



State Senator

**LISA M.
BOSCOLA**

Independent • Effective • Working to Make a Difference

SPRING 2018

2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



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📁 Survey Results 📁 Property Taxes 📁 Redistricting Reform



State Senator
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2017 Newsletter Survey Results

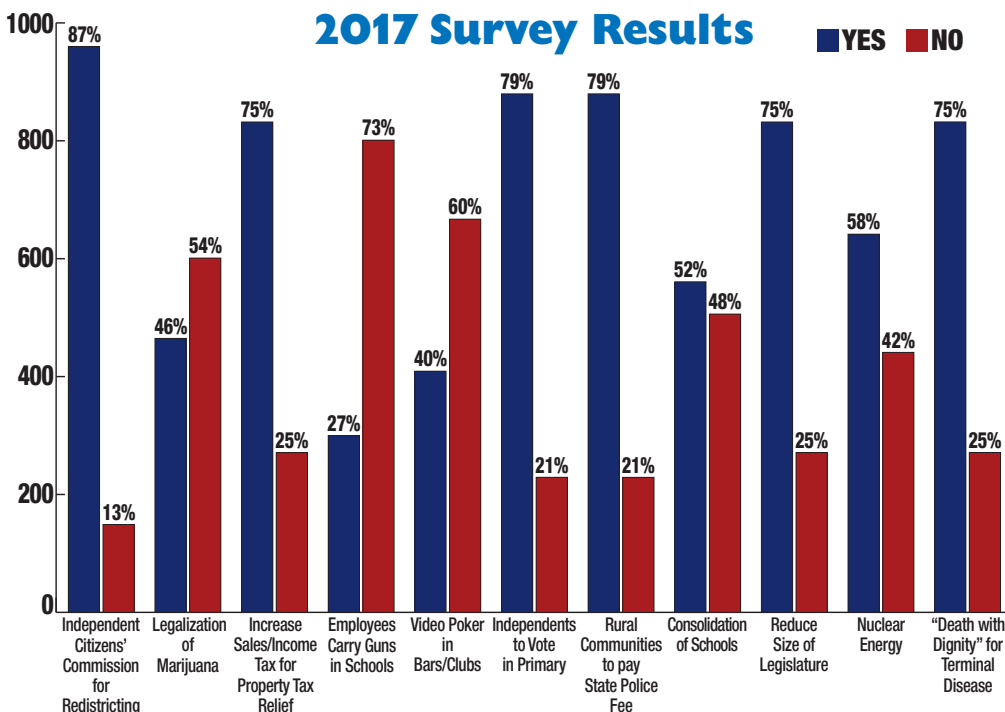
My last newsletter included a survey about some issues that were pending in the General Assembly. **1100** of you took the time to respond and I wanted to provide you with the results. These surveys have become an effective way for me to generate feedback from my constituents about issues that impact all of us.

87% of the respondents support the idea of using an independent commission to draw district lines for Congress and the General Assembly. **SB 22**, a bill of which I am the Prime Sponsor, seeks to amend the PA Constitution to create such a commission. The bill has garnered bipartisan and bicameral support along with support from grassroots activists. The General Assembly needs to pass the legislation before July 2018 to remain on schedule to have the Constitution amended before the lines are redrawn following the 2020 census.

75% of respondents support raising state sales or income tax for property tax relief. Eliminating property taxes for homeowners has long been a goal of mine. The potential for the legislature to help homeowners received a real boost this past fall when the voters of Pennsylvania overwhelmingly supported a Constitutional amendment that will allow the legislature to treat homesteads and farmsteads differently than business and commercial properties for real estate tax purposes.

There was also broad support for amending the law to allow "death with dignity" following a diagnosis with a terminal disease (**75%**) and allowing Independents to vote in the primary (**79%**), both of which I have introduced legislation to permit. Additionally, requiring rural communities to pay a fee for state police coverage (**79%**) and reducing the size of the Legislature (**75%**) enjoy broad support. There was also broad opposition to permitting school employees to carry guns on school property (**73% against**), a bill I voted against this session.

