



**State Senator
Mike Brubaker**

Reports

36th Senatorial District



SUMMER 2008

Dear Friend:

We have made major strides in several important areas during the first half of 2008, which together are significant steps to ensuring a bright future for this Commonwealth.

For instance, Senate Republicans introduced HealthNET PA, a comprehensive package to expand direct access to health care and medicine for uninsured and low-income working Pennsylvanians in a fiscally responsible way by building on approaches that are already working.

We also unveiled a tax stimulus package to provide relief to lower-income working families, small businesses looking to expand and other employers and job creators. Senate Bills 1385 through 1388 were approved by the Senate in June and sent to the House of Representatives.

I am also pleased that the 2008-2009 state budget contained no new taxes and kept spending increases below the rate of inflation. Overall, this budget reflects a dedication to Pennsylvania while remaining mindful of the tight economic conditions facing the Commonwealth.

One of the most significant elements of this budget is an

overall five percent increase in basic education funding that ensures every district receives a minimum three percent increase. We were also able to maintain a strong commitment to Pennsylvania agriculture, our number one industry, and authorized borrowing to make investments in public infrastructure, such as bridges, dams, water and sewer projects, alternative energy development and other economic development initiatives.

In addition, legislation I authored to eliminate phosphates in automatic dishwashing detergents, and therefore help municipalities meet their phosphate reduction goals under the federal Clean Water Act, was signed into law in May as Act 15.

I appreciate the valuable input shared by the constituents of the 36th District on state government issues, and I continue to maintain an active visitation schedule to each of the communities in the District. If I can provide any assistance or information, please do not hesitate to contact me by one of the means listed below.

Pennsylvania Invests In Alternative Energy

Recently approved legislation will make Pennsylvania a leader in developing renewable energy, improving energy efficiency and conservation.

I am very aware that increases in energy costs are having a significant impact on families and businesses throughout the Commonwealth. For that reason, I am very pleased that Pennsylvania has made this commitment to a sustainable energy policy.

The Alternative Energy Investment Act will invest \$650 million to encourage the development and use of alternative and renewable energies. For instance, \$165 million will be available for businesses, nonprofit economic development corporations

and municipalities to undertake clean energy development projects. Individuals and small businesses will be able to take advantage of loans, grants and rebates for solar energy projects (\$100 million) and energy conservation programs such as geothermal heat pumps and energy efficient appliances, windows and doors (\$92.5 million).

The Act also includes \$40 million for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to supplement the existing federal funding.

To encourage renewable fuel production, the Biofuel Development and In-State Production Incentive Act will establish mandated content

requirements of biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol. The reimbursement to alternative fuel producers will also increase to 10 cents per gallon, with an additional 75-cent-per-gallon biodiesel subsidy for qualified producers within the Commonwealth.

While I am very supportive of efforts to develop new technologies and biofuels, I believe the conservation measures contained in these new laws are also important so that we start using energy more efficiently right now. Energy policy has been one of my priorities in the Senate since the beginning of my term, and I was proud to support this major step forward for Pennsylvania.

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36th District

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Cleaner Water, Improved Infrastructure Ahead for State

As part of the 2008-2009 state budget, historic investments in the state's infrastructure, including flood control, dams, and water and sewer projects, are set to take place.

The 36th District is in a unique position to reap the benefits of the investments in wastewater upgrades. As part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, both agricultural operations and municipal water treatment facilities must reduce levels of nutrients and sediments going into local waterways. The wastewater upgrades in particular often come with a steep price tag, one that, without targeted financial assistance, plants would have no choice but to pass on to ratepayers.

Act 63 of 2008 will provide \$800 million over the next 10 years for critical water, sewer, and flood control projects, and repairs to unsafe, high-hazard dams. Under Act 64, Pennsylvanians will also have the opportunity to approve an additional \$400 million for improvements in public drinking water and wastewater systems through voter referendum in this November's election.

Publicly owned water systems facing federal mandates to reduce nutrient pollution will be eligible for additional support. Grants and loans may be used for capital improvements as well as other innovative strategies, such as nutrient trading.

This new infusion of funding

will address vital water and sewer projects that must happen and should not be put off any longer. I will also continue working with the local Chesapeake Bay Task Force to help Lancaster County develop other innovative ways in which it can meet its obligations under the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy.



Senator Brubaker invited superintendents and school business officials from the 36th District to come to Harrisburg for a discussion on education funding.

Health-related Initiatives Signed Into Law

This summer, the General Assembly approved several bills to improve public health and encourage accessibility and affordability of health care.

Act 62 is a landmark new law requiring Pennsylvania insurance companies, for the first time, to cover treatment for autism spectrum disorders. Up to \$36,000 will be available annually for applied behavior analysis and other medically necessary treatments up to age 21, with no lifetime cap. The legislation also creates an expedited appeals procedure for denied autism services

claims. As a member of the Joint Autism Caucus, I appreciate the benefit this will have for Pennsylvania families with autistic children.

The legislation also requires insurance companies to cover colorectal cancer screening that is consistent with American Cancer Society guidelines.

In addition, Act 62 assures state oversight of proposed mergers involving non-profit health insurance companies, such as that being considered by Highmark, Inc., and Independence Blue

Cross. Many concerns have been raised that this proposal would limit competition in the industry, and now both the House and Senate Banking and Insurance Committees may offer input in such matters, with the state Insurance Department given the final say.

These are all important measures which, by helping patients access appropriate treatment and providing another level of oversight of the insurance industry, will help control and even reduce health costs, and I am proud of our progress in this area.



Senator Brubaker discusses the importance of local farmers markets with Christine Eshleman during a visit to Schopf Bros Farms in East Hempfield Township.