



**State Senator  
Mike Brubaker**

# Reports

**36th Senatorial District**



Dear Friend:

As my first full two-year session in the General Assembly comes to a close, I am very proud of the measures we have enacted to benefit area families. The General Assembly passed measures to reduce energy costs, expand access and affordability in health care, promote agriculture and improve state government, and I am confident that these measures will improve the quality of life in our communities.

One of the major accomplishments at the end of the 2007-08 legislative session was updating the state's Dog Law. I worked extensively as the Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee to ensure a safe and healthy environment for dogs in commercial kennels, and I am proud that we have been able to ensure more humane treatment for animals that will someday serve as our beloved family pets.

While we have accomplished a great deal in the past two years, there is much more work left to do in the coming legislative session. I introduced several bills in November to address issues that are critical to Lancaster and Chester Counties, and I am hopeful that the Senate will take action on these bills when they are reintroduced in January.

I introduced legislation that would prevent mortgage fraud and protect whistleblowers who report suspicious or illegal activities within a lending institution. Hundreds of homeowners in Lancaster County alone were recently victimized in the OPFM mortgage scandal, and my legislation would help to prevent this sort of scam from ever happening again.

In addition to the mortgage reform bills, I also introduced legislation that would promote agritainment activities, a valuable source of revenue for many area farmers. The bill will be an important step forward for area farmers who offer these valuable educational and recreational activities.

I appreciate the valuable input and support shared by the constituents of the 36th District on state government issues, and I will continue to maintain an active schedule in each of the communities in the district. If I can provide any assistance or information, please do not hesitate to contact me at my district office.

## State Revenue Picture Shows Declining Collections

The Department of Revenue recently reported that state government revenue collections in the first quarter of the 2008-09 budget year were behind the official revenue estimate by \$281.4 million, or 4.7 percent.

Collections over those first three months are almost 3 percent behind last year's collections during the same period, and all three of the state's major revenue sources - taxes on sales, business income and personal income - are behind projections for the year.

The 4.7 percent shortfall projected over the entire July-June fiscal year would create a \$1.3 billion hole in the budget, which could prompt deeper spending cuts in the \$28.3 billion budget. The fiscal year is still young and the biggest collection months are still to come, but the shortfall is still very troubling.

In September, the governor

froze hiring, banned out-of-state travel and cut other spending to save \$200 million in light of the weakening national economy. He also asked the Legislature, judiciary and independent state agencies - including the higher education system and Attorney General's office - to reduce spending.

To prevent the revenue shortfall from forcing a tax increase or painful cuts to government services, I am working with my colleagues to reduce spending in the Senate. Appropriations to the Senate have declined, dropping from \$108.3 million in Fiscal Year 2005-06 to \$101.8 million in Fiscal Year 2008 -09, a

decrease of more than 6 percent. The number of employees in the Senate Republican Caucus has been reduced 8.6 percent since January 2006.

In addition to spending cuts for government operations, I also worked with my colleagues during the budget process over the summer to cut overall state spending growth. The 2008-2009 budget is nearly \$150 million less than the spending proposed by the governor, and the 3.98 percent spending increase is below the 4.4 percent rate of inflation.

These steps to curb government spending could prove to be invaluable if state revenues continue to decline. I am committed to working with my colleagues in the coming months and years to cut spending and ensure that state government remains fiscally responsible.



## General Assembly Provides Sweeping Changes to State Dog Law

**A**s Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, I was proud to play a leading role in creating legislation that will ensure a humane and

healthy environment for dogs living in commercial breeding kennels.

Act 119 would require dogs to be checked by a veterinarian every six months and prevents dogs from being

euthanized by anyone except a veterinarian. The legislation also requires kennel owners to provide dogs with free access to an outdoor exercise area at least twice the size of their primary enclosure, except in certain specific circumstances. Kennels would be required to double the primary enclosure size for dogs, and the use of wire flooring that can lead to serious foot injuries will be prohibited.

Additionally, the bill creates a Canine Health Board made up of nine veterinarians with expertise in treating and caring for dogs to set standards for lighting, ventilation, temperature and flooring options.

There was overwhelming support in the General Assembly for this legislation, and I am pleased that my colleagues in the General Assembly shared my concerns for the health and safety of dogs in commercial breeding kennels.



*Senator Brubaker attended the bill signing for House Bill 2525, legislation that would improve the state's Dog Law.*

## Accomplishments Outside the Senate

**I** was recently honored with the "Power of One" award from the Pennsylvania Family Institute in Harrisburg. I received this award due to my public service and committed effective leadership on SB 1250, the Pennsylvania Marriage Protection Amendment.

In addition, I was named a Guardian of Small Businesses by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) for my outstanding voting record on behalf of Pennsylvania's small-business owners in the 2007-08 session of the General Assembly.

Guardian of Small Business Awards are given to Senators and Representatives who voted favorably on key small-business issues at least 75 percent of the time during session.

The voting record includes only votes on small-business issues, not all of the votes cast during the session. The key issues include health care, legal reform, private property rights, competition and a variety of tax measures. The 2008 NFIB small business voting record can be accessed from NFIB's website [NFIB.com/PA](http://NFIB.com/PA).

