

## Election Reform, Balance of Power Among Proposed Constitutional Amendments



This week, the House advanced several proposed constitutional amendments aimed at restoring the balance of power between in state government and ensure the integrity of elections.

- ***Voter ID***

In light of the broad, bipartisan support for voter ID, the first measure seeks to amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to require all voters to present valid identification each time they cast their ballot, whether they are voting by mail or in-person. Any voter who does not have valid identification would be provided a government-issued ID at no cost.

- ***Election Audits***

Another proposed amendment would require comprehensive auditing of elections, including the administration of elections, certification of election machines, the accuracy of the list of registered voters, the administration of voter registration and election results.

- ***Reining in Executive Power***

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Two additional proposed amendments would continue efforts to restore a proper balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of state government. One amendment would limit executive orders to 21 days unless extended by a concurrent resolution of the General Assembly, and the other would allow the General Assembly to fully disapprove a regulation without approval of the governor.

The measures were added to [Senate Bill 106](#) which proposes to amend the Constitution to allow candidates for governor to select their running mates for lieutenant governor, similar to the way presidential candidates select vice presidential running mates. Currently, the lieutenant governor is independently elected. In order to amend the state Constitution, the proposal must be passed in identical form by the House and Senate in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approved by voters in a statewide referendum. The bill now returns to the Senate for consideration.

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## House Rejects Third-Party Funding for Election Administration

To help ensure election integrity, the House voted this week to prohibit all county election officials and the secretary of the Commonwealth from accepting private contributions and donations to administer the state's elections. [House Bill 2044](#) would specifically prohibit contributions to counties or the state for the purposes of operating elections, employing staff, equipping polling places or engaging in voter outreach. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

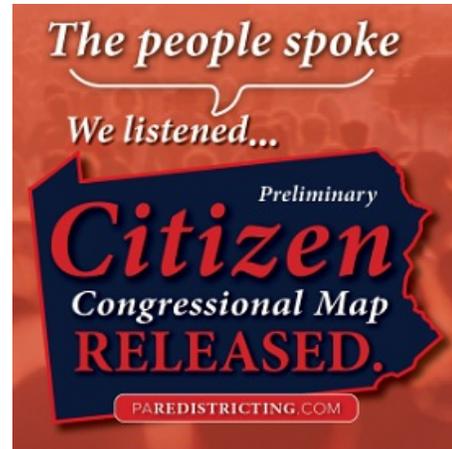


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## Committee Advances New Congressional Redistricting Map

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The House State Government Committee, on which I serve, approved a congressional redistricting map that was created by Lehigh County resident Amanda Holt. The map was submitted through the committee's online mapping tool, which encouraged citizens to get involved in the redistricting process and submit their own maps. The committee selected Holt's map from several submitted. Last week, Rep. Russ Diamond (R-102) and I issued a statement in opposition to splitting up Lebanon County and we were ultimately successful in not approving the map until that issue was fixed. The map we approved this week was amended in committee to improve the compactness of districts, respond to citizen concerns regarding communities of interest and increase minority representation in Philadelphia. [House Bill 2146](#) now goes to the full House for consideration. To view the updated citizen map, residents should visit [paredistricting.com](http://paredistricting.com) and click on "Preliminary Map." There, users will be able to view the updated map and offer public comments.



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## Senate Committee Advances Unborn Child Dignity Act



This week, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee approved the “Unborn Child Dignity Act,” a bill I sponsored to require health care facilities to provide for the disposition of fetal remains. [House Bill 118](#), which now goes to the full Senate, would give parents the option to claim their unborn child’s remains and provide for proper burial. The committee amended the bill to clarify that parents are not mandated to claim their child’s remains.

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## Committee Advances Bill to Term Limit Judges

This week, the House Judiciary Committee advanced legislation I sponsored that proposes to amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to limit the terms of justices and judges serving on state appellate courts. [House Bill 1880](#) would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to limit justices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to two terms or a total of 20 years on the bench.



