



Corbett's Budget Proposal Begins Repair of State's Fiscal Standing

In March, Gov. Tom Corbett presented his 2011-12 state budget proposal to a joint session of the General Assembly. His plan would spend \$27.3 billion, which is a reduction of \$866 million, or 3.1 percent, from the 2010-11 budget.

Governor Corbett has proposed a budget that begins the process of restoring fiscal stability and sanity to state government without raising taxes or fees on the people of Pennsylvania. For the past eight years, government spending has been mismanaged, which will require funding concessions from every department and agency to make government live within its means. It will not be easy, but it is necessary to secure the Commonwealth's financial future.

While the governor's proposal has caused concern across the state, especially with the education funding line items, it's important to remember that the General Assembly and the governor must work together to enact a final spending plan.

We still have a way to go to curtail the growth of state government, and Governor Corbett's spending proposal realigns the state's priorities to protect the health and safety of all Pennsylvanians. Unlike what we have seen in the prior governor's budgets, Corbett has made tough decisions to ensure the Commonwealth lives within its means.

I was especially pleased to hear the governor say, 'we have to spend less, because we have less to spend. We must tax no more, because the people have no more to give.'

It's obvious Governor Corbett understands business by his statement that 'we must eliminate the Capital Stock and Franchise Tax.' He knows how to stimulate our economy by retaining the film tax credit, since this will attract jobs and pump money into our local communities.

Committee Assignments for 2011-12 Session

Speaker of the House Rep. Sam Smith (R-Jefferson/Armstrong/Indiana) has appointed me to serve on the following House standing committees during the 2011-12 legislative session: Human Services, Professional Licensure, Tourism and Recreational Development, and Urban Affairs.

I want to thank Speaker Smith for assigning me to committees that will allow me to put my experience to use to have a positive influence on legislation. I am excited about the opportunities to better represent the residents of the 104th District.

The Human Services Committee's role is to oversee programs and services provided by the newly created Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, such as treatment, recovery and prevention. This committee will also work on issues relating to mental health and some of the programs administered by the Department of Public Welfare.

The Professional Licensure Committee considers all legislation dealing with the professional and licensing boards and commissions in Pennsylvania. Professionals range from physicians and cosmetologists to real estate agents and funeral directors.

As a holder of five professional licenses, I bring a unique perspective to this committee. My background can only serve to help our state's professional licensees by having someone from their ranks involved in crafting and considering legislation and regulations that impacts them.

The Tourism and Recreational Development Committee focuses on issues such as travel and tourism promotion; the Historical and Museum Commission; amusement parks, fairs, carnivals and folk festivals; the film industry; scenic roadways; and the ski industry.

As a member of the Urban Affairs Committee, I will be involved in issues dealing with housing, urban redevelopment, economic development, land use planning and zoning, growth management, infrastructure financing and city services such as police, fire, sewage and water, among others. Helm said she is pleased to be able to bring the perspective of someone who lives outside Pennsylvania's major cities to the panel.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on these committees to re-evaluate the role of state government and improve the lives of the citizens of Pennsylvania.

Kids Trout Rodeo on May 14, 2011

The Dauphin County Anglers and Conservationist Club and I have teamed together to host a **FREE** Kids Trout Rodeo at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 14, 2011, at the club's trout nursery, E.J. Stackpole Memorial Trout Nursery, 201 Clarks Valley Road, Dauphin, PA 17018.

The rodeo is open to those 12 years of age and younger. Registration for the rodeo begins at 7:30 a.m., and fishing will take place from 9 a.m. to noon. Prizes will be handed out at noon. Those participating are reminded to bring their own fishing gear and equipment.

The Dauphin County Anglers and Conservationist Club maintains a partnership with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and raises 8,000 fish annually to stock throughout Dauphin County's waterways. The club's focus is on providing opportunities for children and handicapped individuals to fish and foster an interest in fishing for everyone.

For additional information or directions, visit my website at SueHelm.net, or contact my Elizabethville office at 717-362-1119, or my Susquehanna Township office at 717-651-0100.

Private Transfer Fees Would Be Banned Under Legislative Proposal

Legislation, which I introduced, would prohibit the assessment of private transfer fees and require disclosure of such fees in real estate purchase contracts, as well as impose liability for violations.

This measure seeks to protect homebuyers and sellers from being tied to a fee from which they draw no benefit. Private transfer fees are nothing more than a way for a third party with no real ties to a property to make money.

