

Senator Dominic Pileggi



REPORT to the PEOPLE

9TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT • WINTER 2008



Senator Pileggi's Open Records Bill Moving Forward; Senate Bill 1 Likely to be Finalized in January

Senate Bill 1, legislation to strengthen Pennsylvania's Open Records Law sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi (R-9), is moving forward.

"Pennsylvania needs a stronger Open Records Law because openness builds trust in government," said Senator Pileggi. "Transparency gives the public the ability to review government actions – to understand what government does, to see when government performs well and when government should be held accountable."

Senate Bill 1, which was approved by the Senate (48 to 1) and amended by the House, makes dramatic changes in the records available from various government agencies.

- For executive agencies and local agencies, Senate Bill 1 reverses the presumption of access to records and puts the burden of proof on a government agency denying access to a record. This is the one change that many advocates of open government consider the most essential.
- Senate Bill 1 provides a list of 28 plainly stated

exceptions for executive agencies and local agencies. These exceptions include such things as criminal investigations, Social Security numbers, personal financial information, and individual medical records.

- Legislative agencies, including the Senate and the House, are required to provide access to 19 categories of records.
- Judicial agencies are required to provide financial records.
- The four state-related universities – Temple, Penn State, Pitt and Lincoln – are required to provide information from IRS Form 990, whether or not the university is required to file that form, along with a list of the highest 25 salaries for university employees.

"Pennsylvania has implemented many important government reforms this year," Senator Pileggi said. "But no other reform comes close to matching the impact of a strong Open Records Law."

Senate Bill 1 also makes many important changes to the process of obtaining public records in Pennsylvania:

- It creates an Open Records Clearinghouse to

provide information, training and advisory opinions on Open Records.

- It improves the appeals process, making it easier for a citizen to challenge an agency's decision not to release a record.
- It reduces the time period for response by a Commonwealth agency from 10 to 5 days.
- It increases financial penalties for noncompliance and makes it easier for plaintiffs to recover attorneys' fees if an agency acts in bad faith.
- It requires the Open Records Clearinghouse to establish standard fees for photocopying records.
- It gives the Open Records Clearinghouse independ-

ence from political pressure by requiring the Governor to appoint an executive director who serves for six years.

Other reform measures adopted by the Senate this year include posting more information than ever online, giving the public easy access to all roll call votes, the full text of Senate debates, and a live video feed of Senate floor activity.

The Senate has also approved legislation to increase penalties for violating the Sunshine Law, to eliminate lame-duck voting sessions, and to prohibit bonuses for state employees. All of those measures are now before the House for consideration.



Senator Pileggi toured the Rare Books Collection at the State Library in Harrisburg. Kurt Boding, Rare Books Librarian, showed Senator Pileggi some of the priceless books and periodicals contained within the collection.

www.senatorpileggi.com

Visit Senator Pileggi's website, www.senatorpileggi.com, to keep up with legislative news and other state issues. You can also see photos and videos related to Senator Pileggi's work both in the district and in Harrisburg.



Alternative Energy Investment Act Advancing in Special Session

In the Special Session on Energy, the Senate has advanced legislation to invest \$650 million over the

next 10 years in consumer energy programs, energy conservation, and the development of alternative and renewable energy.

The Alternative Energy Investment Act, Special Session Senate Bill 1, would provide funding for grants and loans to projects geared at improving energy supply and efficiency, improved conservation and reduced demand for energy – with no tax increases.

“Our goal is to enact a fiscally responsible law to encourage the development of alternative and renewable energy and energy conservation in Pennsylvania,” said Senator Pileggi. “As energy costs go up, the state needs to support energy conservation and alter-

native energy development as a long-term way to reduce the impact on Pennsylvania families.”

Special Session Senate Bill 1 would provide:

- \$100 million for residential energy conservation projects, including energy efficient windows, energy efficient doors, solar panels, geothermal heat pumps, insulation, air-sealing and other energy saving projects approved by the Department of Environmental Protection.
- \$100 million for the Low-Income Home and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- \$250 million in loans and grants for political subdivisions and businesses to be used on clean energy projects, alternative energy production projects, venture capital, and pollution control technologies.
- \$130 million in tax credits to alternative energy production projects, including facilities using waste coal, biofuel, biomass, solar power, wind energy, geothermal technologies, clean coal technologies, or other alternative energy sources to produce or distribute renewable energy, facilities manufacturing or producing products which provide renewable energy, and facilities used for the re-

search and development of technology to provide alternative or renewable energy sources.

- \$50 million for the purchase and installation of solar panels.
- \$15 million for hybrid vehicle rebates.
- \$5 million for home-based energy efficiency projects.

Special Session Senate Bill 1 was approved by the Senate on December 12.

Other Special Session bills approved by the Senate include Senate Bill 36, which would establish a mandate for the use of biodiesel fuel in Pennsylvania; and Senate Bill 22, which would provide incentives to produce biodiesel. Biodiesel fuel is biodegradable and non-toxic, and many vehicles can run on 100 percent biodiesel.



