



State Government Committee Gets Message, Except on Term Limits

In an effort to curtail the notion of “career politicians” in Pennsylvania and restore the public service aspect of Government, I introduced my first piece of legislation, Senate Bill 814. This bill would amend the state Constitution by limiting the terms of members of the General Assembly to eight years in the House of Representatives and eight years in the Senate over the course of a

lifetime. Additionally, the language of this bill would exempt all incumbents and only apply to newly elected officials if it was enacted.

On Tuesday May 8, 2007, five Constitutional Amendments, including SB 814, were voted on by the State Government Committee. These bills cannot reach the full Senate floor for debate without passing the 11-member committee. With a consistent message of moving reform forward, the committee voted to pass all of the following bills: SB 468, SB 69, SB 248, and SB 822. However, when it came to term limits, the committee either was sidetracked or leadership waged an effort to kill my bill on arrival. Ignoring

the fact that nearly 80% of the citizens of Pennsylvania want some form of term limits, the State Government Committee voted against the bill 2-9. Our only two votes were Senators Piccola and Folmer.

Prior to May 8, 2007, I, along with several of my colleagues, believed that calls for a Constitutional Convention may have been premature. The reform movement is coming off huge electoral victories and making progress in small steps, and a Convention is a measure of last resort. However, if the General Assembly is unwilling to allow fundamental changes to how business is conducted, a Convention may be our only hope.

The people of Pennsylvania wonder how serious the General Assembly is about reform. Rule changes and commitments are great first steps, but the Constitutional Amendments are the “red meat” of serious, fundamental reform. In the near future, we will see how committed the General Assembly is to passing true reform legislation.



Sen. Eichelberger at State Government Committee Hearing.

Online Town Hall Meeting Makes State History

On March 1, 2007, the 30th District joined me in making state history by holding the first fully interactive online town hall meeting. To date, no other state official has conducted a meeting of this nature, and it was a success! Citizens across the 30th District signed in from kitchen tables and home offices to discuss pressing issues that face our state. Participants were able to discuss topics from the budget to the bonus ban investigation. This is just one more example of how technology is bridging the gap between Harrisburg and your living room.

Fulton County Office – Open for Business



On Tuesday, May 29, 2007, over 40 friends and supporters joined me to officially open my Fulton County Office. My conversations with people ranged from the history of the building where we are located to the upcoming budget. People also mentioned how they appreciated me taking an active role in their communities by having an open and accessible office. I would like to especially thank the Fulton County Chamber of Commerce for providing a ribbon cutting and cookies. I want to thank everyone who made this event a successful one, and I look forward to working with Fulton County.

Judicial Pay De-Links State and Federal Judicial Salaries

A measure which eliminates the tie-in between federal judicial salaries and Commonwealth judicial salaries - a connection that was established in the controversial pay raise - was approved by the Senate.

Following the repeal of the infamous pay raise, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court partly reinstated the controversial pay raise by determining that the legislature could not repeal the raise for judges. The ruling said only judges should receive the raise, not the legislators or other government employees who originally qualified. The court found that the repeal law violated the constitutional provision that prohibits the reduction of compensation during a judge's term in office. As a result, the new repealed 2005 state law remains in effect for judges, thereby tying their salaries to their federal counterparts.

Senate Bill 44 does away with the federal judge pay linkage system. It does not reduce judicial salaries, but rather changes the structure on which those salaries are based to avoid another huge pay increase for state judges when Congress raises federal judicial salaries.

Additionally, to bolster its chances of withstanding a court challenge, Senate Bill 44 includes a provision to raise judicial salaries by \$1. This assures that the new salary system would not violate the constitutional ban on diminishing the Commonwealth judicial pay, which was the argument cited to reinstate the pay raise for the judges.

Senate Bill 44 has been sent to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Website Breaks Down Wall Around State Government

The Internet has become a vital tool in almost every American's daily life. Therefore, when I created my website, www.senatoreichelberger.com, I did not construct it to be a novelty piece just for show, but rather the centerpiece of a strategy to empower the people I represent. This site is not designed nor is it maintained or hosted at taxpayers expense.

The website offers a wealth of information including news releases, pending legislation, state laws, agencies and programs, and special sections of interest to senior citizens, veterans and children. You can also download frequently requested forms, read my daily blog, and download multimedia podcasts. Please check back daily for updates!

It is Budget Season!

We need to stop the Governor's tax and spend proposals and restore fiscal sanity!

As we enter into June, this might be the most controversial and exciting month on the job. In the days leading up to June, I have noted increased emails, letters, and phone calls about programs. This will increase even more as information begins to flow about who is going to get what funding.

With all honesty, this is going to be a tight budget year, and the Republicans in the State Senate are expressing a desire to keep spending down and not increase taxes. However, this is not going to be easy because the Governor has proposed massive spending increases and seven new or increased taxes. Those taxes are:

- A 3% tax on the payroll of any company that does not provide health insurance.
- A 10-cent increase in the cigarette tax.
- A new tax on smokeless tobacco and cigars.
- A new tax on electricity to fund alternative energy initiatives.

- A 1% increase in the state sales tax.
- An "oil profits tax" on the profit of all oil companies.
- An increase in the fee for waste disposal.

The Governor's budget also increases spending by roughly 4.4%, a simply unacceptable amount of growth for government. I have co-sponsored the Taxpayer Protection Act (TPA), which would cap state spending at 3.2% this year. While I believe that we should be pushing for as close to a zero-growth budget as we can achieve, nothing above 3.2% is acceptable.

At a time when Pennsylvanians are tightening their belts and faced with huge increases in gas prices, our state government must be required to do the same. I hope you will share your thoughts with me as you follow this intense session month. Make sure to visit www.senatoreichelberger.com for daily updates.

Coming Soon to Your Neighborhood

In addition to providing online access, I am committed to offering you first class constituent service with 4 district offices. These offices will be located and staffed in Blair, Bedford, Fulton and Huntingdon Counties. On a daily basis, citizens of the 30th District will be able to visit their local office and conduct state business. Here is a list of the office addresses and the staff that will be available to provide assistance:

HARRISBURG OFFICE

Monday through Friday
(9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Senate Box 203030
Room 460

Harrisburg, PA 17120-3030

Phone: 717-787-5490

Fax: 717-783-5192

Personnel:

Brian Turk - Chief of Staff

Jason High - Legislative Director

Maura O'Leary - Administrative Assistant

BLAIR COUNTY DISTRICT OFFICE

Monday through Friday
(9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

309 Allegheny Street
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Phone: 814-695-8386 or

866-509-EICH (3424)

Fax: 814-695-8398

Personnel:

Charles State - District Director

Michele Adams - Economic

Development Specialist

Carla Ruscio - Legislative Aide

Liz Kulling - Administrative Assistant

BEDFORD COUNTY DISTRICT OFFICE

(Opening Soon!)

107 S. Richard Street

Bedford, PA 15522

Phone: 814-623-5004

Fax: 814-623-5044

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

(9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

Personnel:

S Sharon Turkovich - Legislative Aide

Fulton County District Office

Wednesday (9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

201 Lincoln Way West, Suite 102

McConnellsburg, PA 17233

Phone: 717-485-3616

Fax: 717-485-4207

Personnel:

S Sharon Turkovich - Legislative Aide

HUNTINGDON COUNTY DISTRICT OFFICE

Monday through Friday
(9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.)

612 Pennsylvania Avenue

Huntingdon, PA 16652

Phone: 814-643-2583 or 814-643-2584

Fax: 814-643-2582

Personnel:

P Pam Prosser - Legislative Aide