

Legislative UPDATE

News on the 2007-08 State Budget

From State Senator Mike Brubaker

S U M M E R 2 0 0 7



Dear Friend:

Over the past several weeks and months, many individuals have continued to tell me that they cannot handle any more tax increases and that the state needs to learn to control its spending. I am proud that the state Senate fought hard to keep our commitment to the people of Pennsylvania and rejected each of the Governor's proposed seven tax increases to deliver a budget with a much lower increase in spending than recent years.

There are elements of this budget with which I am satisfied, and those with which I am not. However, the final product is one that reflects negotiation, compromise, and input from every corner of Pennsylvania.

One area of the budget I followed very closely was the funds directed toward agriculture, our number one industry. Certainly, I am disappointed that cuts were made, and there are some programs that will not be funded at levels I would like to see – conservation districts and crop insurance top that list. I do appreciate, though, that we were able to restore about \$2.4 million of the cuts Governor Rendell originally proposed, particularly in areas such as the Center for Dairy Excellence, agricultural research and Farmers' Market Food Coupons. In addition, we increased funding to

PSU Agriculture Research and Extension by \$1 million and funded a new Healthy Farms and Healthy Schools program to provide important nutritional and agricultural education for young school children and more direct marketing opportunities for producers.

"Preventing those tax increases will save the average family of four more than \$800 per year."

Farmers will also be able to benefit from \$10 million in new tax credits under the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP) approved by the General Assembly as part of this budget.

These monies will provide a mechanism to leverage private dollars for conservation practices on farms. The new line programs and the increase in Penn State's lines resulted in a net increase in the budget for agriculture of 4.9 percent over last year's budget.

Again, this budget truly is the result of a great deal of compromise on all sides, and the end result is fiscally responsible and allows Pennsylvania to live within its means. I look forward to working together with my colleagues and all of you on future state budgets to ensure that we can keep this Commonwealth moving toward a brighter tomorrow.

Sincerely,


SENATOR MIKE BRUBAKER

Tackling Our Energy Needs

With my support, the legislature has approved a new law which will steadily increase the amount of solar energy used in Pennsylvania through 2020. In addition, a Special Session on Energy will convene in September to consider additional issues, such as:

- Creating a state fund to encourage alternative energy and clean energy projects. We can create this fund without any additional taxes.
- Establishing thresholds for the use of ethanol and biofuels.

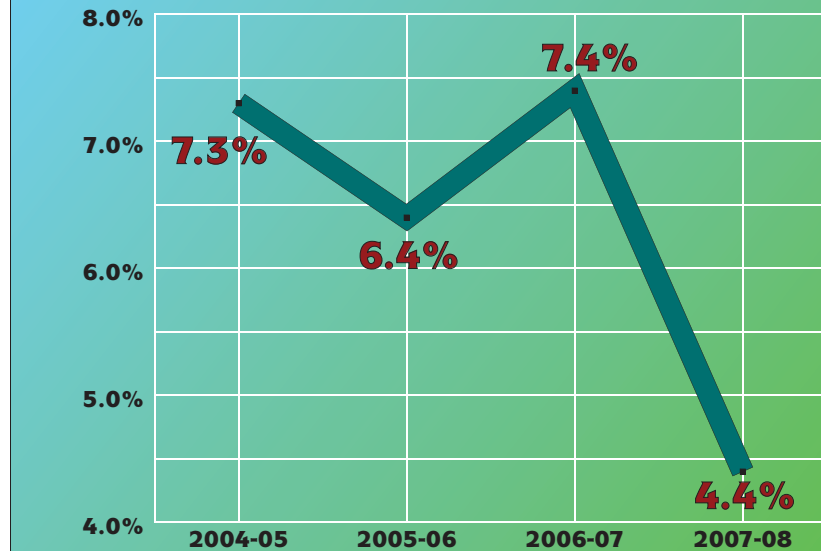
Improving Health Care in Pennsylvania

The Senate has actively tackled the issue of health care this year. Among the most notable accomplishments:

- **Assisted Living / Personal Care** – Senate Bill 704 (Act 56) will require assisted living facilities to be licensed, ensuring that patients and families can make informed decisions about the quality of care they receive.
- **Hospital-Acquired Infections** – Senate Bill 968 (Act 52), prime-sponsored by Sen. Ted Erickson, will establish the

Pennsylvania State Budget Growth

2004-05 to 2007-08



Bringing State Spending Under Control

One of my goals in this year's budget was to bring state spending back to a reasonable level. As you can see in the chart above, the past three years saw state spending grow by an average of 7.0%. This year's budget growth is only two-thirds of that: just 4.4%. With this budget, we were able to meet all of the state's true needs without increasing the burden on taxpayers – and without setting up a tax increase next year.

roles of state government and health care facilities in reducing the incidence of infections, and require that all health care facilities implement infection control plans.

- **Scope of Practice** – A series of bills will change outdated state laws to give licensed health care workers more lati-

tude in the types of medical care they provide.

- **Electronic Medical Records** – Senate Bill 8, approved by the Senate in June, would help hospitals, doctor offices and health care clinics obtain funding needed to create computerized systems to better diagnose and treat patients.

2007-08 Agriculture Budget Update

(in thousands)	FY 2006-2007	FY 2007-2008 Gov's request	FY 2007-2008 budget agreement	Difference between agreement and 06-07	Percent change between 06-07 and agreement
Department of Agriculture	\$85,399	\$78,857	\$81,206	(\$4,193)	-4.90%
REAP			\$10,000	\$10,000	100%
Penn State Cooperative Extension Services and Research	\$54,881	\$54,881	\$55,979	\$1,098	2%
Total agriculture-related spending	\$140,280	\$133,738	\$147,185	\$6,905	4.90%

Senator Mike Brubaker

36th District

301 E. Main Street, Lititz, PA 17543-2013 • (717) 627-0036 • FAX (717) 627-1389

Senate Box 203036, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3036 • (717) 787-4420 • FAX (717) 783-3156

Toll Free (866) 738-1601 • TTY (800) 364-1581

senatorbrubaker.com • mbrubaker@pasen.gov