What is a Special Session?

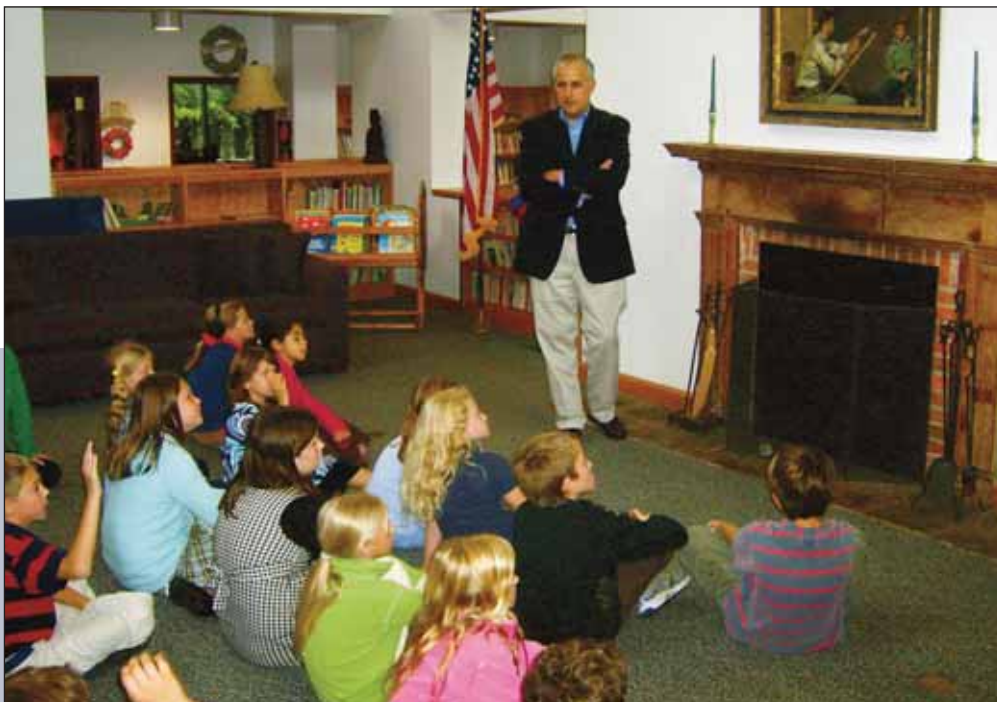
A special session focuses legislative attention on a specific Pennsylvania issue. The Governor issues a proclamation that calls the legislature into session, which delineates when it will begin and what specifically the legislature should address.

Pennsylvania’s Constitution governs the process for calling and conducting special sessions. Article II, Section 4 says, “Special sessions shall be called by the Governor on petition of a majority of the members elected to each House or may be called by the Governor whenever in his opinion the public interest requires.” Historically, the Governor has taken the initiative in calling special sessions.

The current special session on energy began on September 24.

Do Not Call List Reminder

Senator Pileggi reminds constituents that their registration under Pennsylvania’s Do Not Call List could be close to expiration. Telemarketers are prohibited from calling any residential telephone subscriber whose name, address and telephone number are on the list. New registrations and renewals of existing registrations for the Do Not Call List may be made by calling 1-888-777-3406 or visiting www.senatorpileggi.com and clicking on the “Do Not Call” button on the right side.



Senator Pileggi answered questions from the fourth-grade class at Upland Country Day School in East Marlborough Township. Senator Pileggi also met with Head of School David Suter and toured the Upland campus.

Tax Credit Program Helps Students Succeed

As part of the state budget this year, Senator Pileggi was a strong advocate for increasing the successful Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. This program provides a tax credit to businesses that contribute to scholarship organizations or to organizations providing innovative educational programs.

"The EITC program has been extraordinarily successful in Pennsylvania," said Senator Pileggi. "By giving businesses a tangible incentive to partner with scholarship organizations and innovative education programs, we are making a very real difference in the lives of children and families across the state each and every year."

More than 30,000 children across Pennsylvania are benefiting from EITC scholarships this year, and thousands of children in

public schools are benefiting from innovative programs that probably would not have been funded without the program.

The total amount available for tax credits under the EITC program was increased from \$59 million to \$75 million in the 2007-08 state budget. The additional authorization will help provide more scholarships and additional funding for innovative programs. The program is so

effective and popular that available tax credits were used almost immediately in previous years.

Since the EITC program began in 2001, more than 1,900 companies have donated in excess of \$200 million.

The EITC program offers a helping hand to parents across the state who work hard to send their children to the best possible schools. Senator Pileggi is

pleased that his efforts were successful to secure additional funding for this time-tested program that is making a difference in the lives of our children.

If you are a parent or business owner who would like more information about the EITC program, please contact Senator Pileggi's office by calling (717) 787-4712 or emailing dpileggi@pasen.gov.



