



**CAPITOL UPDATE**

# STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN E. MADDEN

Representing the 115th Legislative District

Summer/Fall 2022

## Constitutional Amendments 101 WHAT'S AT STAKE

### Abortion Rights

Denying the right to abortion care and funding in Pennsylvania

### Voting Rights

Requiring voters to present "valid identification" prior to voting

### Undermining Our Democracy

Shifting the authority to audit elections from counties to the Auditor General

### Eroding Checks & Balances

Permitting the legislature to reject any executive branch regulation

### Lieutenant Governor

Taking away your right to elect Lt. Gov.



**SEE INSIDE: BUDGET BREAKDOWN**

# Constitutional Amendments 101

On the heels of the historic overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, Pennsylvania finds itself in a precarious position. On July 8, 2022, the PA General Assembly advanced Senate Bill 106. Within this bill lies a proposal of five separate amendments to the PA Constitution that would disproportionately harm women, people of color, seniors, people who are low-income, and many other marginalized communities here in the Commonwealth.

You may be thinking, how do constitutional amendments work? Is it that easy to change our Constitution? Well, let's break it down:

- First, the exact language must be proposed as an amendment.
- Any proposed amendments must pass by a simple majority of both chambers in two consecutive legislative sessions. PA has two-year legislative sessions.
- When a majority of both chambers approves a proposed amendment for the first time, the amendment must be advertised in every county three months before the next general election.
- If the proposed amendment is approved by a majority of both houses in the next legislative session, the amendment goes on a statewide ballot.
- At that point, all registered voters in Pennsylvania would have the opportunity to vote, whether it is on the primary or the general election ballot.

So, where is SB 106 in the process? It has passed once in the 2021-22 session. Now, it must pass in the 2023-24 session. If SB 106 passes next session, the amendment goes on a statewide ballot as a referendum asking voters to approve or reject the amendment(s).

## Power Grab — Eroding our Democratic Checks and Balances

SB 106 would eliminate the requirement that disapproval of regulations by the General Assembly be presented to the Governor. This attempt to eliminate the checks and balances inherent in our democracy means that a simple majority of the House and Senate could eliminate any and all regulations they felt like eliminating, unilaterally, with none of the current checks and balances from a separate and equal branch of government. Environmental regulations seem a likely first target, as the current majority feels that most environmental regulations are unnecessary compared to improving corporate profits.

## Audit Requirements

This bill would shift the authority for election audits from counties to the Auditor General. The Auditor General has no expertise in elections and no staff trained to conduct such audits, likely creating enormous disruption to the certification of elections. This amendment serves no other purpose than to sow distrust in our election system and undermine our democracy.

## The War on Women: Abortion Rights

The legislators behind this proposed amendment paint a picture of “reasonable regulation of abortion.” However, this picture is an illusion. In fact, a similar ballot initiative was passed in Tennessee in 2014 after politicians promised they would not use it to pass any extreme laws. In the years since Tennessee adopted this constitutional amendment, the legislature has enacted multiple restrictions on abortion, including a ban starting at six weeks — before most women even know they're pregnant. Tennessee legislators have since swiftly passed nine bills restricting access to abortion and have faced multiple lawsuits as a result.

The voters of Kansas, faced with a similar ballot referendum, voted overwhelmingly on August 2, 2022 to uphold a women's right to a safe and legal abortion. Planned Parenthood reports that states with more abortion restrictions tend to have poorer health outcomes for women and children than other states, including higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. Studies also show a woman who is denied abortion care is more likely to fall into poverty than a woman who receives the care she needs. The impact of abortion restrictions is predominantly felt by those who already experience barriers to health care, including but not limited to people of color, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and people who are undocumented. This amendment would enshrine discrimination in the Pennsylvania Constitution.

## Voter ID Requirements

SB 106 would add a voter identification requirement to the PA Constitution that would require all voters to present “valid identification” regardless of voting method and define valid identification as “any unexpired government issued identification unless otherwise authorized by statute.” If a voter does not have “valid identification,” the voter must request and be furnished with a government-issued identification at no cost to the voter.

This bill does not specify what constitutes a government-issued ID, does not provide guidance around the process for requesting and furnishing the free, government-provided ID, and the language and meaning around “unexpired” remains vague. Voter ID requirements will lead to needless confusion. The legislature would clarify those definitions only after voters are asked whether or not to adopt this constitutional amendment.

Studies show that as many as 11% of eligible voters do not have a government-issued photo ID. That percentage is even higher for seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income voters, and students.