House Bill 442 would amend Title 68 (Real and Personal Property) by creating a chapter that focuses on private transfer fee obligations. Also referred to as a resale fee or a capital recovery fee, private transfer fees are written into purchase contracts and are levied based on a percentage of the final sales price each and every time the property is sold. A typical private transfer fee is 1 percent and remains in place for 99 years.

The following items would not be included in the definition of private transfer fees:

- Fees payable to private communities by members of homeowner associations.
- Fees that do not bind successors in title, including mineral estates and surface access rights.
- Commissions to real estate brokers.
- Interest, charges and fees payable to a lender pursuant to a mortgage, deed or trust.
- Rent, reimbursement and charges payable by a lessee to a lessor.
- Assessments, fees and fines imposed by and payable to a governmental authority.
- Payments for extraction of timber, crops or minerals, including gas, oil and water.

This proposal also would require disclosure of private transfer fees during the contract process. A sales agreement that does not conform to this requirement would be unenforceable by the seller. Additionally, the buyer would be entitled to a return of all deposits involving the sale of the property. If disclosure is not made and the buyer discovers the private transfer fee after the property's title has been transferred, the buyer would have the right to recover damages, such as the amount of the private transfer fee and legal expenses.

In addition, this legislation would also apply to existing private transfer fee obligations. Payees of private transfer fees in effect before this bill becomes law must record within six months a separate document in the office of the recorder of deeds for each county in which the property is located indicating the amount of the fee, if or when the fee expires, description of the property and the purpose of the fee being charged.

Last year, the Federal Housing Finance Agency issued a rule prohibiting Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Federal Home Loan banks from investing in private transfer fees. In addition, legislation has been introduced in Congress that would outlaw the misuse of private transfer fees nationwide.

Inaction to restrict private transfer fees will further drag down a housing market that is trying to rebound and will tie unsuspecting buyers and sellers to an agreement they had no opportunity to negotiate.

House Bill 442 passed the House on March 9 and is now before the Senate.

Events to Commemorate 150th Anniversary of the Civil War

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will be hosting a series of events and activities this spring and summer to commemorate the role of the state in the American Civil War.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the conflict. The historic battle of Gettysburg served as a major turning point of the war in the summer of 1863. Some of the events featured include performances on the role of various groups in the Civil War, plays centered on Civil War stories and related topics, parades and reenactments.

For a complete list of commemorative events in the area, visit SueHelm.net and click on "PA Civil War 150".



Rep. Sue Helm attended the Farm Show Scholarship awards ceremony on Jan. 11, 2011, where college students were awarded \$3,300 scholarships. Kimberly Langhans of Elizabethtown is a freshman at Penn State University, majoring in animal sciences. Langhans is the daughter of Daniel and Barbara Langhans.



Rep. Sue Helm attended the Farm Show Scholarship awards ceremony on Jan. 11, 2011, where college students were awarded \$3,300 scholarships. Ashley Shaw of Susquehanna Township is a freshman at Harrisburg Area Community College and Delaware Valley College, majoring in animal sciences. Shaw is the daughter of Matthew and Angela Shaw.

Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council Launches Interactive Medicare Payment Database

The Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) recently launched a consumer-friendly interactive database of Medicare payments for common health care services.

The database was created as a way to aid consumers in making more informed health care choices. For every Pennsylvania county, the database makes available information on the amount Medicare pays hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers for outpatient procedures, such as colonoscopies, cataract surgeries and MRIs.

The database can also assist consumers in fee negotiations and in finding quality health care in their area for the best price.

To access the database, visit SueHelm.net and click on "Medicare Payment Database."

House Republicans Target Welfare Waste, Fraud and Abuse

In early April, the House Republican Caucus unveiled a package of legislation that would put an end to the waste, fraud and abuse in the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). Billed as the WelfAIR Reform Package, these proposals would rebuild public assistance through fairness, accountability, integrity and responsibility.

Taxpayers work too hard for their tax dollars to go to people who are not eligible for public assistance.

During the past several years, the House Republican Policy Committee and Democrat Auditor General Jack Wagner have investigated misuse of welfare benefits. Together, they have identified hundreds of millions of dollars in potential savings for taxpayers and commonsense reforms to restore integrity to the welfare system.

