

2026-27 STATE BUDGET OVERSPENDS AGAIN

You probably heard the annual state budget was passed July 12, approving \$50.85 billion in spending, with no tax increases and without touching the state's Rainy Day Fund. However, that's not the whole, or accurate, picture.

The finished product spends well above state revenue projections and relies on accounting tricks to "hide" or defer costs to the next fiscal year.

It does include some significant wins, such as its preservation of the popular Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs, as well as funding for rural road infrastructure. And, Republicans also led an initiative to block a \$2 billion tax on employers, which was part of a prior budget proposal.

However, despite some of its positives, the nearly \$51 billion total comes in at about \$3.65 billion over projected state revenues. Further, deferring Medicaid payments and new Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) compensation until the first day of the next fiscal year "hides" more than \$1.5 billion from this year's budget balance sheet. This brings the state total budget closer to \$53 billion.

Families and businesses must live within their means and spend only what they have when they budget, but once again we've not adopted this principle in Harrisburg. I voted "no" on this year's budget because rather than scale back irresponsible spending, we've burdened tomorrow's taxpayers with a steep bill.

At the current trajectory, this budget sets Pennsylvanians up for future tax hikes. This type of accounting and budgeting is something I will continue to fight against because I believe the people of Pennsylvania deserve better than a group of men and women who "cook the books" to make our financial picture look better than it really is.



STANDING UP FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

This year, I have devoted a great deal of time to visiting schools across the Commonwealth. This includes charter, cyber, public and private schools to gain greater insight into how they operate, who they serve, what their challenges are and what they succeed in doing.

As a former teacher, I have a natural interest in this, and as a legislator I have a renewed curiosity in how we can best support all students in our state and ensure they receive the best education possible. I also think if we open the lines of communication between these various types of schools, there are a lot of great ideas that can be shared.

I taught in a wonderful public school where I watched many kids thrive and grow; however, I also supported those students who I know wanted and would benefit from a different model of education.

That's why I fiercely fought against legislation that would take essential funding away from cyber and charter schools offering alternatives to traditional education – effectively shutting them down.

There were also discussions about reducing – to the point of elimination – funding for the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs. This was something I also strongly opposed.

These scholarships afford many families the opportunity to send their children to schools that best match their students' needs. Eliminating this highly successful program would deprive thousands of students of these opportunities.

I was glad to learn that my – and many of my colleagues' – strong opposition resulted in the EITC and OSTC being continued under this year's state budget.

A VOTE FOR JUSTICE

On March 26, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that automatic mandatory life without parole sentences for second-degree murder (also known as felony murder) are a violation of the state Constitution. The court gave the Legislature 120 days to make changes to the unconstitutional sentencing framework. That deadline was Friday, July 24. Without new measures in place addressing sentencing, hundreds of men and women already convicted of second-degree murder could be resentenced or released from incarceration.

Second-degree murder applies when an individual participates in certain dangerous felonies, including robbery, rape or arson, that result in another person's death. Even if the individual did not personally cause the fatal injury, Pennsylvania law has long recognized that those who willingly participate in violent felonies that lead to a loss of life must be held accountable.

Currently in Pennsylvania, approximately 1,100 inmates are serving life sentences for second-degree murder.

I opposed a bill amended by House Democrats, which includes dramatically reduced sentences, expansive medical parole and no minimum mandatory sentencing. Under this bill, there is the very real potential a convicted felon who played a part in a person's death could get no jail time at all.

These types of sentencing rollbacks for dangerous criminals do nothing but erode public safety and traumatize victims' families.

As of the writing of this newsletter, House Bill 1042 is awaiting consideration by the state Senate after having narrowly passed in the House due to the current Democrat majority.

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If you need help with any of the above or with any other state-related matter, please do not hesitate to contact my district office.

OUT AND ABOUT



Touring Dover Township
Fire Department.



Visting the Pennsylvania state
booth at the Great American
State Fair in Washington, D.C.,
with my staff.



Attending a "Quilt of Valor"
ceremony for constituent and
Army veteran Ed Breach.



Presenting a House citation to Bishop
McDevitt wrestler and 92nd District
resident Camden Baum. Camden is the
PIAA Class 2A wrestling champion.



Congratulating Thomas Sisca, a member of Troop 192,
on earning the rank of Eagle Scout.
Joining us was state Sen. Dawn Keefer.

DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM

The deadline for senior citizens and Pennsylvanians with disabilities to apply for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2025 has been extended to Dec. 31.

Income limits for the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program increased again this year to \$48,110 for both homeowners and renters. Remember to exclude 50% of Social Security when determining your income. The maximum rebate is \$1,000.

The program is open to residents age 65 years and older; widows and widowers 50 years and older; and people with disabilities 18 years and older.

Remember – you do not need to pay anyone for assistance to apply for the rebates. Apply online at mypath.pa.gov, or contact my office for help.