

Honoring Seal Wounded in Attempt to Save Fallen Comrade



[*Watch Video Here*](#)

This week, I had the honor of participating in the bridge dedication for Petty Officer Stephen “Turbo” Toboz Jr., a Navy Seal who fought in the Battle of Roberts Ridge – a brief, but intense battle between U.S. special forces and al-Qaeda insurgents on Takur Ghar mountain in Afghanistan in 2002. To see my remarks, click the above video.

Hearing Highlights Challenges of Property Tax Elimination in PA



On Monday, I hosted a public hearing of the House Majority Policy Committee at the Lebanon Valley Expo Center to examine the complexities of property tax elimination in Pennsylvania. The hearing featured testimony from proponents and opponents of property tax elimination. My goal was for the committee and the public to gain a better understanding of the issue and why it has been so challenging to solve.

As someone who has sponsored or co-sponsored legislation to eliminate property taxes in Pennsylvania, I can say that this is by far the toughest issue I have dealt with since taking office. Everyone wants to eliminate property taxes if someone else is paying for it. Last session, I drafted legislation that would have eliminated property taxes, but my plan, like any plan to eliminate property taxes, must shift the burden elsewhere. Examples include higher Sales and Use Taxes, a tax on items not currently taxed such as food and clothing, an increase in the Personal Income Tax or taxing retirement income. Matt Knittel, director of the Pennsylvania Independent Fiscal Office, testified that replacing Pennsylvania's property tax revenue would likely require a combination of all those options.

John Callahan, chief advocacy officer for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, is open to any funding scenario if it is stable and reliable. He also said actions must be taken to control the cost drivers of public education, including special education, pensions and charter school tuition obligations. In addition to providing school districts some relief from these mandates, he said attention must also be paid to property tax assessments, which he said are being applied inequitably.

Other presenters testified about inequities in the current system that unfairly impact seniors, low- income families and renters. "No tax is more unfair,

inequitable or unjust as the property tax,” said Jim Rodkey, founder of the PA Property Rights Association.

The reason this issue is so complicated is because our current system of taxation and funding schools is so fundamentally flawed. Even minor fixes to peripheral elements of the system could have significant unintended consequences. The education funding formula and the “hold harmless” provision are making the elimination of school property taxes nearly impossible. The hold harmless clause guarantees that a school district will receive no less funding than it received the prior year. Thus, each year allocations rise despite declining enrollments and other variables that might otherwise impact disbursements. The hold harmless provision essentially means that well over half of the state gets more than it should in property tax relief and the other half gets far less. This disparity creates utter chaos when trying to get rid of school property taxes because those benefitting from the current system do not want it to change.

When I introduced my property tax elimination bill, I traveled around the Commonwealth explaining it to various groups of citizens who were initially cool to the proposal, but soon learned why it is necessary. [Click here](#) for details.

For more information on my financial rescue plan and strategies for eliminating property taxes, visit RepFrankRyan.com.

Wolf Ignores Local Control, Issues Mask Mandate for Schools

The governor should not be usurping the authority of local school boards by unilaterally imposing a statewide mask mandate inside K-12 schools, early learning programs and childcare providers, beginning Sept. 7. Citizens who have spoken out on this issue deserve to be heard, just as voters were heard on May 18. Government mandates of this magnitude are doing significant damage to the psychological well-being of children. I trust parents, school administrators and school boards to interact with one another and make sound decisions in the best interest of children. A dictatorial approach to this issue is unacceptable.



Health Secretary Wrong About COVID-19 “Outbreak” at ACSD

This week, Rep. Russ Diamond and I issued a joint statement, calling out Pennsylvania’s acting secretary of Health for inaccurate comments concerning the Annville-Cleona football team and COVID-19. See our statement below:

“At a news conference this week acting secretary of Health Alison Beam was critical of schools with optional mask-wearing policies, saying they are suffering the consequences of not following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. She went on to name four school districts, including Annville-Cleona, which she said canceled a recent football game due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

“We checked with school officials at Annville-Cleona School District and they confirmed that while they did cancel a game, they did not have a COVID-19 outbreak. The acting secretary of Health’s assessment was wrong and caused undue concern.

“School officials said they had one confirmed case of COVID-19 that did not originate at the school. Out of an abundance of caution, school officials took quick and decisive action to quarantine the football team and cancel last Friday’s game to prevent further spread. It was the correct and sensible response to this situation.

“We are calling on the acting secretary of Health to apologize to the school, the superintendent and the school board for misrepresenting the facts in this case and using the situation to further the Wolf administration’s political goal of imposing a statewide mask mandate on Pennsylvania school children.

“The Annville-Cleona School District exercised prudence and good judgment and demonstrated the effectiveness of local control. We believe in local control - giving parents and our school districts the power to decide what policies and actions are appropriate to protect our children. It works and our school officials just proved it.

Wolf Administration Drops Appeal in LebCo RTK Case

The total lack of transparency in this administration is appalling and I challenged it early in the pandemic. Last year, I filed a Right-to-Know request demanding documentation regarding the administration's decision to delay moving Lebanon County from the "yellow" to "green" phase of reopening. The administration's action harmed Lebanon County businesses and workers and I wanted answers. The Office of Open Records ruled in my favor, but the administration appealed. This week it dropped its appeal. While I am pleased to have prevailed, trust in government has been eroded by this situation and that is regrettable.

Committee Hearing Focuses on Workforce Shortage in Pennsylvania

With many Pennsylvania employers struggling to attract and retain enough workers to operate their businesses, the state House Commerce Committee held a public hearing in Harrisburg this week focused on identifying the sources of the Commonwealth's workforce shortage. The committee heard testimony from several small business owners as well as advocates from the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry. Those testifying indicated the lack of available workers has placed pressure on employers to increase wages and benefits for workers.

While this is good news for employees, it can place additional pressure on small business owners, who often operate on tight margins. Also discussed was the additional \$300 of weekly Unemployment Compensation benefits provided by the federal government during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has provided a disincentive for some workers to seek employment. Testifiers said many factors – including the availability of childcare services and health care benefits – may also affect a person's decision to seek employment. "COVID-19 has created a perfect storm of issues for small employers," said Gregory Moreland, state director of NFIB. [Click here](#) to watch the hearing.



We Don't Audit Garbage – Election Integrity



In this week's podcast, we discuss the steps that must be taken to ensure public confidence in our election process as we move forward. [Listen here.](#)

Marking Labor Day



Monday, Sept. 6, is Labor Day – a day set aside to recognize the hard-working people who keep our economy moving. I know many of you have faced unprecedented challenges over the past 18 months. I remain committed to Pennsylvania’s economic recovery and a better future for our working families. So, let’s [celebrate this Labor Day and get to work, Pennsylvania!](#)

PennDOT Driver License, Photo Centers Closed for Labor Day

All PennDOT driver license and photo centers, including the Riverfront Office Center in Harrisburg, will be closed Saturday, Sept. 4, through Monday, Sept. 6, in observance of Labor Day. Customers may still obtain a variety of driver and vehicle products and services online through [PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services website](#). Driver and vehicle online services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and include driver's license, photo ID and vehicle registration renewals; driver history services; changes of address; driver license and vehicle registration restoration letters; ability to pay driver license or vehicle insurance restoration fee; driver license and photo ID duplicates; and driver exam scheduling. There are no additional fees for using online services.

