



Don White

STATE SENATOR



Reports to the People

41ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT • SUMMER 2006

Dear Friend,

As we prepare to head down the homestretch of the 2005-06 Legislative Session, I felt this would be an appropriate time to update you on events in Harrisburg and around the 41st Senatorial District.

The General Assembly considered several critical issues this year and I remain committed to serving the best interests of all residents of the 41st Senatorial District. If you have any questions or comments about anything in this newsletter or any state-related matter, call my Indiana Office at 724-357-0151/toll free 866-357-0151, my Kittanning Office at 724-543-3026/toll-free 866-366-9448 (1-866-DON-WHITE), or my Murrysville Office at 724-327-2422/toll-free 866-736-9448 (1-866-SEN-WHITE).

Regards,
Don White

Senate Approves Bill Limiting Protests at Funerals

Reacting to a recent spate of protests at funerals for service members killed in action (including one for an Indiana County native), the Senate approved legislation in April that would limit the scope of protests at funerals and memorial services.

Senate Bill 1150 was introduced in response to incidents of picketing and abusive chanting targeting Pennsylvania military funerals, according to Senator White. The Westboro Baptist Church, a Topeka, Kansas-based congregation, has picketed military services in Pennsylvania and around the country.

"We cannot enact this law soon enough as we have seen this group display their disrespectful behavior here in Indiana at the funeral of Sgt. 1st Class Randy McCaulley of Marion Center," said Senator Don White, who serves as Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. "I was there to pay my respects to Sergeant McCaulley and I saw their contemptible behavior. I have the deepest gratitude for the 130 Patriot Guard Riders who stood guard between those individuals and the mourners. The families of fallen service members suffer enough pain and anguish without having to endure the antics of those unscrupulous individuals who would tarnish a solemn occasion to promote themselves and their opinions."

SB 1150 would require protesters

to remain 500 feet from any funeral, memorial service or memorial procession beginning one hour before, and ending one hour after, the event. First-time violators would be charged with a third-degree misdemeanor; subsequent violations would result in a second-degree misdemeanor charge.

"It is a sad state of affairs when legislation is necessary to ensure common decency, but it is truly reprehensible that a few individuals are actually trying to turn these solemn,

dignified memorial services into some kind of a circus," said Senator White. "That behavior is unacceptable."

The legislation is supported by the American Legion, the Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police and the Pennsylvania War Veterans Council. Wisconsin, Indiana and South Dakota recently enacted laws limiting protests at funerals and at least 12 other states, as well as Congress, are considering similar legislation.



Speaking at a press conference in March, Senator Don White, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, offers his strong support for legislation banning protests at military funerals.

Military Medical Benefits Bill Enacted

A new law drafted by Senator Don White extends the coverage that full-time students called to active military duty can receive under their parents' medical insurance plans. The Governor signed Senate Bill 869 into law during a December ceremony at Fort Indiantown Gap.

Currently, most health insurance policies allow parents to provide coverage for their children until age 23 as long as they are full-time students. However, some members of the Pennsylvania National Guard and Air Guard are being called out of the classroom and into active duty for assignments that can last for a year or longer. Many of these young people will be unable to complete their studies before reaching the age of 23.

"This will help Pennsylvania's young people who put aside their classroom studies in order to answer the call of duty by requiring insurance companies to permit these families to let health coverage lapse while the young person is on active duty and have it resume when the student returns to school, with an extension in coverage equal to that of the term of duty," said Senator White, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Senate Approves Military Survivors' Bill

In honor of the service and sacrifices made by America's citizen-soldiers, the Senate approved legislation introduced by Senator Don White that would provide tuition credits to spouses and children of Pennsylvania National Guard members who die while on active military duty.

"I am extremely pleased that the Senate approved this bill," said Senator White, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee. "Over the past few years, we have seen a reawakening of the American spirit in so much that society again respects and honors the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. But, it is also essential that we remember the families of service members who share in those sacrifices. Senate Bill 1043 would provide an important

benefit to the families of Pennsylvanians who make the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our country."

Under current law, only the children of members of the Pennsylvania National Guard who are killed or die as a result of injuries received while on state active duty are entitled to a 50 percent tuition credit at all Pennsylvania state-owned colleges or universities or approved trade schools.