*Senator Brubaker was honored with the NFIB's Guardian of Small Business Award (above) and the Power of One Award from the Pennsylvania Family Institute (below).*



## Legislation Introduced to Promote Agritainment

**A** growing number of farms are offering unique attractions, such as corn mazes, pick-your-own crop harvests, hay rides and farm vacations, to earn additional revenue. I recently introduced legislation that will promote these additional profit-making opportunities for agriculture by making it easier for farmers to take part without putting their livelihood at risk.

Agriculture entertainment activities, also known as agritainment, give traditional farmers another way to generate revenue while providing opportunities for the public to learn

more about one of our state's leading economic industries.

Under current law, farmers involved in agritainment activities face serious liability risks when opening their land to the public. My legislation would protect farm owners from civil liability in cases where no party is at fault. The right for an individual to sue would still be preserved if an owner is grossly negligent, displays willful disregard for safety or intentionally causes injury, but it would protect farmers from being held liable for circumstances beyond their control.

The legislation was crafted with input from the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and the Lancaster County Chamber of Commerce, and both organizations are supporting the General Assembly's efforts to protect area farmers who offer agritainment activities. I am hopeful that my colleagues in the General Assembly will join me in protecting and encouraging these important recreational and educational opportunities in the upcoming legislative session.



*Senator Brubaker introduced legislation that would protect farmers at a press conference at Cherry Crest Adventure Farms in Ronks.*

## Mortgage Fraud Prevention Measures Proposed

**H**undreds of homeowners in our area were recently victimized in the OPFM mortgage scandal, leaving many families' homes and life savings in jeopardy. I introduced two bills in November that would help protect consumers from that kind of deceitful activity in the future.

Senate Bill 1614 would prohibit a mortgage broker or originator from being the exclusive recipient of communications to a consumer. The bill would ensure that consumers are informed of the terms of their mortgage, and it would prevent brokers from withholding information about interest rates, fees or monthly payments.

I also introduced Senate Bill 1615, legislation that would help to pre-

vent fraud by protecting mortgage company employees that report illegal activities or take part in an investigation, hearing or inquiry. The legislation would prevent an employer from taking actions such as reducing an employee's salary or benefits, changing the terms of employment, or firing an employee for raising a red flag about a company's suspicious or illegal activities.

The General Assembly needs to do its part to ensure that Pennsylvania homeowners are not victimized by this type of scam again. I am hopeful that my colleagues will join me in providing greater protections to our homeowners during the new legislative session that begins in January.

## Energy Bill Will Reduce Costs to Consumers

**T**he House and Senate recently passed an energy bill that will change the way electric utilities buy power and impose new energy conservation regulations. These measures are expected to save ratepayers more than \$500 million by 2013.

Act 129 would require utility companies to purchase energy at the lowest possible cost. It would limit the amount of energy utility companies would buy through long-term contracts and other methods that may not be the best value for ratepayers.

Under the legislation, utility companies will be required to work with consumers to reduce energy use over the next five years. Over time, the legislation requires utility companies to reduce energy use by 3 percent and as much as 4.5 percent during peak hours when rates are highest. This demand-side management will ensure that consumers will pay less for energy, especially at times when energy is most expensive.

The new energy bill would also allow consumers to request a "smart meter" to help ratepayers monitor energy use and conserve energy during peak hours when electricity costs are highest.

While the legislation was a victory for ratepayers, our work on this issue is not complete. With rate caps expiring in 2010, it is very important to negotiate a rate mitigation agreement with utility companies to ensure that ratepayers are shielded from painful rate spikes. I expect rate mitigation to be one of the most important topics for the General Assembly in 2009.

## Brubaker Announces Hunger Caucus

**H**unger is a growing problem in communities across the state. A recent USDA study found that more than 492,000 Pennsylvania households are at risk for hunger, or more than 1 in 10 families statewide. As the state and national economy continue to struggle, the General Assembly must do more to protect the growing number of families that may be at risk for food insecurity.

I recently announced the formation of the Hunger Caucus, a group of legislators that will help to bring greater awareness to hunger issues and help families at risk. I will co-chair the Hunger Caucus with Representative John Myers of Philadelphia, and I am confident that the legislators involved in this group will bring a diverse range of viewpoints and ideas on how the state can combat hunger in communities,

both large and small, across the state.

Hunger is not solely an urban or rural problem. Families from every Senate and House district across the state are at risk for hunger, and the Hunger Caucus must work to prevent these families from suffering the consequences of food insecurity.

The Hunger Caucus will work to lower barriers to anti-hunger programs, develop cooperative anti-hunger programs between government and the private sector, and search for new ways to address hunger issues. I am confident that the Hunger Caucus will help to build awareness of this serious problem, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the General Assembly to find new and better strategies to ensure that Commonwealth families will not fall victim to hunger and food insecurity.



*Senator Brubaker recently spent some time volunteering at the Water Street Mission in Lancaster.*

## A Special Thank-You to District Residents



**I**would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for those who have offered support and well wishes to me and my family after I was diagnosed with prostate cancer earlier this year. I am happy to report that, as of my most recent check-up, I am cancer-free.



### State Senator Mike Brubaker

*36th District*

301 East Main Street  
Lititz, PA 17543-2013  
(717) 627-0036  
FAX (717) 627-1389  
Toll Free (866) 738-1601

Senate Box 203036  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3036  
(717) 787-4420  
FAX (717) 783-3156  
TTY (800) 364-1581

senatorbrubaker.com  
mbrubaker@pasen.gov