

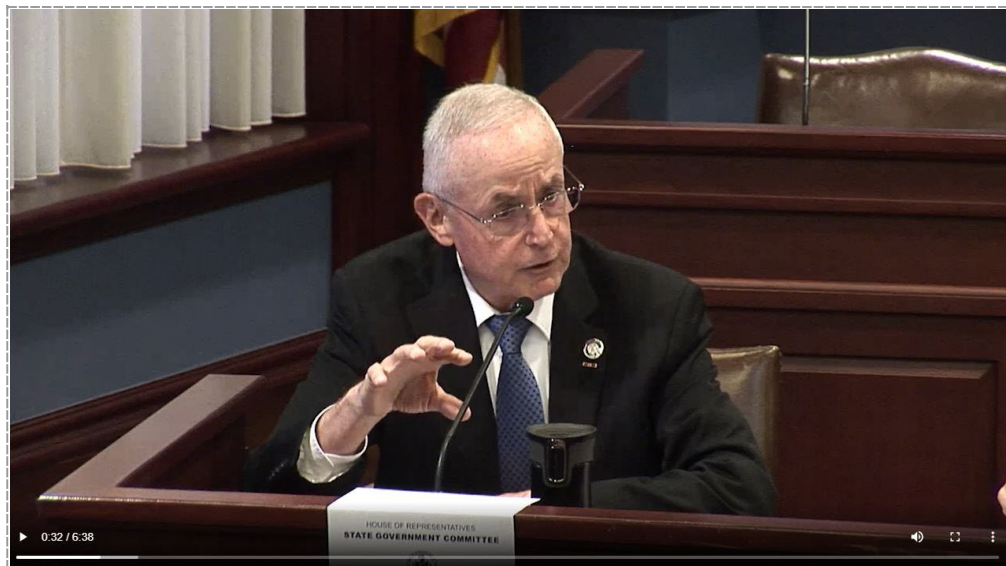
## Keeping an Eye on School Districts



State Auditor General Tim DeFoor recently announced his office is turning over responsibility for auditing school districts to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. While the auditor general is not mandated to handle these audits, I believe it is necessary and the Legislature is looking into putting this in statute. In the meantime, there are actions taxpayers can take to ensure accountability in our schools. [Listen here to learn more.](#)

## Subcommittee Reviews Performance of State Pension Systems

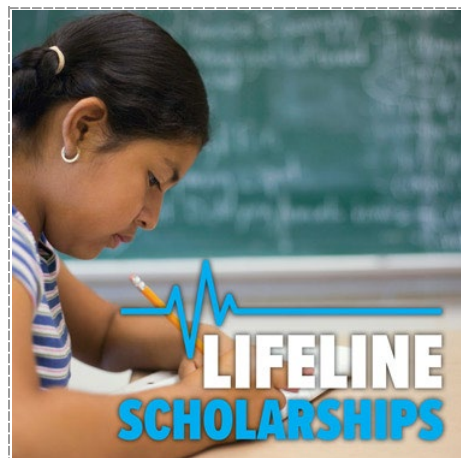
The House State Government Committee's Subcommittee on Public Pensions, Benefit and Risk Management, held a meeting this week on the performance of the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS) and the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS). As a member of the subcommittee, I questioned representatives of Funston Advisory Services, LLC, which administers plan investments and reviews, about best practices to protect annuitants and taxpayers. Watch below.



[Watch Video Here](#)

## Lifeline Scholarships Aim to Help Students in Struggling Schools

Where a student lives should not determine his or her chances for academic success. That is why the House Education Committee recently approved legislation that would create a Lifeline Scholarship Program to support students in struggling schools. [House Bill 2169](#), which I co-sponsored, would give qualified students and parents the resources to pursue a high-quality education that meets their needs. Under the bill, parents with children in grades 1-12, who reside within the attendance area of a district school in the bottom 15% of performance metrics based on state testing, would be eligible



to receive a scholarship to offset costs associated with choosing an alternative academic setting that meets their child's individual learning needs. If a student and his or her family would opt to take the Lifeline Scholarship, they would receive only the state portion of funding to use toward an educational opportunity elsewhere. The federal funds and local property tax share would remain with the school district, enabling it to invest in improvements to better serve existing students and help the district to climb out of the low-performance metrics. This bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

## Bills to Boost PA Dairy Industry on the Move

The House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recently advanced several bills to support Pennsylvania's dairy industry. [House Bill 2397](#) would enable schools to put Pennsylvania whole milk back on the school lunch menu. Federal guidelines, established in the Obama administration, require schools to serve skim or 1% milk. According to the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board, milk consumption in schools has dropped by about 35% and a lot of what is served ends up in the trash. Other dairy bills passed in committee include:



- [House Bill 223](#), which would create Keystone Opportunity Dairy Zones to facilitate economic development in Pennsylvania's dairy industry through tax exemptions, deductions, abatements or credits.
- [House Bill 224](#), which would enable the state Milk Marketing Board to ensure the Commonwealth's struggling dairy farmers receive state-mandated milk premiums.
- [House Bill 2456](#), which would amend the Milk Marketing Law to increase the amount of payment in lieu of suspension of a milk dealer's license from \$150 per day to \$1,000 per day.
- [House Bill 2457](#), which would amend the Milk Marketing Law to increase milk tester and weigher sampler certification periods from one year to two years.

