

Let's Be Kind to One Another



On Thursday, Aug. 11, I was asked to give a legislative budget update to the Palmyra Area School District Board at their meeting.

During the meeting a question was asked by one of the board members, during a rather interesting exchange about the budget, about the comments that I have made that the Palmyra school district was well run financially compared to other school districts. Despite that representation, I was still expressing caution that the budget that was approved in Harrisburg was not sustainable in the long run and will eventually negatively affect the majority of school districts.

One of the directors rightfully expressed frustration that the public discourse for school directors turned nasty particularly since the school directors are unpaid. He was apparently referring to those who objected to the recent school property tax hike. Similar complaints were lodged last year towards those who objected to mask mandates and vaccination mandates.

For too long, we have allowed anonymous comments on social media to attack individuals, call for picketing of their homes and harassing their children, spouses and other relatives, and other intolerable behavior to continue.

The deteriorating nature of public discourse and the disdain with which people interact with one another are even more troubling when one realizes that this behavior, by adults, in a public forum sets an example for the children who are actively engaged in the same forum. Adults are inadvertently condoning such behavior and then act surprised when their children and grandchildren engage in similar behavior.

Our political process is merely a reflection of our society. This feigned perspective

that our government must be above the fray while we are engaged in social media hatred is incomprehensible.

The character of a nation and its core values determine whether or not a nation will survive. The loss of coping skills and that inability to accept reality will create a construct for which the society is not likely to be able to survive. The people will be incapable of coping with the problem and then crafting meaningful solutions.

Until we achieve a mutual respect for one another and learn to disagree respectfully, our nation will never tackle our most difficult challenges. We will be doomed to failure.

Where school directors are concerned, we are seeing statewide resignations of directors because of the abuse. The impact of that trend is not healthy for anyone.

Be kind to one another! Please express your disagreements with civility.

One-Time Boost to Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program

Eligible senior citizens and people with disabilities will see enhanced rebates through this year's Property Tax/Rent Rebate program thanks to a one-time infusion of additional funds in the 2022-23 state budget.

The additional funding brings the maximum standard rebate to \$1,105 for both homeowners and renters, up from the usual \$650. People who already received their checks this year will not need to take any further action; the Department of Revenue will automatically send a check for the additional funds starting in early September. For additional information about the bonus rebates, [click here](#).

For those who qualify but have not yet applied, the deadline to do so for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2021 has been extended to Dec. 31. Claimants are encouraged to file their rebate applications online by visiting mypath.pa.gov though paper applications are also available



at revenue.pa.gov or by contacting my office. We will also provide free assistance with filing the forms.

The Property Tax/Rent Rebate program benefits 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 annually for homeowners and \$15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded.

Slow Down for School Buses

The school year for students in the Annville-Cleona, Cornwall-Lebanon, Palmyra Area and Lebanon school districts begins Monday, Aug. 29.

With students returning to class, school buses are or soon will be back on the roads. Motorists, parents and children are encouraged to refresh their memories about how to share the road safely.

Pennsylvania law requires motorists stop at least 10 feet away from school buses when their red lights are flashing and their stop arm is extended. Motorists following or traveling alongside a school bus must also stop until the red lights have stopped flashing and the stop arm is withdrawn. Do not proceed until all the children have reached a place of safety.

Penalties for failure to obey school bus safety laws can result in a \$250 fine, five points on a driving record and a 60-day license suspension.

Parents are reminded to ensure their children are at the bus stop early to avoid rushing. Students should stay where the bus driver can see them while boarding or exiting the bus.

[Click here](#) for more information and tips on school bus safety.



Investing in Election Integrity

Pennsylvanians can only have faith in their government if they have faith in the system that elects our federal, state and local leaders.

To help restore that faith, this year's budget **ELIMINATES** any use of third-party funding for the administration of elections. In November 2020, the Department of State facilitated an uneven, and blatantly partisan, distribution of funds provided by the Center for Tech and Civic Life, funded largely by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. No outside entity should have any role in funding our elections.



Instead, the budget provides \$45 million for election integrity and administration to be managed by the Department of Community and Economic Development. The law clarifies the cost to prepare, conduct and administer elections can only be funded by federal, state and local government. Grants would follow strict guardrails including public transparency requirements to ensure the funds can only be used to ensure election integrity and proper administration of election. The law also requires each county to produce a report on its compliance with the Election Code and voter registration law.

I'll be highlighting other key initiatives contained in the budget in the coming weeks. You may also read more at PAHouseGOP.com/statebudget.

Ensuring Fairness in Financial Aid

A new state law ends the practice of “scholarship displacement” for students pursuing a higher education.

Scholarship displacement occurs when a student goes above and beyond to earn private scholarships to supplement their financial aid, only to have their school deduct the amount of that scholarship from their financial aid package. In essence, the students were doing extra work but not receiving any additional benefit.



[Act 55 of 2022](#) prohibits public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth from reducing their aid package for an enrolled student who receives a private scholarship.

The law would not apply if a student’s total financial aid from all sources exceeds the cost of attendance. Also, if the student is an athlete financial aid may be reduced to comply with rules and restrictions of the school or athletic association.