# State Budget Highlights: 2022 -2023

Representative Madden voted for the \$42.8 billion state budget because of its significant increases for school funding, the establishment of a state Child Care Tax Credit Program, and the historic \$125 million investment for housing.

With a \$3.6 billion surplus, \$2.1 billion was deposited into the Rainy Day Fund, bringing that savings to \$4.96 billion.

**The following describes some of the highlights of the 2022-23 budget:**

## ■ Education

The 2022-23 plan includes a basic education funding increase of almost \$750 million (\$525 million through the Fair Funding Formula and \$225 million for Level Up funding to the state's poorest school districts). It also includes a special education funding increase of almost \$100 million. In addition, \$200 million was provided for physical and mental health safety in schools and \$89 million for all early childhood education programs.

This is a historic investment that will enable Pennsylvania to provide every child in the Commonwealth with a good education, regardless of ZIP code.

Locally, the Pocono Mountain School District will receive a 6.6% increase, East Stroudsburg Area School District will receive a 16.5% increase and Stroudsburg Area School District will see a 15.7% increase.

On the significant increase, Stroudsburg Area School District Superintendent, Dr. Curry stated, "This money will be used to provide current programming and preserve the fund balance for our schools. As a district, we also received an additional \$353,786 to be used for physical safety and mental health purposes through a grant writing process. We are very appreciative of the additional funding. With the safety and security grant, we will purchase additional safety items for our school buses, two-way communication radios for security officers, a night lock barricade system for our schools and individual classrooms, and security cameras district wide."

## ■ New State Child Care Tax Credit Program

The budget also established the Pennsylvania Dependent and Child Care Enhancement Program (PDCCEP). Modeled after the already established federal program, the state program could help 221,000 Pennsylvania families. The maximum credit at an income level of \$15,000 is \$315 for one child or dependent and \$630 for two or more children. The maximum credit at an income level of \$42,000 or more is \$180 for one child and \$360 for two or more children. This will be available starting next year.

## ■ Corporate Tax

The Corporate Net Income Tax (CNIT) will be broadened and lowered gradually from 9.99% to 4.99% over the next eight years (2023-31). Lowering the CNIT is done in an effort to grow small businesses and reduce the tax burden on companies operating in Pennsylvania.

## ■ The Majority's Broken Promise: Property Tax Relief

Still, the majority party ignored a critical opportunity to further alleviate the burden for ALL Pennsylvanians, especially our most vulnerable population, SENIORS: property tax relief.

Property tax relief for the 2022-23 fiscal year was funded through the American Rescue Plan for the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion Act. In its place, the majority party, with little notice, diverted gaming money away from the Property Tax Relief Fund and put it into the General Fund. This move reneges on a promise made in 2010 to use gaming money to provide property tax relief to homeowners. Representative Madden continues to work with colleagues on property tax reduction legislation and hopes the majority party will bring up for a vote one of the several bills waiting in committee.

While no state budget is perfect, Madden said she was pleased to support the 2022-23 state budget because of the many good things it contains.

## ■ Whole Home Repair Program

The Whole Home Repairs Program was included in the budget with \$125 million for grants up to \$50,000 for homeowners with household incomes not exceeding 80% of the area median income. Forgivable loans for landlords who meet certain requirements are also available. The grants can be used for habitability concerns, energy or water efficiency improvements, or accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Representative Madden sees the Whole Home Repairs Program as an investment in our communities and our residents. Working families work hard and save for years to afford a home. This investment in homeowners will assist them in the cost of repairs to protect what is, for most people, the single-biggest investment of their lives. The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) will be working throughout the rest of the year to build this program and bring Pennsylvanians closer to accessing affordable housing. Once the program opens, applications will be accepted by DCED staff.

# Rep. Madden's Legislative Corner: Funding secured for Pocono Family YMCA, ESU & more

Among the many responsibilities associated with being an elected official is helping to secure funding for local projects.

And there is nothing Representative Madden enjoys more in her role as state representative than supporting motivated people, community-based organizations, and crucial, practical projects aimed at improving various corners of our region.

