

State Senator **LISA M. BOSCOLA**



Independent • Effective • Working to Make a Difference

March 2014

This last December, Bethlehem was chosen by the state to receive one of two statewide designations creating a new economic development program.

The City Revitalization and Improvement Zone program (CRIZ) allows for the use of future tax revenues to pay for infrastructure and development costs of local projects. This designation is not only important to Bethlehem, but the entire Lehigh Valley. The CRIZ program will enable current planned projects to become a reality, which in turn will bring more jobs and businesses into our area.

In my view, Bethlehem's overall economic prospects and focused efforts to generate private investment were the keys to winning this designation. All of the city's CRIZ projects are in line with its comprehensive plan, previous revitalization efforts and commitment to smart growth. The plan is expected to generate 4,120 permanent jobs, stoke \$300 million in new development and invest \$83.8 million in new revenue into the economic development effort.

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Bethlehem Wins CRIZ Designation



INSIDE: Property Tax Reform • Electric Supplier Alert • New 18th District

Buyer Beware – Check your Electric Contract

This winter's arctic blasts have left some electric consumers experiencing sticker shock when they opened their latest electric bill.

Customers using competitive suppliers for their electricity that are on variable rate contracts may see or have already seen their rates rise due to increased demand during this cold winter. Customers who have fixed rate contracts which have expired also may have been moved to a variable rate contract by the supplier. Consumers should check their contract to see the terms and conditions.

Customers who feel their competitive supplier may have violated the PUC's regulations on marketing practices can file a complaint by calling the PUC at **1-800-692-7380** or by going to the Commission's website at **www.puc.pa.gov**.

Shopping for electricity is easy. Consumers can go to **www.papowerswitch.com** to check terms and conditions of competing offers by suppliers. When shopping for electricity, consumers should be aware of certain factors such as:

- **What is the current price to compare?**
- **Is the price a fixed rate price or variable rate price?**
- **Is the rate offered an introductory or teaser rate?**
- **Does the offer require signing a contract?**
- **What is the length of the contract?**
- **Is there an early termination fee associated with the contract?**
- **Is there a monthly fee associated the rate?**

Consumers who have chosen to stay with the default supplier (their distribution company such as PPL, Met-Ed, etc.) likely will not see drastic increases in rates, but may see gradual increases over time to reflect the higher costs experienced this winter. Choosing a competitive supplier might be the right decision for some, but not necessarily for all consumers. Check competing offers and make the decision that best fits your household's needs.

Boscola Wants to Keep Choice in Customers' Hands

Legislation is currently pending in Harrisburg that would involuntarily move all default supply customers to a competitive supplier. I oppose this legislation because I believe electric choice should be the decision of consumers, not Harrisburg bureaucrats. Consumers know what electric plan best fits their household needs. That choice should be left to them. Be assured that I will continue to monitor this legislation closely and will fight to keep decisions about electric choice in the hands of consumers.

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Bethlehem Wins Economic Development Zone Designation

It was critical that legislation considered in the Senate was changed to allow Bethlehem to apply for the new CRIZ designation. Originally, Bethlehem would have been precluded from applying due to population restrictions in the initial legislation. Elected officials, city leaders and local developers partnered to put together a quality application for the city. Finally, there were meetings with the Corbett Administration to talk about the

highlights and quality of the Bethlehem application.

I commend the many people who worked with our team. The mayor's office, city council, the city's CRIZ authority and our local developers did excellent work. The Corbett Administration also deserves credit for recognizing the great potential this valuable economic development tool will have in Bethlehem.



Boscola Encouraged with Proposed State Budget

Overall, Gov. Tom Corbett's \$29.4 billion spending plan was encouraging in many areas. The budget holds the line on taxes while still making substantial investments in education, workforce training and other important programs and services.

While budgets typically have things you like and do not like, I am cautiously optimistic that this spending plan uses scarce revenues well. The governor's investments in education and workforce development were positive aspects of the plan.

Programs such as the proposed \$25 million 'Ready to Succeed' scholarship represent a sound, targeted investment in preparing students for tomorrow's jobs. We need to continue this kind of emphasis and find ways to sustain these funding dollars. Using our resources to fuel workforce development has been my goal for many years.

On the economic development front, I will work closely with Democrats and Republicans to try and find a way to provide increased state support for proven job

creation programs such as the Ben Franklin Partnerships.

Other worthwhile elements of the governor's budget plan include a 10 percent increase for rape crisis and domestic violence programs, as well as additional funding for the newly created Veterans' Trust Fund.

Again, while I am still looking over the fine print in this budget proposal, the governor's proposed spending plan that bolsters investments in education and workforce development is an excellent starting point.