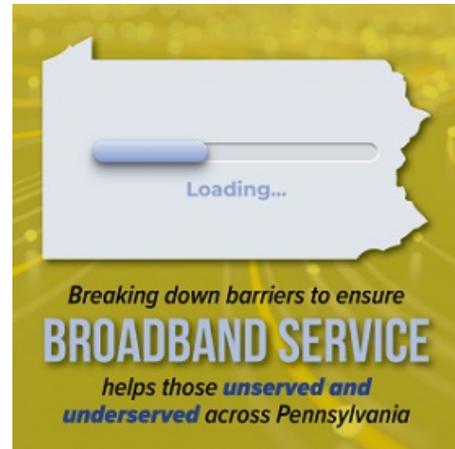
Under the bill any justice currently serving who has exceeded the new limit would be permitted to complete their current term. The bill was amended in committee to apply the same term limits to Commonwealth Court and Superior Court judges. The amendment limits those judges to two terms or 20 years on each court on which they serve. I am pleased this important legislation is now on its way to the full House for consideration. This amendment would put more power in the hands of the citizens of this Commonwealth by enabling voters to decide whether or not to limit the terms of our judges and justices. No jurist should be able to hold office indefinitely and 20 years is long enough. Constitutional amendments must pass in identical form in each of two consecutive legislative sessions before they can be placed before voters in a statewide referendum.

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## House Sends Broadband Expansion Measure to Governor’s Desk

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The state House and Senate approved legislation this week aimed at boosting access to high-speed internet service in rural and other underserved areas of the Commonwealth. [House Bill 2071](#) would establish the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority to administer funding anticipated through a federal infrastructure bill recently approved by Congress. The Commonwealth is expected to receive at least \$100 million initially with the potential for more after the authority develops a statewide plan for broadband expansion. Under the bill, the authority also would serve as a single point of contact for parties interested in developing broadband or having broadband developed, helping to minimize duplication and maximize the use of existing infrastructure. Additionally, the authority would be charged with identifying access to funding sources and helping to coordinate joint efforts for broadband buildout. The authority would sunset in 10 years or when all federal funds have been exhausted and obligations fulfilled. The bill is now awaiting the governor's signature.



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## House Rejects Bill Impacting Energy Jobs, Electricity Costs



This week, I joined a majority of my House colleagues in rejecting proposed state regulations to enroll the Commonwealth in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI was created to cap CO2 emissions for power generation plants. Pennsylvania is already outperforming most states enrolled in the initiative in reducing emissions. Joining RGGI would impact jobs and significantly increase the operating costs for power plants, which would be passed on to consumers. Senate Concurrent Regulatory Review Resolution No. 1 will now go to the

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governor's desk.

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## Committee Acts to End State Tax on Forgiven Student Loans



The House Finance Committee, on which I serve, advanced legislation that would forgive Pennsylvania Income Tax for any amount of student loan principal or interest canceled by the U.S. Department of Education under the Public Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. Federal income tax exemptions have been in place since the PSLF program was enacted in 2007. [House Bill 2137](#), which I co-sponsored, would exempt Pennsylvania income taxes as well. For details, [click here](#).

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## Bill Would Ensure Families Easy Access to Students' Curriculum

Legislation now on its way to the governor's desk would require K-12 schools to post online their curriculum online in a standardized, user-friendly manner. The goal is to help parents more easily research what their children will be taught in school. Information would include a title or link to all textbooks being used, course syllabus or written summary of each instructional course, and the state academic standards for each course. [House Bill 1332](#), which would take effect at the start of the 2022-23 school year, also stipulates that a school administrator or designee would be required to post the information online, so as not to burden teachers. Also, school entities would have 30 business days to update their websites after approval of updated curricula.



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## Final Reminder for 2020 Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Applications

Older adults and Pennsylvanians with disabilities have until Dec. 31 to apply for the state's 2020 Property Tax/Rent Rebate program. Remember, assistance through my office is always free. You need not pay a private firm for assistance. The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians age 65 and older; widows and widowers age 50 and older; and people with disabilities age 18 and older. The income limit is \$35,000 a year for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters and half of Social Security income is excluded. For additional information and applications, [click here](#), or contact my office for assistance.