She believes in the organizations – and the people behind them – for whom she advocates and endorses, and it's truly a reason to celebrate when grant funding is announced for these projects. Over the last few months, Madden has been overjoyed to share in the celebration of several vital funding announcements, including:

- **June 2022:** \$750,000 in Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) funding for upgrades at the Pocono Family YMCA facility in Stroudsburg, which President and CEO Scott Peckins said would be used toward gyms, expanded child care service, new community spaces, aquatic center improvements, inclusive locker rooms and family changing areas, and additional parking spaces, with construction expected to begin in 2023. Adding this to other funding initiatives for this project (including one mentioned below), Madden has helped generate more than \$4.2 million in various grants for the YMCA, and she looks forward to seeing how this structural renovation will eventually allow it to expand its efforts to meet the needs of our growing community.
- **June 2022:** \$1.7 million in Gaming Local Share Account funding, including \$537,399 for new Pocono Family YMCA buildings around their current structures in Stroudsburg; \$490,097 for Mount Pocono for the demolition and construction of a 4,400-square-foot borough maintenance garage with parking area and security funding; \$295,489 for Monroe Career and Technical Institute for a 9,000-square-foot addition to the existing MCTI for a variety of uses; \$183,233 for Waste Not Technologies for a loading dock and outside storage addition; \$148,139 for Stroudsburg Wesleyan Church for an indoor play area to house a Family Fun and Learning Center; and \$117,495 for Pocono Hemlock Civic Association to repair roads within the Pocono Hemlock Development.
- **April 2022:** \$1 million in RACP funding for East Stroudsburg University to upgrade the Warriors' soccer facility which interim President Kenneth Long said would include new NCAA regulation turf and field lighting (which will allow for increased field utilization), perimeter fencing, spectator seating, a press box, scoreboard and sound system. Such top-class soccer programs like the women's and men's teams at ESU deserve state-of-the-art facilities, and is a "direct kick" for not just students, alumni and coaches, but the entire region!

## SEEN IN THE DISTRICT



# SENIOR EXPO 2022

On July 19, Representative Madden co-hosted a Senior Expo with Senator Mario Scavella and Representatives Jack Rader and Rosemary Brown. Attendees were happy to be back after two years of not having the Expo – one that the community has come to rely on through the years. Over 75 exhibitors participated, representing government agencies and senior citizen-focused organizations. There were health screenings, educational seminars, and plenty of refreshments. We saw old friends and made many new ones!



# TOBYHANNA ARMY DEPOT

On June 26, Representatives Madden, Thom Welby and Bridget Kosierowski, along with Congressman Matt Cartwright, had the opportunity to participate in a military send off for the 392nd Expeditionary Signal BTN, B Company as they deployed from the Tobyhanna Army Depot to Europe. This was a historic deployment of troops from Tobyhanna Army Depot. It is an honor to be part of the community that came out to show support for what these soldiers may be facing over the next year.



# WOMEN'S DAY *Expo*



After two years without holding Representative Madden's Annual Women's Day Expo due to COVID-19, she and her staff were finally able to come together on June 25 and enjoy a day filled with local and state agencies sharing information and local health networks providing medical screenings. Lehigh Valley Health Network provided blood pressure screenings and also brought along their Mobile Mammography Unit, where

numerous attendees were able to access mammograms on the spot. Carbon-Monroe-Pike Drug and Alcohol Commission in partnership with the PA Department of Health distributed Narcan and instructed people how to use it. Free facials and massages were provided, along with giveaways and door prize raffles. Both exhibitors and attendees said it was one of the best Expos to date. One of the exhibitors also included Along the Way, a non-profit organization committed to providing free child care to qualifying single moms during non-traditional daycare hours. Local artist Linda Schwartz exhibited her women's series of incredible felted art. St. Luke's Medical Center also provided health screenings. Monroe County League of Women Voters, Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (C.A.R.I.E.), and Carbon-Monroe-Pike Drug and Alcohol Commission were also among many other area agencies and exhibitors. Thank you to all who came out to make it one of the best Women's Day Expos.





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# Property Tax/Rent Rebate Bonus

Thanks to the new state budget, Pennsylvanians who filed for the 2021 Property Tax/Rent Rebate will receive a one-time 70% bonus rebate between \$175-\$455 in the coming months. If you've already applied, you do not need to do anything to receive this additional payment. You'll receive it the same way that you received your original rebate, either by direct deposit or check.

**If you haven't applied, don't delay! The deadline is December 31. Contact Representative Madden's office for assistance or visit [mypath.pa.gov](http://mypath.pa.gov) to file your application online.**

*Thank you!* Representative Madden would like to thank members of her staff – Marina Purcaro, Latisha Griffith, Erin DeRosa, Lisa Cantor and Geoff Morrow – for their collaboration on this newsletter.