Child Protection Package

Our children are our most important resource. We owe it to them to nurture, protect and help them grow up in safe and secure communities. I recently re-introduced a legislative package aimed at toughening our laws against those who would harm, molest or exploit children. Some of these bills would:

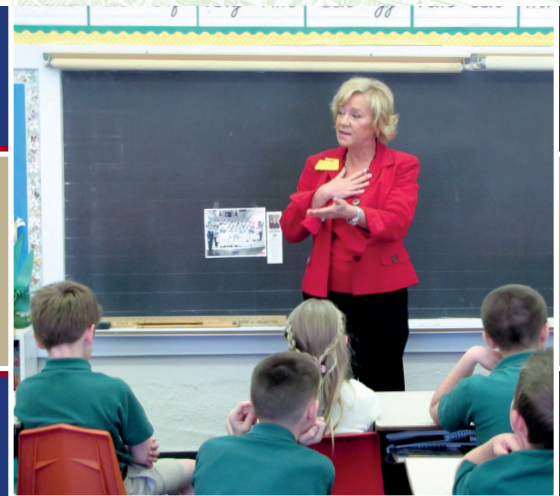
- Establish residency restrictions for convicted sex offenders. Specifically, my legislation would restrict any Megan's law registrant whose conviction was a result of a crime against a minor from residing within 1000 feet of a school, pre-school, daycare facility or public playground. The legislation also prohibits residency within 500 feet of a school bus stop;
- Toughen penalties against school employees who possess or deliver drugs on school property. Prompted by incidents in Northampton County, my proposal would add two years to any jail sentence imposed on

school administrators, teachers or employees convicted of drug possession or delivery on school property. A companion bill would also forfeit that employee's pension;

- Terminate parental rights for those convicted of committing violent offenses in their home when the victim is a child or the other parent. Children are too often permanently scarred by exposure to violent acts in their home;
- Remove the statute of limitations for sexual abuse cases in both criminal and civil cases. Far too often, those who are sexually abused as minors

go decades before seeking justice for the abuse they suffered as children. My bills would give sex abuse victims the recourse they rightly deserve; and

- Require the state Department of Public Welfare to develop specific assessment/counseling plans for chronic runaways as part of county shelter care, custody and detention. Rather than leaving these children to fend for themselves on the streets, I want to give chronic runaway children a helping hand they so desperately need.



Momentum Builds for Property Tax Reform

Clearly, momentum is building for action on school property tax reform. As legislators retire and new members take their place, it is clear that property tax elimination is a central issue throughout Pennsylvania. When I first advocated for school property tax elimination, I was joined by only a few legislators. Today, over half of my colleagues in the Senate have joined me as a co-sponsor of the Property Tax Independence Act (SB 76).

For too long, Pennsylvania taxpayers have struggled with an antiquated property tax system. Policymakers have used one excuse after another to delay meaningful action. Taxpayers are tired of paying too much and school officials are caught in the vortex of inadequate state funding and little flexibility to engage in systemic reform.

For many years, I have been a strong and vocal advocate of changing how property taxes are assessed and collected. It has been over a decade since I forced the General Assembly into Special Session on tax reform. Since then, we've had innumerable proposals



to alter property taxes. To a large measure, these have failed and the current property tax system remains inequitable and outdated.

As Democratic chair of the Policy Committee, I convened joint hearings with my Senate Republican counterpart to explore new bipartisan tax reform ideas – including SB 76. Senate Bill 76 would eliminate property taxes and replace the revenue with a mixed menu of other revenue sources. There are enough sponsors and support for this measure to pass the Senate. I am hopeful that it will be considered before the Senate recesses in June.

In addition, as the General Assembly's longest and strongest advocate of using table game revenues exclusively for tax relief, I believe we can add new dollars for tax relief as a precursor for comprehensive reform that is featured in SB 76. I also remain committed to property tax freeze legislation for seniors as we continue to work for elimination.

The renewed interest in property tax reform is being led by rank and file lawmakers in both parties who are responding to calls from citizens. I am hopeful that there soon will be meaningful action to eliminate this burdensome tax once and for all.

Boscola's Legislative Policy Committee Remains Active

I am very proud of how active my Senate Policy Committee has been in recent years.

My fellow lawmakers and I have already held a number of hearings around the state on issues such as workforce development, violent crime/gang violence in smaller urban communities, the viability of the state's film tax credit program, economic development in rural Pennsylvania and voting reforms.

In the months ahead, my committee will continue to tackle the issues and topics that are important to Pennsylvanians.

As always, I am eager for public input on issues the committee discusses and debates.

