

State Senator
**LISA M.
BOSCOLA**



Independent • Effective • Working to Make a Difference

Summer 2015

INSIDE:



**Redistricting
Reform**



**Property Tax
Reform**



**Constituent
Survey**

Spearheading Bipartisan Redistricting Reform



Boscola Spearheads Bipartisan Redistricting Reform

Every 10 years, after census results are finalized, legislative and congressional districts are redrawn to reflect population shifts and changes. Throughout my career, I have advocated to change the way these districts are drawn.



Under our current system, four legislative leaders run the process. As a result, our government has deteriorated into a politically tainted, polarized and gridlocked mess that is more about self-preservation than representative government. In order to change this broken process and make the redrawing of districts less political, I have introduced legislation to change the current system and am preparing to do so again this session.

My legislation would ban politicians from the map-drawing process and create an 11-member impartial citizen panel to draw legislative maps. The panel would

be comprised of four registered Democrats, four registered Republicans, and three independent or non-affiliated voters. Voters interested in serving on the commission would apply to the Pennsylvania Department of State and would be selected randomly. Politicians, staffers, lobbyists and political party officials would be banned from serving on the panel.

The commission's map-drawing efforts would seek to have the least number of county and municipal splits; to make districts as contiguous and compact as possible; and to maintain a "communities of

interest" standard that pools similar economic patterns, school district boundaries, cultural activities, self-identification, media coverage, and other relevant demographic information. No district will be drawn with an attempt to favor a political party, official or group. Finally, the legislation sets a series of deadlines for preliminary maps and public hearings. Final maps would be sent to the General Assembly for an up or down vote without the opportunity to change the maps.

Redistricting reform is long overdue in our Commonwealth. People should choose their legislators, not the other way around. Pennsylvania's many oddly shaped, gerrymandered districts have created political fiefdoms that pressure lawmakers to toe the party line at the expense of bipartisanship and compromise.

A recent Penn State study concluded that lawmakers are now nearly seven times less likely to cross-vote on issues than they were a few decades ago. In the 112th Congress (2011-2013), just seven members accounted for nearly all party cross-votes.

I will continue to work to make common sense redistricting reform a priority in Harrisburg.

Boscola Forms Legislative Work Group

Knowing that it will take a bipartisan and bicameral effort to achieve redistricting reform, I led the creation of a work group of law-makers, comprised of both Republicans and Democrats in the Senate and House, to hammer out the best possible legislative redistricting reform legislation.

This bipartisan effort is not about whether we need to change redistricting, but how we should change it. Our work group's goal is to study the various redistricting reform proposals, find common ground, draw the best from various ideas, and emerge with a strong bipartisan solution. While I have my own redistricting reform proposal, I am open to other ideas for making the process fairer.

It is important that the redistricting reform process take shape this legislative session if we hope to have a new system in place when maps are redrawn again after the 2020 census. To change the redistricting process, the state legislature must amend the constitution in two consecutive legislative sessions, and then the change must be approved by the voters through a voter referendum.

Property Tax Reform Makes Budget Stage



Senator Boscola joins her colleagues on the Senate floor to introduce Senate Bill 76, a bill that would eliminate school property taxes.

In my last update to you, I said that momentum is building for action on property tax reform. That momentum received a shot in the arm when Governor Wolf announced property tax reductions as part of his 2015-16 budget address.

The Governor's proposal would increase the state personal income tax from 3.07 percent to 3.7 percent and the state sales tax from 6 percent to 6.6 percent in order to reduce residential property taxes by \$3.8 billion. A similar proposal that recently passed the state House (HB 504) would increase the personal income tax to 3.7 percent as well and the sales tax to 7 percent in order to reduce residential property taxes by \$5 billion.

While both plans only reduce property taxes and do not eliminate them, they do start a dialogue on the need to shift our funding obligation away from the local tax base and onto a larger and more encompassing tax pool. The property tax base alone is too small to absorb increasing costs and sustain an adequate level of funding.

Over the years, the state share of education costs has been continually declining. Today, the average district receives roughly 36 percent of their operating budget from the state. This leaves the lion's share of education funding to be made up by the smaller tax base, resulting in frequent and sometimes drastic property tax hikes.

