

Fall 2011



*Dear Friends:*

I hope this finds you and your family well.

Thank you for taking time to read this newsletter. In it, you'll find a review of some of the highlights of the year to date, as well as details of an upcoming event and a survey of possible legislative issues.

Thank you for the honor of sending me to Harrisburg to represent your interests. Being chosen to serve as your voice at the state Capitol is an honor and duty I respect and will never take for granted.

Sincerely,

Keith Gillespie,  
State Representative  
47th Legislative  
District



## Senior Information Seminar Slated for Oct. 28

State Rep. Stan Saylor (R-Red Lion) and I will again be hosting

a Senior Information Seminar. The event will take place on **Friday, Oct. 28, from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Advent Lutheran Church, 1775 East Market St., York.**

In addition to the many vendors on hand that day, flu shots will be made available. You must pre-register with my district office by calling (717) 840-4711 on or before Friday, Oct. 21, to reserve your flu shot, and remember to bring your Medicare card.



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## Supporting a Responsible Budget

The people of York County expect us to conduct business in the General Assembly much as they conduct "business" in their households – in a timely manner, while spending responsibly. The budget bill I supported in June met both of those expectations.

Pennsylvanians endeavor to pay their bills on time, and this budget came in under deadline. It also reduces spending in this troublesome economy, just as our citizens are forced to cut back when times are tough. The amount of overall spending (\$27.148 billion) is more than \$1 billion below last year's budget, an accomplishment that has happened only three times in nearly 40 years.

Even in this difficult financial climate, some programs must be sustained and not cut. Education, the key to a bright future for Pennsylvania, is supported in unprecedented numbers. After the previous budget cut state education spending and backfilled with federal stimulus dollars that knowingly would not exist this year, this budget's appropriation of \$5.354 billion in the 2011-12 Basic Education Funding subsidy represents the largest investment of state dollars for that funding stream ever.

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# Castle Doctrine Becomes Law

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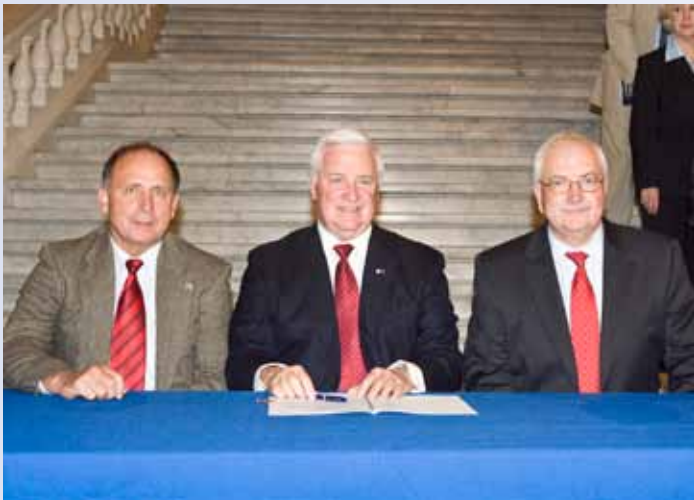
This budget bill also prioritizes debt in the same manner any responsible household would. It views what some would regard as a surplus, weighs it against outstanding obligations and realizes the need to square its accounts before spending extravagantly. Pennsylvania is in debt to the tune of \$50.5 billion. Borrowed unemployment funds from the Federal Unemployment Trust Fund (\$4 billion) must be repaid. There is a very good chance we will have to reimburse the \$716 million taken from the Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error (MCare) Fund by the previous administration. Owing more than you have does not equate to a surplus.

By avoiding increased taxes and new debt, we are balancing this budget based on existing revenues and not on the backs of hard-working Pennsylvanians. Voting for this budget meant supporting a plan that puts us back on the road to prosperity.

I am proud to have co-sponsored House Bill 40, the so-called Castle Doctrine legislation, which was signed into law June 28. While there was a focus on this bill as it relates to the use of firearms, I believe the focus should be on the right to use force in self-defense and, by extension, defend one's family.

While this new law certainly includes the use of firearms, it may just as likely include the use of a baseball bat or mere fists. The method of force is immaterial. It is, rather, the existence of circumstances which lead to a reasonable belief in imminent death, serious bodily injury, kidnapping or rape which give rise to the authority to use deadly force in self-defense.

The new law does not change that basic requirement. It does, however, create an initial presumption that an individual is justified in using any level of force to repel an intruder who has unlawfully and forcefully entered the home or occupied vehicle.