Senator Pileggi met with constituents from Delaware County and representatives of the American Cancer Society in his office in Harrisburg to discuss Senate Bill 246, the Clean Indoor Air Act.

Pennsylvania Will Fund Hazardous Sites Cleanup

When the annual state budget was passed in mid July, it did not include any funding for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund – one of the most important programs in state government.

Since that time, Senator Pileggi has led the fight for reliable funding. Pennsylvania's Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act, often referred to as HSCA, provides funding for many vital environmental cleanups. Perhaps most importantly, it pays for the state's portion of the federal Superfund program, which cleans up abandoned hazardous waste sites.

In large part because of our industrial heritage, Pennsylvania currently has at least 269 Superfund sites, according to the federal En-

vironmental Protection Agency. Our commitment to HSCA is not optional.

HSCA also provides funding to clean up other contaminated sites, to investigate illegal hazardous waste disposals and methamphetamine labs, to allow the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to stabilize serious chemical spills, and to maintain a statewide emergency response network.

In June and July, the administration sought to pay for this key program by increasing the tax on trash, which would affect every homeowner and business in the state.

HSCA is such an important priority that Senator Pileggi believes we should fund it from existing state

revenues. We should not rely on a tax increase.

In October, the Senate passed Senate Bill 1100, legislation Senator Pileggi introduced to transfer \$17 million to HSCA from legislative accounts for the current fiscal year. Recent estimates indicate that amount is enough to keep the program afloat through the end of June. By using money from legislative accounts, no state program is cut to fund HSCA.

The Senate also passed legislation, Senate Bill 1068, to ensure that any fines or penalties levied for violations of HSCA are used to fund HSCA-related environmental activities, rather than being used for other government programs.

Going forward, Senate Bill 1100 would dedicate \$40 million in existing revenues for HSCA from the Capital Stock and Franchise Tax in fiscal year 2008-2009 through fiscal year 2010-2011. That tax is scheduled to be eliminated at the end of 2010; this proposal will not delay that phase-out.

In other words, Senator Pileggi's legislation will ensure that HSCA is properly funded for the next four years. During this time, the state can work to find a longer-term funding source.

SB 1100 passed the Senate and House unanimously. When the Governor signs it into law, Pennsylvania's very real environmental needs will continue to be met.

Heating Assistance Available for 2007-08 Winter Months

Senator Pileggi reminded constituents that the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has started accepting applications. The program will accept applications through March 21, 2008.

"No family should go without heat during the cold winter months," said Senator Pileggi. "Although some weather forecasters have predicted a mild winter, I encourage families who qualify to apply for assistance from LIHEAP."

To qualify for assistance from LIHEAP, household income cannot exceed certain income guidelines. For a one-person household, that equals \$15,315; two people, \$20,535; three people, \$25,755; four people, \$30,975; five people,

\$36,195; six people, \$41,415. For larger households, the guidelines increase by \$5,220 for each individual person.

LIHEAP is a federal program, administered by the state, to assist low-in-

come individuals who cannot pay their heating bills. Those who are eligible for the program can receive assistance through a direct payment to the vendor who supplies their fuel. LIHEAP can also provide assistance during severe weather emergencies for problems such as a broken furnace, leaking pipes or the threat of utility service termination.

To apply, Pennsylvania residents can call the LIHEAP hotline, 1-866-857-7095, or contact their local county assistance office. In Delaware County, the county assistance office can be reached at (610) 447-3099. Chester County's assistance office can be contacted at (610) 466-1042. Applications may also be completed online at the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Access to Social Services (COMPASS) website, www.compass.state.pa.us. In addition to LIHEAP, many utility companies offer their own assistance plans. Interested customers should check with their individual heating fuel and electricity suppliers for more information.



Charlie Pizzi, President of Tasty Baking Company, welcomed Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi for a tour of its Oxford Plant. The 91-year old bakery employs about 180 people in Oxford.

Email Updates Available from Senator Pileggi

Senator Pileggi sends periodic email updates to constituents interested in legislative happenings. If you would like to receive these email updates, you can sign up by either:

- Sending your email address to dpileggi@pasen.gov with "Email Updates" in the subject line; or
- Clicking on the "Sign Up for Email Updates" button at www.senatorpileggi.com and filling out the online form.

If you sign up for updates, your email address will not be given or sold to any other individual, organization or company.



SENATOR PILEGGI'S LEGISLATIVE OFFICES

100 Granite Drive, Suite 105, Media, PA 19063 • (610) 565-9100 • FAX (610) 566-2010
631 West Baltimore Pike, West Grove, PA 19390 • (610) 345-1084 • FAX (610) 345-1087
415 Avenue of the States, Chester, PA 19013 • (610) 447-5845 • FAX (610) 447-5848
350 Main Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120 • (717) 787-4712 • FAX (717) 783-7490
1-888-9TH-DIST • 1-888-984-3478
dpileggi@pasen.gov • www.senatorpileggi.com