As someone who has fought for change and is a co-sponsor of the Property Tax Independence Act (SB 76), I remain committed to the complete elimination of this onerous tax. Elimination of property taxes means the state would fully fund our schools. Both of the plans discussed above move in the direction of a greater portion of state funding for education. If we place a greater reliance of school funding on the state, we must ensure that safeguards are in place that prevent property taxes from continuing to climb.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and the Governor to provide for long overdue relief to the beleaguered property tax payer.

Around the **18th District** *& Beyond*



Senator Boscola and racing legend Mario Andretti volunteer for Meals on Wheels.



Senator Boscola discusses senior issues with a constituent at her recent Senior Fair.



Senator Boscola welcomes Governor Tom Wolf to her alma mater, Governor Wolf Elementary.



Senator Boscola greets school students from Lincoln Elementary School on the Senate floor.



Senator Boscola invites the PIAA Class AA Champion Bethlehem Catholic High School girls volleyball team to the Senate after they won the 2014 state title. They made school history as the first female sports program at Bethlehem Catholic to win a state championship.





STATE SENATOR
LISA M. BOSCOLA

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Boscola Re-elected as Senate Democratic Policy Committee Chair

I am grateful once again that my colleagues have given me the opportunity to serve as chair of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. Our committee continues to deliberate and engage in innovative solutions for the challenges facing Pennsylvanians.

This year we have held meetings in every region of our state to explore current issues affecting the lives of Pennsylvanians. Some recent topics have included: higher education affordability, forensic crime laboratories, public health data monitoring, workforce challenges for individuals with criminal records, sick leave for employees, job retention/creation and economic development.

My committee continues to discuss many key issues and serve as a strong and innovative voice on issues in state government. As chair, I have remained committed to providing balanced and current information on major policy initiatives.

We will continue to keep your interests and concerns in mind as our committee considers future legislative issues. As always, I am eager for public input on topics coming before my committee. For information on future Policy Committee meeting dates, please check my website at www.SenatorBoscola.com.

Chrin Interchange Opening Soon

The new Chrin Interchange off Route 33 in Palmer Township is scheduled to open in July 2015. The \$40 million interchange will have a tremendous economic impact in the Lehigh Valley as it will provide easy access to the Chrin Commerce Centre, an 800 acre industrial park located in Palmer and Tatamy.

The Chrin Interchange, located between the Route 248 and Route 191 exits, was built through a public private partnership. Although highways are funded primarily through public dollars, substantial private investment contributed to the completion of this project.

Development along the area off the interchange is estimated to bring an additional 5,000 jobs to our economy and generate an estimated \$16 million annually in tax revenue. The Chrin Commerce Centre already has two tenants, Porsche and Mondelez International with additional development on the horizon.

Easton Office

New district lines for the 18th Senatorial District took effect last year, which means that my district once again includes Easton, Palmer, Glendon, Tatamy, West Easton, Williams Township and Wilson and added for the first time, Emmaus and Salisbury.

To better serve the residents of the Easton area, I have opened a satellite district office at 1701 Washington Boulevard in Wilson. This address may sound familiar as Sen. Bob Mensch had maintained an office at the same location. Continuity helps to better serve the area.

The Easton office is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The phone number is 610-250-5627.



STATE SENATOR
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CONSTITUENT SURVEY

Please consider completing this survey to assist me in providing outstanding constituent service. Your opinion is important to me as I continue to represent the views of the residents of the 18th Senatorial District.

Your opinion is important to me!

- Should Pennsylvania change the way we currently draw legislative and congressional districts?
- Do you support closing state stores and privatizing the sale of liquor in Pennsylvania?
- Should state stores remain open and our liquor laws modernized to allow for the sale of beer and wine in supermarkets?
- Do you favor the legalizing of medical marijuana?
- Do you support decriminalizing offenses where the offender possesses a small amount of marijuana?
- Are you in favor of increasing the state income and/or sales tax to reduce property taxes?
- Do you favor increasing the state income and/or sales tax to eliminate property taxes?
- Should Pennsylvania legalize internet casino gambling?
- Do you support increasing the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour?
- Should the death penalty be legal in Pennsylvania?
- Do you support a moratorium for the death penalty in Pennsylvania?

YES

NO

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