Two issues enjoyed marginal support: **52%** support consolidating school districts to county-wide or regionally run schools and **58%** believe nuclear energy should be a part of Pennsylvania's energy portfolio. Lastly, two issues did not break the **50%** mark, only **40%** support permitting video poker in bars and clubs and **46%** support legalizing marijuana. Thank you for taking the time to respond.



PA Supreme Court Ruling Affirms the Need for Redistricting Reform

The State Supreme Court struck down Pennsylvania's Congressional Districts for violating the Pennsylvania Constitution. The Court ruled that the map violated the free and equal elections clause. The Court is requiring the General Assembly to draw new maps before the 2018 election.

The decision reaffirmed what I have been saying since 2001, my first experience with redistricting, that partisanship plays too large a role in our redistricting effort. It is why I have introduced legislation to amend our

Constitution to allow for an independent commission to draw our lines every 10 years. **SB 22** enjoys bipartisan, bicameral and grassroots support. Unfortunately, it has been stalled in the State Government Committee since 2017.

Hopefully, the Supreme Court's decision will compel a full Senate vote on this important legislation. We need maps drawn by people that do not have a vested interest in the outcome. Essentially, we need voters to elect our leaders, not leaders to pick their voters.

To amend the Constitution in time



Interviewing with advocates for gerrymandering documentary filmed at the Capitol.

for the next time our maps will be redrawn, we need to pass SB 22 by June 30, 2018. The bill would then need to pass next session before it can be placed on a ballot referendum.

Restitution Bill (SB 897)

Last year, the PA Supreme Court ruled that people who steal from government, nonprofits and businesses cannot be required to pay back the money they stole. Locally, a few high-profile cases were impacted by this decision. Two cases involved the same individual bilking over \$1 million from Bethlehem Twp. and Coplay. Another case involved an individual who stole over \$300,000 from a church.

The individuals in the local cases are citing the Supreme Court decision now to avoid paying back the money they stole. This makes no sense.

I introduced a bipartisan bill to fix this issue. **SB 897** makes it clear that people who steal from government, nonprofits and businesses can be ordered to repay what they stole. I will continue to advocate for its swift passage and adoption into law.



Voters Overwhelmingly Support Property Tax Ballot Initiative

Over the past few decades public education costs have largely been borne by local property owners. This has a particularly devastating effect on communities with large senior citizen populations – and it continues to discourage home ownership for many younger, working families.

So, I was thrilled to see local voters overwhelmingly support a referendum that will enable local governments to double the property tax homestead exemption. The approval of this referendum means legislators can take a different approach to providing meaningful relief to homeowners. With the



Holding a hearing on property tax reform in Bethlehem Township.

Constitution now changed, the General Assembly can focus on passing legislation that permits local school districts to exclude up to 100 percent of the assessed value of a homestead property.

Gaming Legislative Fix (HB 271)

After over a year of negotiations, the General Assembly adopted **HB 271** in October, which made significant changes to the state's gaming laws. The most important result of this bill to many of my constituents is reinstating the Local Share. This portion of the slot tax revenue is directed to host municipalities and counties of casinos along with surrounding municipalities to help deal with impacts of the casinos and fund other priorities.

As part of the bill, I also worked to finance some important local projects. The bill provides \$2 million annually for a ten-year period from the Gaming Economic Development & Tourism Fund for a project in the City of Easton. This \$20 million commitment, which will begin next year, is devoted to the development and construction of the DaVinci Science and Technology Center. When the casinos first opened all this money was steered towards projects in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Instead of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia getting all the money, it was time for the Lehigh Valley to get its fair share.

Additionally, the bill provides funding for necessary upgrades and improvements to the Banana Factory in South Bethlehem. The overhaul, estimated to be \$18 million, will include arts-based preschool and early childhood development programming.

Around the 18 Senatorial District



Dedicating the Firefighters Memorial and Walk of Honor with personnel of the Catasauqua Fire Department.



Representing Lehigh Valley fans of the Philadelphia Eagles prior to their historic Super Bowl LII championship.



As a proud alumna, it was an honor giving the keynote address at the 50th anniversary of Freedom High School.



Visiting the grand opening of the state-of-the-art Iron Mountain Inc. records management facility building in Easton.



Attending the annual Lifepath/PICPA Thanksgiving benefit & awards event this past fall.