*My fellow York Countian, state Rep. Ron Miller (R-Jacobus), and I were proud to have been on hand June 28 as Gov. Tom Corbett signed into law Senate Bill 1131, the Fair Share Act. This legislation addresses frivolous lawsuits in our legal system that delay justice for those who deserve it. It restores common sense and personal responsibility.*



*One satisfying part of my job is the annual model legislature exercise that my fellow House members and I host each spring. A group of York County high school students comes to Harrisburg to take part in a day-long "trip" through the legislative process. They take pieces of legislation from the committee process and then into caucus, followed by floor debate and actual votes. In this photo, I am overseeing the "House Judiciary Committee."*



*In May, I helped kick off National Nurses Week by presenting a House citation to staff members at Memorial Hospital in York. Pictured with me (left to right) are Nicole Rollman, registered nurse, and Sue Gordon, vice-president of Patient Services.*



# Applications Now Available for Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

Forms for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate program for 2010 are now available in my district office. We can assist you with filling them out. Eligible participants can receive a rebate of up to \$650 based on their rent or property taxes paid in 2010. The program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians who are 65 years or older, widows and widowers 50 years or older, and those 18 years or older with disabilities.

Eligibility income limits for homeowners are set at the following levels, excluding 50 percent of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits:

- \$0 to \$8,000, maximum \$650 rebate (homeowners and renters)
- \$8,001 to \$15,000, maximum \$500 rebate (homeowners and renters)
- \$15,001 to \$18,000, maximum \$300 rebate (homeowners only)
- \$18,001 to \$35,000, maximum \$250 rebate (homeowners only)

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate program is one of many initiatives supported by the Pennsylvania Lottery, which dedicates its proceeds to support programs for older Pennsylvanians. Since the program began in 1971, more than \$4 billion has been paid to qualified applicants.

Residents are reminded to provide all the necessary income, property tax or rental information required to process claims quickly and accurately.



## The Facts about Property Taxes

As many of you are aware, I have watched very closely and reported on a bill advanced by former state Rep. Sam Rohrer that offered to eliminate property taxes by increasing the base of our sales tax. After much analysis, the numbers of this bill unfortunately are not enough to replace property taxes.

The challenge in attempting to reduce and/or eliminate school property taxes includes finding a way to generate the revenue needed to provide the level of desired relief. Total elimination requires filling a \$9 billion hole, and that is for residential properties alone. Add commercial properties into the mix, and you are searching for a \$14 billion revenue stream.

Personal Income Tax (PIT) and Sales and Use Tax (SUT) are the two most likely sources of new revenue for property tax relief. Every 1 percent increase in the PIT results in approximately \$3.52 billion. A similar increase in SUT would bring in an estimated \$1.44 billion.

Expanding the SUT has also been an option continually discussed to support property tax relief.

There are approximately \$17 billion in SUT exemptions (\$9 billion in goods and \$8 billion in services). For example:

- Food: \$1.31 billion
- Clothing and footwear: \$755 million
- Advertising and public relations services: \$729 million
- Prescription drugs and orthopedics: \$698 million

There are also other elements in this equation. A significant portion of the state has not felt the pain that those of us with skyrocketing property tax bills are feeling. As a result, convincing the legislators in those areas to consider something their constituents do not see as an issue is a challenge.

School districts must be willing to control spending in order for property tax relief to be realized. At the same time, an effective funding formula must be put into place that takes into account growing areas of the state (such as York County). To not count student populations, as the current formula does not, cheats those areas out of the support they deserve.

With all this in mind, I would like your thoughts on the following questions as they relate to two property tax relief proposals I am considering introducing, as well as several other questions dealing with upcoming legislative issues:

*Survey on page 4...*

# Representative Keith J. Gillespie

47<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

## Harrisburg Office:

PO Box 202047 / Harrisburg, PA 17120-2047

(717) 705-7167 / (717) 772-9869 (FAX)

**E-Mail:** [kgillesp@pahousegop.com](mailto:kgillesp@pahousegop.com)

## District Office:

4188 Lincoln Highway / York, PA 17406

(717) 840-4711 / (717) 755-2896 (FAX)

**RepGillespie.com**

**Please fill out my survey at [www.RepGillespie.com](http://www.RepGillespie.com) or cut this card and return to:  
State Representative Keith Gillespie, 4188 Lincoln Highway, York, PA 17406**

1 – Realizing we will all reach this age at one point, would you support the forfeiture of the gaming rebate to provide school property tax elimination for individuals over age 65 with an annual income of no more than \$65,000?

YES       NO

2 – Switching to an alternative revenue source would be possible for elimination of residential property taxes, but would require a constitutional amendment in order to separate commercial property taxes from residential property taxes. Would you support a constitutional amendment and the necessary process for complete elimination of school property taxes for residential property by shifting to an increase in the Sales and Use Tax, Personal Income Tax or a combination thereof? This would require passage in two terms of the General Assembly and approval by voter referendum.

YES       NO

3 – Do you favor the expansion of Sunday hunting?

YES       NO

4 – Are you a hunter?

YES       NO

5 – Are you in favor of selling the state-run liquor stores?

YES       NO

6 – Are you in favor of an extraction tax/fee on Marcellus Shale drillers?

YES       NO