

Battle Over for Data that Kept Lebanon County Closed



This week, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) finally surrendered data I requested more than a year ago to justify the Wolf administration's action to keep Lebanon County from reopening following the statewide shutdown and after all other counties reopened. The DOH denied my Right-to-Know (RTK) request and I appealed to the Office of Open Records, which ordered the DOH to comply. Instead, the department took the matter to court and I have waited nearly a year for my case to be heard. This week, just days before our court date, the department handed over the data I requested. Last year, after several weeks of arbitrary and confusing executive orders that were largely unexplained and forced the shutdown of businesses and put people out of work, the General Assembly passed [Act 77 of 2020](#) to compel the administration to be more transparent. The bill strengthened Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law by clarifying what information would be considered a public record during a disaster declaration and requiring disclosure of the process used to collect data and any models produced to establish rules and policies in a disaster declaration. It was this legislation that ultimately gave me the data I was seeking. My colleagues and I have been frustrated by the administration's general lack of transparency during this pandemic and its decisions have caused great harm to businesses, workers and our economy. I am pleased my appeal was successful and the DOH finally complied. It is unfortunate it had to take this long. I am hopeful the administration will be more cooperative and forthcoming as we work to move our Commonwealth past this pandemic.

House Returning to Session Next Week

Speaker of the House Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) is recalling members to session next week to address a variety of issues including the Wolf administration's decision to issue a statewide mask mandate in schools. We will also be considering an extension of the disaster emergency declaration related to the aftereffects of Hurricane Ida. The declaration ends Monday, and this will be the first time the General Assembly will consider an extension after voters approved an amendment to the state Constitution limiting a governor's disaster declarations to a maximum of 21 days. Anything beyond 21 days requires legislative approval. Other issues on the agenda include addressing regulatory waivers and suspensions existing since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to address the opioid crisis. Session will convene at noon on Monday, Sept. 20. It will be streamed live at PAHouseGOP.com.



Impact of Suspended Regulations on Nursing Care Residents



[Watch Video Here](#)

On Monday, the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee, of which I am a member, held a public hearing regarding the pandemic-related suspension of regulations at Pennsylvania’s nursing care facilities. I am extremely concerned about employee turnover, complicated working environments and outdated funding models at the federal and state levels, which may negatively impact senior care. We have a great deal of work to do that will require a holistic approach to solving the problem. Over \$11 billion per year is allocated from the budget to help cover some of the costs of taking care of our senior citizens. I asked Department of Health executive deputy secretary Keara Klinepeter and Department of Aging deputy secretary Jamie Buchenauer if they believe the suspended regulations had an adverse impact on seniors in these facilities. Listen to their responses above.

Health Committee Seeks Opinion on Mask Mandate

Members of the House Health Committee met Tuesday to request a determination from the Commonwealth Joint Committee on Documents about whether the Wolf administration’s school masking mandate is subject to the regulatory process and the Regulatory Review Act. In its letter to the Joint Committee on Documents, the committee seeks to determine whether the administration’s unilateral masking order should be promulgated as a regulation as the acting secretary of Health did not follow the rulemaking procedures required to do so. No branch of government should be allowed to abandon long-established legal processes – even in a pandemic. [Click here](#) to read the full letter submitted to the Joint Committee on Documents.



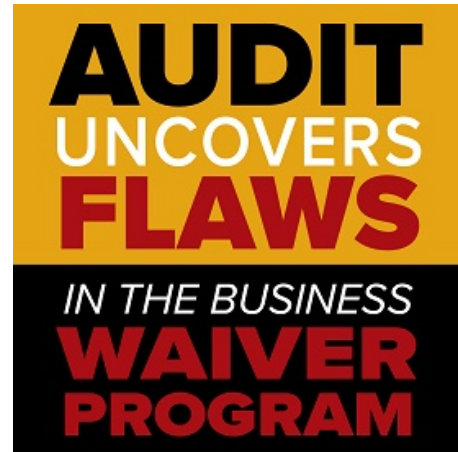
Legislation Aims to Fix Pension Risk Factors