Cutting the ribbon with the students, faculty, family and friends at the new Nitschmann Middle School in Bethlehem Area School District.



Congratulating the students & coaches of Bethlehem Catholic High School's Lady Golden Hawks basketball team on winning their first state title in school history.



Speaking at the opening of the New Street Parking Deck.

Economic Re-Birth of Bethlehem's Southside Continues

In September, I joined local officials at the topping out ceremony for the new Gateway at Greenway Park at 3rd and New Streets on Bethlehem's Southside. This six story mixed use development will be home to offices for St. Luke's University Health Network and Lehigh University along with first floor commercial uses.

In late November, we cut the ribbon on the New Street Parking Garage, which is attached to the Gateway at Greenway Park. The 626 space garage is critical to the redevelopment of that section of Southside Bethlehem as it will provide ample parking for residents who want to visit the Gateway or the multitude of storefronts in the neighborhood.

Since the closing of Bethlehem Steel two decades ago, South Bethlehem has seen a tremendous resurgence. The state has been an active partner with helping the city through a variety of programs. Two specific programs helped with these projects, the City Revitalization and Improvement Zone helped fund the Gateway to Greenway Park and Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program funds were used as part of the New Street Parking Garage.

Boscola Bill Would Mandate Data on Children Born with Addiction

Addicted babies are the most innocent, voiceless and invisible victims of Pennsylvania's worsening opioid crisis. Not only are these infants born with drug withdrawal symptoms, but they face a greater risk of premature birth, low birthweight, sleep issues, growth problems, seizures and tremors. We need a better understanding of how many babies are born with addictions, to understand the kind of specialized care that they will require.

To that end, I have introduced **SB 1026** that would mandate the reporting of any infant born with an addiction to opioids. Currently, Pennsylvania has no real-time reporting requirement. As a result, the state cannot fully assess whether the problem is worsening and what kinds of resources are needed.

Under my bill, medical personnel would be required to confidentially provide real-time data on babies born with an addiction to the Department of Health.



State Funds Making Our Community a Better Place to Live

Throughout the past several years, I have advocated for over \$40 million in state funds that have been invested here in the 18th Senate District to improve our quality of life, infrastructure and economic activity. A few examples include funding to improve pedestrian safety along Main Street in Hellertown, S. New Street in Bethlehem and 13th Street in Easton. Parks throughout the district, including Comer Park in Bethlehem Twp., Lindberg Park in Salisbury, Dimmick Park in Hellertown and Saylor Park in Coplay have been upgraded. There have also been important environmental projects

receiving funding such as Monocacy Creek improvements and restoration, Saucon Creek Restoration and the Atlas Dam Removal in Northampton.

Substantial funding through grants and loans have assisted in creating and retaining jobs here in the Lehigh Valley through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, the Keystone Communities Program, the Alternative and Clean Energy Program, Ben Franklin Technology Partners and others. My office is available to provide information on these grant and loan programs.

Lehigh Engineers Help Cut Corrections Costs

Lehigh University faculty and students from the Industrial and Systems Engineering Department were honored with the Daniel H. Wagner Prize for Excellence in



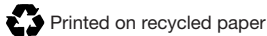
Operations Research Practice. They developed an algorithm in collaboration with Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections to streamline the assignment of inmates to the state's 25 correctional institutions. The state is projected to save \$3 million in the first year and \$19 million over the next five years using this program. Their algorithm is the first of its kind in the nation.



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Constituent Survey

Please consider completing this survey to assist me in understanding your views on some important issues in the 18th Senatorial District.

Your opinion is important to me!

- Should communities that rely solely on state police for primary patrol coverage be required to pay a fee to the state?
- Do you support increasing the amount of money Pennsylvania spends on infrastructure?
- Should Pennsylvania reduce the penalties for possession of a small amount of marijuana?
- Do you support enacting an impact fee to help communities affected by the construction of new natural gas pipelines?
- Should Pennsylvania enact a Marcellus shale tax?
- Should registered Independents be permitted to vote in the primary?
- Do you support increasing the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$12.00 an hour?
- Should Pennsylvania release terminally ill geriatric prisoners from state prison?
- Should the size of the legislature be reduced?
- Do you support using a merit selection process for statewide judge positions in place of elections?

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