

May 14, 2020

Rep. O'Mara Again Votes Against Allowing Small Businesses to Safely Re-Open

Smythe says Small Business Owners and Voters in the 165th Need to Contact O'Mara and tell her to change her position and be part of a bipartisan majority to override Gov Wolf's certain veto.

Springfield - Bob Smythe, the Republican candidate for State Representative in the 165th District, issued a call to action to Delaware County small business owners and residents to contact Rep. Jennifer O'Mara urging her to change her position on HB 2388, legislation she voted against today that would allow our small businesses to safely open under current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. Smythe said he hopes an outpouring of opposition will convince O'Mara to become part of a bipartisan coalition that can override Governor Tom Wolf's certain veto of the legislation.

"It is absolutely unacceptable that chain stores like Home Depot, Walmart and Target -- all located in the 165th District -- have been allowed to remain open and sell non-essential goods while small business owners have been strangled by a flawed and non-transparent exemption process," said Smythe. "To say that our local small business owners can't be trusted to reopen safely in a way that protects their neighbors and communities is just plain insulting. I know that our local small business owners care about our communities – they are the ones that sponsor our local little leagues, donate to our fire companies and EMS services, and are the first one to step up to help a neighbor in need."

Smythe noted that O'Mara's change of position on allowing the safe resumption of real estate activity followed an aggressive half million-dollar lobbying effort. She had voted against the legislation before voting for it today. "Unfortunately, our local hairdressers, barbers, pet groomers and garden stores don't have a million-dollar lobbying arm – and frankly it shouldn't take one for Rep. O'Mara to do the right thing," said Smythe.

"HB 2388 was passed with bi-partisan support, but it is headed for a probable veto by Governor Tom Wolf. We need to convince Jenn O'Mara and twelve other legislators to change their positions so that the House has the two-thirds majority needed to override the Governor's veto."

"Rep O'Mara's various Facebook posts state she understands the frustration that voters and small business owners are facing with the shutdown orders, but actions speak louder than words and her actions today show that she has again ignored the pleas of responsible small business owners and their families. We have thousands of Pennsylvanians waiting for their unemployment from a failed government system and small businesses are forced to close down," said Smythe. "The current stay at home orders are inequitable, unfair, and

unsustainable. We have a minority of our state elected officials who are holding our small businesses and citizens hostage.'

"I am a teacher, a volunteer firefighter, and the son of a police chief. Health and safety are a top priority for me, and I am concerned about the negative impacts of the stay-at home orders on the health of individuals – both physically and mentally," said Smythe. "An important part of individuals' mental health is the ability to provide and care for their families. Americans are known for their ingenuity and I believe strongly that we can begin to reopen our small businesses in a limited fashion in a way that balances the health and safety concerns associated with COVID-19 with the health and safety concerns of continued social isolation and unemployment."

Smythe pointed to testimony before the Pennsylvania Senate yesterday from Dr. Steven Shapiro the Chief Scientific Officer of UPMC, the largest health care provider in the state. Shapiro testified that we could manage the spread if we focus on protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions. As Dr. Shapiro testified: "We can't be put in a position to have to choose between death by pathogen or death by economic shutdown. In this particular case, the problem we're not going to be able to fix in the short term is the complete eradication of the virus. The problem we can fix is to serve and protect our seniors, especially those in nursing homes."

Dr. Shapiro also testified: "What we cannot do is extend social isolation. Humans are social beings, and we are already seeing the adverse mental health consequences of loneliness, and that is before the much greater effects of economic devastation take hold on the human condition. The Academy of Family Medicine estimates up to an additional 154,037 deaths of despair from drugs, alcohol or suicide over the next decade attributable to the rise in unemployment, isolation and uncertainty." His full prepared testimony can be found here: <https://inside.upmc.com/yealy-shapiro-senate-testimony/>

"Now is the time to step up and let Rep. O'Mara know that we need to achieve a better balance, one that allows our businesses to reopen safely and with the proper protocols in place."

House Bill 2388 – which Rep. O'Mara voted against today -- would allow the following industries to resume in Pennsylvania provided they adhere to CDC guidelines.

- Salons and barber shops
- Lawn and garden centers
- Animal Groomers
- Vehicle services
- Manufacturing operations
- Messenger Services

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