In part two of my two-part podcast on the state pension systems, we discuss what must be done to stabilize the pension systems and ensure their ongoing viability. [Listen here.](#)

Audit Finds Serious Flaws in Pandemic Business Waiver Program

Auditor General Timothy DeFoor this week released a performance audit of the Wolf administration’s business waiver program employed last year during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The audit revealed a flawed process that provided inconsistent and confusing answers to business owners. He noted the administration’s frequently changing guidance. The administration’s guidance for determining whether a business was life-sustaining, first issued on March 19, subsequently changed nine more times between March 21 and May 28, 2020. A “frequently-asked questions” document intended to guide businesses was revised 14 times. DeFoor also cited delays in responding to business waiver applications, and changing responses to some of those applications, as a source of stress and uncertainty for business owners, their employees and families. [Read more about the audit findings here.](#)

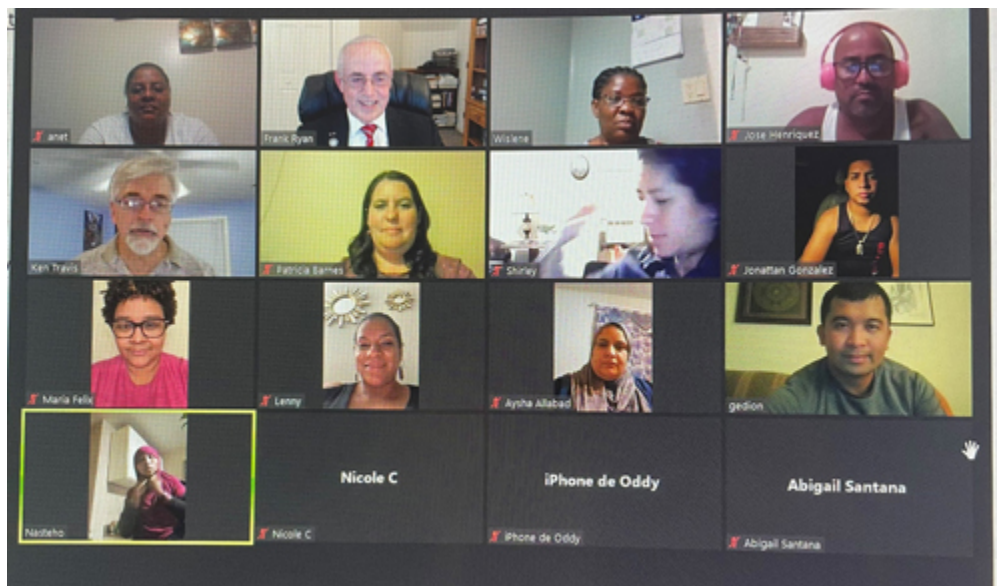


Blood Shortage Prompts Plea



The pandemic has kept many people from venturing out to donate blood and our local blood banks are feeling the impact. Blood donations have declined sharply in the past year and there is still a significant shortage. We are fortunate to have Stephanie and Ruth Ann serving our community at WellSpan. I appreciated their hospitality and friendship as I donated blood today. If you can donate blood, please consider doing so. You could save a life. Thank you!

Citizenship Class Learns About Government Structure, Resources



Thanks to Ken Travis and IU-13 for again inviting me to address the citizenship class for the Lebanon and Lancaster areas. We discussed the structure of government at the federal, state and local levels as well as the responsibilities of the executive, legislative and judicial branches. Among the many great questions covered was who to call when they have questions. In my legislative district office, that is a common inquiry. We are always very happy to assist and make appropriate referrals.

Celebrating Constitution Day!

On Sept. 17, 1787, our Founding Fathers signed the most influential document in American history, the U.S. Constitution. The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia is hosting a variety of online events in honor of this day, including a discussion about the state of civics education in the country; an opportunity to interact with leading constitutional scholars; and a conversation among judges about how they have approached recent appellate cases. You can also view a naturalization service in honor of Citizenship Day; celebrate the birthday of the Constitution; and attend a virtual town hall about the legacy of America's founding fathers. Learn more about the [National Constitution Center here](#).

