

State Government Committee Advances Election Reform Bills



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On Monday, the House State Government Committee continued its efforts to modernize and secure Pennsylvania's elections with passage of three key reform measures. [House Bill 1482](#), which I co-prime-sponsored, would establish a Bureau of Election Audits within the Office of Auditor General and require the Commonwealth and each county to implement post-election audits using an approved auditing method. The bill aims to strengthen election security and integrity, confirm the accuracy of election outcomes and provide confidence to voters that their votes are being counted accurately. A member of the committee, I offered remarks on why this legislation is so important. [House Bill 2044](#) would end private funding, such as that awarded last fall through the Center for Tech and Civic Life, for the administration of elections in the Commonwealth. [Senate Bill 738](#) would require the PA Department of State to post to its website a tracker for the public to monitor every step and action item the department is taking to ensure proper compliance to carry out a proposed constitutional amendment.

School Masking Update

This week, Commonwealth Court ruled the Wolf administration's school mask mandate invalid after finding the acting secretary of Health did not follow proper protocols in issuing the order. The court's decision came while considering a challenge to the mandate. That case was deemed moot once the court determined the mandate was invalid. The administration plans to appeal the court's decision. Earlier this week, it had announced plans to lift its mask mandate in January.



Supporting Our Veterans

In recognition of Veterans Day, the House advanced several bills this week in support of the dedicated men and women of the Commonwealth who have served in our nation's armed forces. They include [House Resolution 153](#) to commemorate Veterans Day 2021 in Pennsylvania, which I proudly co-sponsored. Others included:

[House Bill 1868](#), which would help veterans seeking to return to civilian life by requiring expedited professional licensure for veterans and their spouses, and consideration of prior military experience.

[House Bill 1220](#), which would increase payments through the blind and paralyzed veteran pension programs.

[House Bill 1055](#), which I co-sponsored, would enhance life insurance for PA National Guard personnel and increase protections for military discharge records to prevent fraud.

[Senate Bill 550](#) would boost care of veteran's graves.

[Senate Bill 248](#) would create a day of recognition for veterans of the Persian Gulf War and the Global War on Terrorism.



To learn about services available to Pennsylvania veterans, visit dmva.pa.gov.

Celebrating Our Veterans



House Adopts Bills to Support Mental, Physical Health

Recognizing the strong connection between good mental health and good physical health, the state House this week approved two bills I co-sponsored, which are aimed at improving Pennsylvanians' overall health outcomes. House Bills [1561](#) and [1563](#) would amend the Mental Health Procedures Act and the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Control Act to allow for sharing of patient information among providers, facilities and insurers. The changes would also meet existing patient confidentiality requirements.



House Advances Bill to Give Families More Education Options

This week, the House advanced legislation that would give parents and students the ability to design a more individualized educational model. [House Bill 1041](#), which I co-sponsored, would permit students who are home schooled to attend up to four academic classes during a school day, participate in co-curricular activities, such as marching band, and to have access to programs offered at career and technical education centers. Enabling parents to supplement their children's home education courses with classes offered by their local public school and co-curricular activities, would maximize the academic potential for those children. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.



Pay Freeze Set to Expire

In December, I introduced legislation to extend the pay freeze for public officials that I succeeded in enacting last year. [Act 79 of 2020](#) placed a freeze on Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the governor, lieutenant governor, treasurer, attorney general, auditor general, the heads of departments, members of boards and commissions, and the judiciary

through this year. [House Bill 583](#) would have extended the freeze through 2022. My bill was unanimously voted out of the House State Government Committee in March but will not be acted on before the raise goes into effect Dec. 1. I remain extremely concerned about the financial stability of the Commonwealth. As such I will forego an increase in 2022 and will present a check to the state treasurer in December 2021 for the full amount of the annual increase minus taxes paid.



Congressional Redistricting: Submit, Draw Maps

To ensure all Pennsylvanians can participate in the congressional redistricting process, [PaRedistricting.com](https://www.paredistricting.com) now has a new feature that allows residents to draw and submit their version of congressional district maps and to make their maps available for public viewing and comment. The new tool will be live until Friday, Dec. 3. Residents can access the feature by clicking on the “Provide Input” tab at [PaRedistricting.com](https://www.paredistricting.com). Users can also view previously held hearings, read testimony and sign up to receive updates. To date, the House State Government Committee, which is tasked with creating new congressional district maps, has held 11 hearings, including eight regional hearings in various parts of the state, to receive input from residents.



Beware: Unemployment Text Message Scam

Treasurer Stacy Garrity is warning Pennsylvanians that scammers are using fraudulent text messages to target recipients of unemployment compensation benefits. This may include unemployment compensation (UC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC). One message wrongly warns recipients that their “state-issued ReliaCard account has been temporarily frozen.” It encourages recipients to click on a link “to verify [their] identity and card status.” DO NOT click on the link. Neither the Pennsylvania Treasury nor the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry ever embed a link in a text message. Any text that includes a link and claims to be from these agencies should not be trusted. In fact, it is important that you never provide any personally identifiable information, user IDs or passwords unless you initiated the conversation by contacting the agency directly. For more information about UC fraud, [click here](#).

