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Holding State Government Accountable: Budget Hearings Continue



The Senate Appropriations Committee continued public hearings this week on Gov. Josh Shapiro's proposed $51.5 billion spending plan for Fiscal Year 2025-26. His plan calls for an increase in state spending by more than 7.5% over the current year, leading to a projected funding shortfall of over $27 billion in the next five years. My colleagues and I are carefully examining state agency budgets to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

At the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) hearing, I followed up on the SPEED program, which I co-authored with Sen. Rothman to improve transparency and efficiency in the permitting process. I asked how the program is performing and whether the governor's PA Fast Track executive order should be codified into law to ensure all state agencies operate with the same level of transparency. I also raised concerns that some in the building industry are experiencing new barriers and regulations that contradict the program's intent.

I also questioned Secretary Jessica Shirley on the governor's "Lightning Plan" which is a proposal to boost energy development by repurposing tax credits. While the administration touts this as a solution to Pennsylvania's energy challenges, the Department of Revenue has not accounted for any tax revenue losses, raising concerns about whether these credits will actually be utilized or if they are merely a

talking point.

At the Department of Aging hearing, I questioned how the agency will operate with level funding in fiscal year 2026-27, which the administration has already proposed. If the department has a plan to maintain services without additional funding in future years, why not implement cost-saving measures now to generate savings sooner? I also asked whether the department anticipates staff reductions, and if so, which areas of operations would be most affected. Instead of requesting $2 million for new initiatives, I suggested that funding be used to sustain existing staff and services rather than creating programs that may not be financially viable in the long run.

At the Department of Education hearing, I questioned whether the State Board of Higher Education is already mirroring the bureaucratic bloat and inefficiencies that have plagued higher education for years. Despite being a newly created entity, the board has already hired multiple high-salaried staff members and is planning to expand further. Meanwhile, the Senate has yet to receive a clear budget breakdown explaining how its funding is being used. If the board is truly focused on improving higher education, it should start by ensuring full transparency in its own operations.

I also raised concerns about staffing disparities. The State Board of Education, which oversees all K-12 public schools, operates with just two staff members. Yet, the State Board of Higher Education has already hired four employees and is planning to grow to at least six. When this board was created last year, lawmakers were told that its budget and staff levels would be similar to the State Board of Education—but that is clearly not the case. I pressed for an explanation of why this board is expanding so quickly when Pennsylvania is already struggling with declining higher education enrollment and limited funding.

Additionally, I questioned the administration's stance on fairness in women's sports, specifically whether Pennsylvania will follow federal policies that protect female athletes from unfair competition.

At the Department of Agriculture hearing, I raised concerns about the threat to preserved farmland in our community, where a proposed hydroelectric storage facility could seize more than 1,000 acres of land, including taxpayer-funded preserved farmland. I made it clear that this would rob farmers of their life's work

and waste taxpayer investments, all while benefiting a private developer at a steep discount. I urged the department to take a stand against such land seizures.

The final week of budget hearings begins on Tuesday, March 4, with the Department of Corrections at 9:30 a.m.

Find the hearings schedule, livestreams of budget hearings, daily recaps and video from prior hearings at PASenateGOP.com or follow along on my Facebook, X, and YouTube.

Reporting State Fraud and Waste



Commonwealth employees and private citizens can take action to stop fraud and misconduct in Pennsylvania state government.

Complaints can be made online with the Office of the State Inspector General (OSIG) against a commonwealth employee, agency or contractor regarding an issue related to an executive agency of the commonwealth.

The OSIG works to maintain public confidence in government by combating fraud,

waste, misconduct, and abuse in commonwealth programs, operations and contracts.

Building on these efforts, I am working across the aisle with Sen. Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny) on legislation that empowers whistleblowers to come forward to report waste, fraud and abuse within YOUR state government. You can learn more about our bipartisan effort here.

I also believe Pennsylvania needs its own version of DOGE, which is why I announced back in December my plan to reintroduce my legislation that will take a look at our state's more than 160,000 regulations. You can learn more about the Transparency, Reform, and Accountability for Pennsylvania Act here. You can also check out @PennDOGE on X, where we look at outdated regulations that no longer serve a public interest as well as the impact excessive government regulation and tax have on economic freedom and prosperity.

Farmers Breakfast Brings Together Local Agricultural Leaders



Earlier this week, I had the pleasure of hosting our third annual Farmers Breakfast,

where I had the opportunity to connect with farmers, agribusiness owners, and local agricultural leaders to discuss the issues impacting Pennsylvania's farming community. It was a great morning filled with important conversations about preserving farmland, strengthening our agriculture industry, and addressing the challenges facing family farms.

We were honored to have Congressman GT Thompson as our keynote speaker, who shared updates on nationwide agricultural initiatives and efforts to support Pennsylvania's farmers. We also received a state update from PA Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding who always has valuable insight for our community. We also heard from Kennady Laird, a local FFA leader, who spoke about the next generation's role in sustaining and growing our agricultural economy.