The legislation is pending action by the full House.

## Fort Indiantown Gap Issues Noise Advisory



Fort Indiantown Gap is scheduled to host training this month that could result in increased noise levels in our area. As a courtesy to the public, the Gap is announcing that demolition training is scheduled during April 9-11 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. and April 30 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m.

## Voter Registration Deadline May 2

Pennsylvanians who are not already registered to vote but wish to participate in the May 17 primary election should be sure to register no later than Monday, May 2. To be eligible to vote in the primary, you must be a citizen of the United States for at least one month before the election; a resident of the election district in which you register to vote for at least 30 days before the primary; and at least 18 years of age on or before the date of the primary. Under the law, only voters registered as Republicans or Democrats may vote for candidates in the primary election. Ballot questions are open to all voters. Citizens may register to [vote online here](#) or visit your county voter



registration office. Not sure of your registration status? [Check it here.](#)

## Committee Moves to Make Mental Health Services More Accessible

The House Insurance Committee has approved legislation to help ensure mental health services are more accessible to Pennsylvanians through the use of telehealth technology. [House Bill 2419](#) would give greater latitude in the issuance of waivers by removing the statutory requirement of 50% of on-site psychiatric time. Psychiatrists and advanced practice professionals would use in-person or telehealth sessions with patients as specified in department regulations or waivers. With the stigma still attached to accessing mental health services and the ongoing shortage of in-person psychiatric time facing the state, telehealth has proven to be a valuable tool in reaching as many patients as possible. House Bill 2419 now goes to the full House for consideration.



## Exploring Multi-Faceted Approach to Improving Cybersecurity

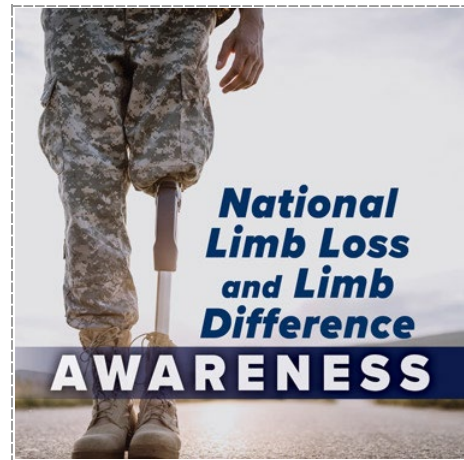
Prioritizing cybersecurity standards and innovation, improving communication and encouraging the next generation of “cyber defenders” were among recommendations offered to lawmakers at a hearing at the state Capitol last week. With many recent examples of cybersecurity issues within our state agencies that have put citizens’ personal information at risk, the House Majority Policy Committee concluded we need to advance policies that will support improved security and encourage the next generation of cybersecurity



professionals. Those testifying at the hearing included officials of Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, Cisco, Motorola Solutions Inc. and Unisys, as well as the chief information security officer with Highmark Health. To read more about the hearing, review testimony or watch the video, [click here](#).

## April is National Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month

In recognition of National Limb Loss and Limb Difference Awareness Month, the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is reminding veterans of the agency's Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension Program. Eligible Pennsylvania veterans may qualify to receive a pension of \$150 per month. There are more than 2,000 veterans currently enrolled in the program. To qualify, a veteran must have served in the military honorably; been a resident of Pennsylvania upon entering the military; suffered a service-connected injury or incurred a disease resulting in the loss or loss of use of two or more extremities (arms/hands or legs/feet); and at least a 40% disability compensation rating or higher in each limb as determined and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. More information about the DMVA Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension Program [is available here](#).



## Boosting Autism Awareness, Acceptance

April is Autism Acceptance Month, formerly known as Autism Awareness Month. The month is designed to help empower autistic individuals and their families, and to ensure improved support and opportunities in education, employment, accessible housing, affordable health care and long-term support services. It is estimated that at least 55,000 Pennsylvanians, and maybe as many as 185,000 or more, are on the autism spectrum in the Commonwealth. To learn more about autism and services available in the Commonwealth, visit [paautism.org](http://paautism.org).



**AUTISM**

ACCEPTANCE MONTH