The eight bill package includes:

- Drug testing for convicted drug felons who receive welfare, House Bill 1297. State government should be fighting drug abuse, not subsidizing it. Welfare recipients are required to stay clean as part of their benefit agreement. The state needs to ensure those with a history of drug crimes are upholding their end of the deal.
- Photo identification on welfare benefit cards, House Bill 392. Welfare benefits are intended only for people in need, and requiring proper identification ensures they are the only folks who benefit from this support.
- Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS), House Bill 960. The best way to tackle welfare fraud and abuse is to catch it before it happens. This proposal would do that by cross-referencing applicants through 19 different databases to verify their eligibility to receive benefits.
- Strengthen Welfare fraud penalties, House Bill 1251. Welfare fraud is a serious crime, and it should be punished as such. Tougher penalties will show we will not tolerate fraud, and it will serve as a deterrent for those who aim to steal from the system.
- No more "shopping around" for welfare benefits, House Bill 1261. This bill would prevent welfare recipients from "shopping around" for the county with the most generous benefits and then applying there. Instead, they would receive assistance based on benefit levels in the county of their permanent residence.
- Job transition loans, House Bill 1312. Welfare benefits are supposed to serve as a bridge to self sufficiency, not a handout for government dependency. This initiative provides recipients the financial support they need to receive training or get a job, but it also requires them to be accountable for the money.
- Prohibiting tobacco purchases with welfare cards, House Bill 1254. Public assistance is supposed to provide for life's necessities, and unhealthy tobacco products are far from a necessity. Tax dollars already pay for welfare recipients' health care. It makes no sense to allow recipients to use other tax dollars to purchase tobacco products that only contribute to health problems.
- Preventing Medicaid transportation fraud, House Bill 1301. Government has a responsibility to help those truly in need get to and from doctor appointments, dialyses treatments, methadone clinics, pharmacy visits, physical therapy and other medical appointments. However, this program is being abused. We want to protect these services and tax dollars by reducing the abuse of this system through more stringent guidelines and enhanced oversight.

The end goal of this package of bills is to move toward a welfare system that is fair for those in need and fair for taxpayers. Welfare should be a safety net for those in need, not a hammock for those who want to avoid work. Every dollar of welfare fraud that we prevent is another dollar we can use to help those Pennsylvania citizens who are truly in need of assistance.

What My Office Can Do For You:

- ✓ PACE/PACENET applications
- ✓ Property Tax/Rent Rebate forms
- ✓ Copies and status reports of legislation before the General Assembly
- ✓ Birth and death certificates
- ✓ Voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications
- ✓ State tax forms
- ✓ Referrals to agencies to resolve state-related problems
- ✓ Driver licenses and registrations

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Applications Due By June 30

Forms for the state's Property Tax/Rent Rebate program for 2010 are now available and are being accepted by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue.

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. Applications are due by June 30.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate claim forms are available at my Elizabethville office, located 16 E. Main Street, phone 717-362-1119; or my Susquehanna Township office, located at 2090 Linglestown Road, Suite 100, Harrisburg, phone 717-651-0100. Applications are also available by visiting **SueHelm.net** and click on the "Property Tax/Rent Rebate" icon.



Rep. Sue Helm was joined by Reps. Sheryl DeLozier (R-Cumberland) and Scott Perry (R-York) to recognize the Winners for Life in the State Capitol Rotunda. Winners for Life is an anti-drug essay program designed to encourage creative writing and self-esteem so children can stand up to peer pressure and not use drugs.



Rep. Sue Helm answered questions from residents of the 104th District during her Spaghetti Dinner at Camp Hebron in Halifax on March 24, 2011.



Rep. Sue Helm is pictured with members of the Williams Valley Clarinet Choir.

Upcoming Events in the 104th District

- **May 7**, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Fort Halifax Festival, Halifax
- **May 7**, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Cherry Blossom Festival, Millersburg
- **May 14**, 9 a.m. - noon, Trout Rodeo, E.J. Stackpole Memorial Trout Nursery, Dauphin (Registration begins at 7:30 a.m.)
- **May 26**, 6 p.m., Legislative Spaghetti Dinner, 2300 Linglestown Rd., Harrisburg (Reservations Required)
- **July 13**, Noon, Take a Swing Against Breast Cancer, Harrisburg Senators baseball field, City Island, Harrisburg
- **July 14**, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m., Ice Cream Social, Rep. Helm's district office, 2090 Linglestown Road, Suite 100, Susquehanna Township
- **Oct. 6**, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Rep. Helm Legislative Senior Expo, Kevin's Place, Lykens
- **Date TBA**, Rep. Helm Senior Expo for Susquehanna Township, Paxtang, Penbrook, 4th Ward of Swatara Township, Dauphin and Middle Paxtang, Place TBA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE SUE HELM

104th Legislative District

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