If you missed the event, you can watch the full video on my YouTube channel. If you attended, I'd love to hear your feedback! Please take a moment to fill out my survey to help us improve future events.

Check out event photos here.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this informative discussion, and most importantly, thank you to our hardworking farmers who keep Pennsylvania's agriculture industry strong!

Connect with Employers at the Commonwealth Job Fair on March 5



The Commonwealth Job Fair offers the opportunity to connect with more than 30 Pennsylvania state agencies and to learn more about public service. There are openings in transportation, finance, health care, wildlife management, public safety, and more. You can also learn about career growth and other benefits.

It will be held Wednesday, March 5, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex, 2300 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg.

See open positions, learn more and register here.

Joining Girl Scouts in Earning First Aid Badge



I had the privilege of joining Rep. Wendy Fink at a first aid training session hosted by the Red Lion Area Ambulance Association for the Red Lion Girl Scout Troop as they worked to earn their First Aid Badge.

During the training, the scouts learned lifesaving skills such as prioritizing care, stopping bleeding, addressing head and neck injuries, and splinting broken bones. They also had the unique opportunity to get a close-up look at EMS apparatus and gain a deeper understanding of how emergency responders operate.

You can find more photos from the event on my Facebook.

It was great to see how our local emergency service providers take time to give back to the community, ensuring that young leaders are equipped with valuable first-aid knowledge. Thank you to the Red Lion Area Ambulance Association for its dedication to both public safety and community education!

Snowmobiling in State Forests and Parks



State parks and forests offer all sorts of recreational opportunities, including snowmobiling. There are thousands of miles and hundreds of acres of designated snowmobile areas for exploration.

As long as there is enough snow cover, snowmobile trails open the day after the last day of Pennsylvania's regular or extended rifle deer season and close April 1 or earlier as determined by the district forester or park manager. During snowmobiling season, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources posts snow and trail conditions three times per week.

While riding your snowmobile, you must carry with you or on the vehicle a certificate of registration, proof of liability insurance, registration plate affixed to the vehicle, expiration stickers (does not apply to limited registration), and valid safety certificate (ages 10-15 if riding off of parent's or guardian's property). Learn more.

Preventing Heart Attacks and Strokes



February is American Heart Month, which is a wonderful time for people of all ages to take steps to protect their hearts.

Typically, we think of heart disease and stroke when we think of the challenges that can result from poor heart health. Maintaining healthy blood pressure and eating well can help to prevent a cardiac event.

Heart health isn't just for adults. More than 23,000 children experience cardiac arrest outside of the hospital each year. By learning CPR, you will be ready to respond in an emergency.

ICYMI: New Podcast Episode



In case you missed it, I recently sat down with my friend, colleague, and new Senate Chamber neighbor, Sen. Dawn Keefer, for a special episode of our podcast, Kristin's Corner. As she steps into her new role representing the 31st District, we discussed our shared priorities for York County, from supporting small businesses to ensuring fiscal responsibility and enhancing government accountability.

You can listen to our conversation on Apple, Spotify, and YouTube.

Mobile Office Hours in Springettsbury Township



Next Thursday, my team will be back at the York Area United Rescue and Fire Station, 50 Commons Drive, York, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

During these hours, my team will be available to assist with PennDOT forms, Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications, notary services, and other state-related needs. My team looks forward to seeing you there!

You can find more information on the mobile offices here.

Honoring Those Affected by the Tragedy at UPMC Memorial

Last Saturday, our community was shaken by a cowardly act of violence at UPMC Memorial in York. My heart is with the victims, their loved ones, and all those affected by this senseless tragedy. I am incredibly grateful for the swift response of our brave law enforcement officers and first responders who acted immediately to protect lives.

Let us continue to keep the victims, their families, and our entire York County community in our prayers. Before the start of this week's Senate Appropriations hearings, I requested a moment of silence to honor Officer Andrew Duarte of the

West York Borough Police Department, who was tragically killed during the incident. You can watch the moment of silence below.



Upcoming PennDOT Maintenance Projects



Most weeks, PennDOT provides me with its upcoming maintenance schedule. While my team and I aim to keep this information up to date, please note that the page may not always reflect the latest changes. For the most accurate details, I recommend checking back on Friday afternoons or over the weekend, as we usually receive updates from PennDOT on Fridays. You can view the full list here to see if any roadwork might impact you and your family.

DISTRICT OFFICE
6872 Susquehanna Trail South
PO Box 277
Jacobus, PA 17407-0277
Find us on Google Maps
Phone: (717) 741-4648
717-741-4655 Fax
9 am - 4:30 pm

CAPITOL OFFICE
Senate Box 203028
362 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: (717) 787-7085
9 am - 4:30 pm

MOBILE OFFICE
Springettsbury Township
(First Thursday of each month)
Penn Township
(Third Thursday of each month)

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