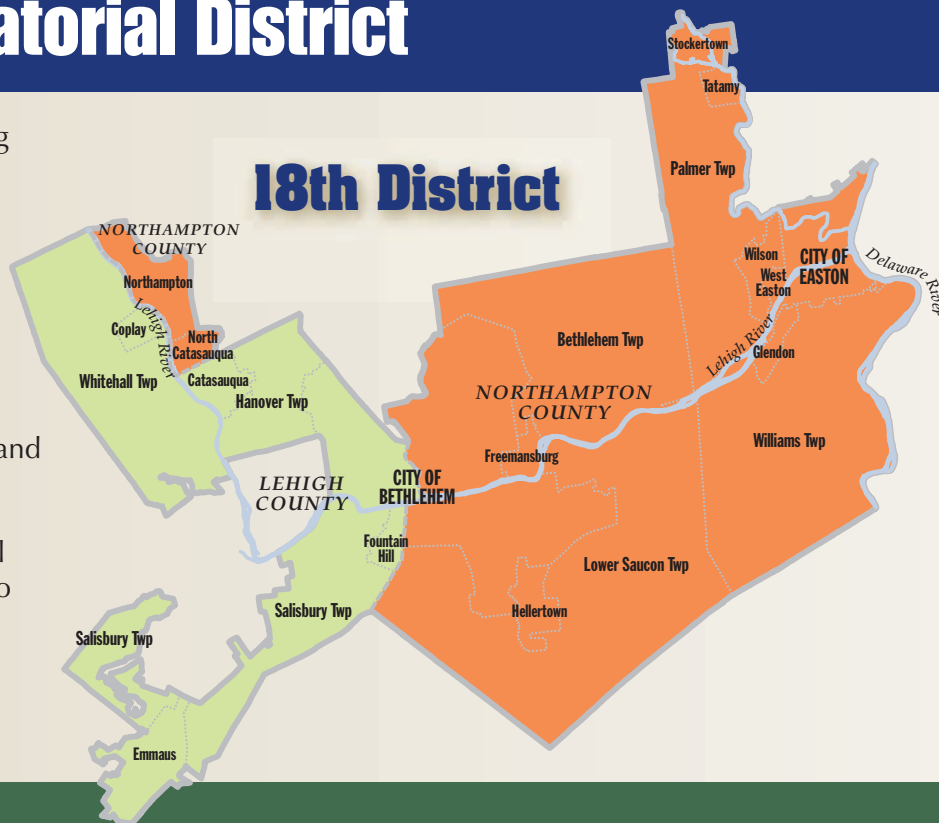


The New 18th Senatorial District

As a result of the finalized redistricting plan, my legislative district will encompass several new communities, including the city of Easton, Palmer and Williams Townships in Northampton County, as well as the borough of Emmaus and Salisbury Township in Lehigh County.

I look forward to providing these new constituents with the same representation and service that I have provided to my district since I first became a senator in 1998.

Please do not hesitate to stop by or call any of my local offices if I can be of help to you – or just to say hello.



New Bethlehem Office

In June, I relocated my Bethlehem office to **One East Broad Street, Suite 120**. The new location is more convenient and accessible for local residents. The Bethlehem office phone number will remain the same at **610-868-8667**.

My staff and I stand ready to help constituents with such services as car registrations, special tags and license applications, disability plates and placards, information on financial assistance for higher education, birth and death certificate applications, notary applications, senior citizen information, such as PACE and Property Tax/Rent Rebate applications and assistance, and requests for literature of all kinds, including copies of bills, regulations, statutes and state maps.

Offices To Serve You

BETHLEHEM OFFICE

One East Broad Street • Suite 120

Bethlehem, PA 18018

(610) 868-8667 • Toll free: 1-877-535-1818

Fax: (610) 861-2184

WHITEHALL OFFICE

West Catasauqua Professional Building

2123 North 1st Avenue • Suite A-4

Whitehall, PA 18052

(610) 266-2117 • Fax: (610) 266-2169

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday • 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

HARRISBURG OFFICE

Senate Box 203018

Harrisburg, PA 17120-3018

(717) 787-4236 • Fax: (717) 783-1257

Senate of Pennsylvania: 1-800-364-1581 (TTY)

TWITTER: @SenLisaBoscola

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/lisa.boscola

WEBSITE: www.senatorboscola.com

Cut along the dotted line and mail to:

Senator Lisa M. Boscola • Senate Box 203018 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-3018

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU.

Your input is helpful to me.

It allows me to represent our community in Harrisburg. Please take a minute to check the issues that are important to you, and let me know of any that aren't listed as well.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (optional) _____ E-Mail _____

Please add my name to your mailing list for regular updates on the following issues and let me know what I can do to make a difference in Harrisburg.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create new, good-paying jobs | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase state funding for public schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate local school property taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate wasteful government spending |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Privatization (liquor stores/lottery/turnpike) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower utility rates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pension reform | <input type="checkbox"/> Preserve and protect the environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Legalization of medical marijuana |



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Around the 18th District and Beyond



Senator Boscola invited Pennsylvania Revenue Secretary Dan Meuser to provide an update of the state's revenue picture to the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce.



Senator Boscola speaks with local residents who attended a rally calling for the elimination of property taxes at the state capitol.



Senator Boscola speaks at the Chrin interchange groundbreaking in Palmer Township. The proposed interchange is expected to generate over 5,000 jobs and millions of dollars in tax revenue over the next 10 years.