County residents can find the latest information on COVID-19 testing and vaccine registration at <https://delcopa.gov/covid/index.html> or by calling 484-276-2100.

Montgomery County residents can find the latest information on vaccine registration at

Haverford Township Library Awarded Million-Dollar Grant

I was happy to help secure a \$1 million grant for the Haverford Township Free Public Library from the Commonwealth's Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program.

The Haverford Township Public Library has been at its current location at 1601 Darby Road since 1934 and has not seen a major renovation since the 1970s. Last September the Haverford Township Board of Commissioners voted to renovate the existing building as opposed to moving the library to another location. The total cost of the renovation project is expected to be a least \$12 million.

Renovations are expected to include making the library ADA-compliant and more energy efficient, new computers, updated lighting, a new elevator, and a new HVAC system. Improvements to parking are also being considered. The project is expected to begin in the late fall or winter.

Online Filing Option Available for PA Taxpayers

The Pennsylvania Department of Revenue has a new online system for taxpayers to file their 2020 Pennsylvania Income Tax Return (PA-40).

This new system is available online at www.mypath.pa.gov and could help taxpayers avoid paying fees for online tax preparation software or to tax return preparers. In addition to filing the PA-40, myPATH also allows taxpayers to make income tax payments, track the status of income tax refunds, and access other services.

www.montcopa.org/3660/COVID-19-Vaccine or by calling 833-875-3967. Testing resources can be found at www.montcopa.org/3493/Testing.

Find information on Pennsylvania's vaccine rollout plan and vaccine data at the Pennsylvania Department of Health's website: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/Vaccine.aspx> or by calling 877-724-3258.

Constitutional Amendments on May 18 Primary Ballot

The following proposed changes to the Pennsylvania Constitution will appear on the May 18 primary ballot:

1. **“Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended by adding a new section providing that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of an individual’s race or ethnicity?”**
2. **“Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law so that: a disaster emergency declaration will expire automatically after 21 days, regardless of the severity of the emergency, unless the General Assembly takes action to extend the disaster emergency; the Governor may not declare a new disaster emergency to respond to the dangers facing the commonwealth unless the General Assembly passes a concurrent resolution; the General Assembly enacts new laws for disaster management?”**
3. **“Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law and increase the power of the General Assembly to unilaterally terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration-and the powers of Commonwealth agencies to address the disaster regardless of its severity pursuant to that declaration-through passing a concurrent resolution by simple majority, thereby removing the existing check and balance of presenting a resolution to the Governor for approval or disapproval?”**

Note: When this newsletter went to press there was the possibility that an additional constitutional amendment would appear on the ballot, which would provide a two-year window for alleged victims of childhood sexual abuse to file previously time-barred civil claims for money damages.

A plain English explanation of each of these questions can be found at <https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/Pages/Joint-Resolution-2021-1.aspx>.

All registered voters including those unaffiliated with a major party are eligible to vote on these questions.

Vitali Reappointed Chair of Environmental Committee

I have been reappointed Democratic Chairman of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee for the 2021-2022 legislative session. The committee advances energy and environmental legislation and oversees the state departments of Environmental Protection and Conservation and Natural Resources.

I have also been reappointed to the Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board, a 20-member body that evaluates environmental regulations.

These appointments allow me to be a strong voice for good environmental and energy policy.

Register and Vote

Pennsylvania’s primary election is Tuesday, May 18. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m.

In this election, registered Democrats and Republicans can select nominees from their respective parties to represent them in the Nov. 2 general election, as well as vote on ballot questions (see related article). Unaffiliated voters can participate in the ballot questions only.

Contests on the ballot include: Judges for the Pennsylvania Supreme, Superior, Commonwealth and Common Pleas courts, County Council, Register of Wills, Controller, Sheriff, Township Auditor, Township Commissioners, School Board Directors and Magisterial District Judge.

To see a sample ballot for your location, visit: https://ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup.

- May 3: Last day to register to vote
- May 11: Last day to request mail-in ballot
- May 18: Primary election

For polling locations, new registration, changes in registration, and requests for absentee/mail-in ballots, visit www.votespa.com.

Mail-in and absentee ballots can now be issued for any reason. Completed mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by the county by 8 p.m. on Election Day. For locations of secure ballot drop boxes, check with your county’s election bureau.

Delaware County: www.delcopa.gov/electionsbureau/index or by calling (610) 891-4673.

Montgomery County: www.montcopa.org/753/Voter-Services or by calling (610) 278-3275.

Vitali Reintroduces Billboard Legislation

Recently, I introduced legislation to give our townships more control over the placement of billboards. HB 850 would prohibit signs larger than 32 square feet within 1,000 feet of a school, playground, park, residential housing area, church, or childcare facility without the approval of the Township Board of Commissioners. The bill would require at least one public hearing before the Board of Commissioners could vote on the placement of billboards. This legislation is similar to HB 2300, which I introduced in January 2020.

This legislation is in response to the applications of a billboard company to install 672-square-foot signs on Lancaster Avenue in Haverford and on West

Chester Pike in Havertown. These applications have been contested by Haverford Township Board of Commissioners and the case is currently before the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas.

I oppose these billboards. They are not in keeping with the character of our community and could pose a threat to public safety. HB 850 would give our townships a means to block billboards such as these.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has held it unconstitutional for a township to completely prohibit billboards.

Unemployment Compensation Benefits Expanded Further

The Unemployment Compensation system has been expanded for the second time since December, to help those who have lost work due to the pandemic. This includes an extension in weekly benefits through the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance programs (PUA).

PEUC supplements the standard 26 weeks of Unemployment Compensation (UC) by providing an additional 24 weeks of benefits. This is an expansion of the previously available 13 additional weeks. If you have an open UC claim, the additional weeks will automatically be added to your existing claim. If your benefits have expired, then you must submit an application online at www.paclaims.pa.gov/PEUC.

PUA now provides 50 weeks of benefits for self-employed workers, independent contractors, gig workers, and others affected by COVID-19 who are not eligible for regular UC. The program will not provide benefits for individuals that lack work due to non-COVID-19-related conditions. You can apply for PUA online here: pua.benefits.uc.pa.gov.

If you encounter problems or issues with your Unemployment Compensation or PEUC claim, call 1-888-313-7284 or email UChelp@pa.gov. If you encounter issues with your PUA claim, call 1-855-284-8545 or email UCpua@pa.gov.

If issues persist, my office may be able to help. Email RepVitali@pahouse.net with UC/PUA in the subject line, or call (610) 789-3900 with details about your claim.

District Office Assistance During COVID

My Havertown District Office is available to help you remotely with your state-related matters from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday. Please call (610) 789-3900 for assistance. Due to COVID we are not currently accepting walk-in traffic. In-office appointments will be available as conditions permit.

Resources for Businesses and Homeowners

As a result of the pandemic, Pennsylvania has made additional resources available to help businesses and homeowners.

Businesses should visit the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) website dced.pa.gov/funding-programs to see if they qualify for loan programs that have recently opened.

Homeowners should visit PA Housing Finance Agency website <https://www.phfa.org/homeowners/foreclosure.aspx> for information on assistance with mortgage delinquency, foreclosure prevention, and debt management.