SB 1043 would benefit the spouses of deceased Pennsylvania National Guard members who are killed while serving on federal or state active duty. This legislation will increase the current benefit for children from a 50 percent tuition credit to a 100 percent tuition credit, while creating a 100 percent tuition credit for spouses to attend any Pennsylvania state-owned college or university or approved trade school.

Vo-Tech Students Build Sign for Senator White



Students from Lenape Area Vo-Tech recently installed a sign they built for Senator Don White's District Office in Kittanning.

Resolution Urges Reconsideration of Proposed Guard Cuts

The Senate recently adopted a Resolution introduced by Senator Don White calling on the President, Congress and Department of Defense officials to reconsider a proposed cut back in National Guard staffing across the nation.

Senator White's resolution urges the federal officials to rescind a plan announced on January 18 by the Secretary of the Army to eliminate six combat brigades from the Army National Guard and reduce its troop strength by 17,000.

Pennsylvania is home to two of these brigades, a heavy brigade headquartered in Scranton and another in Washington, Pa. One plan

would also remove a heavy combat brigade and portions of an aviation brigade stationed at Fort Indiantown Gap. This proposal could mean the Commonwealth would lose some 4,000 soldiers.

"It is hard to believe that today, when American forces are serving around the world and our military

resources are stretched thin, the Secretary of the Army would even consider such a drastic move as scaling back our National Guard component," said Senator White, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, in a speech prior to the Senate vote on his Resolution.

Senator Don White, Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, and Major General Jessica Wright, state Adjutant General, heard testimony about proposed National Guard cutbacks during a February public hearing.



Senator White Gives Students a Civics Lesson

Nearly 130 students from 14 local schools had a special opportunity to learn about state government during a seminar hosted by state Senator Don White on May 25 in the Eberly College of Business at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

The young people participating in Senator White's "The Future Starts Today" student government forum considered topics including Education, Economic Development, the Environment, Health and Transportation during a series of

Students from 14 area schools attended Senator Don White's student government seminar on May 25 at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

panel discussions involving 60 government and business leaders.

"It is important that young people learn about and participate in the

government process," Senator White said. "They will shape the future, but they can't be leaders if they stand on the sidelines."



PENNVEST Approves \$43,872,252 in Funding For Local Projects

One of Don White's goals when he joined the Senate was to secure one of its coveted two seats on the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST) Board of Directors. He achieved that goal at the end of 2004.

"I am honored to serve on the PENNVEST Board," Senator White said. "PENNVEST financing has been a key catalyst in promoting several major water and sewer projects in the 41st Senatorial District which, when completed, are expected to boost our local economy and create job opportunities."

PENNVEST provides grants and low-interest loans to fund sewer, storm water and drinking water projects throughout the Commonwealth. These projects not only contribute to improving Pennsylvania's environment and the health of its people, they also provide opportunities for economic growth and jobs for Pennsylvania's workers.

"This financing is important and essential to municipalities and municipal authorities across the Commonwealth. It enables small communities like Glen Campbell Borough to build needed sewage systems," Senator White said. "PENNVEST also helps promote infrastructure improvements that enhance a region's attractiveness for residential and commercial development, such as the A-15 Bypass around Kittanning."

Just in the past year, PENNVEST awarded \$43,872,252 in grants and loans for projects in the 41st District. These projects include:

- Last November, PENNVEST gave final approval for a \$34,458,252 financing package for **Saxonburg Area Authority (SAA)**. SAA is proposing a major expansion of its sanitary sewage system with the construction of 269,829 linear feet of gravity and forced main lines, 44,296 linear feet of interceptor lines, five pump stations, and a new 2,052,000 million gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant.
- **Burnside Borough** was awarded \$2.9 million in state funding (\$1,660,250 grant and a \$1,239,750 low-interest loan) in May to build a much needed sanitary sewer system. The borough will install 20,000 feet of sanitary sewer lines, a pump station and build a 40,000 gallon-per-day sewage treatment plant. Currently, Burnside is served by "wildcat" private sewer operations, with raw sewage ending up in streams and creeks and ultimately in the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.
- **The Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County** was awarded a \$1,617,500 low-interest loan in March to cover the costs to expand water service in Murrysville and Penn Township. The PENNVEST funding covers the costs to construct 33,640 linear feet of water lines in Mamont Road, Hilty Road, Peachtree Court, Saltsburg Road, Christy Road, Eagles Lane and Lasher Court areas of Murrysville and the Dry Dam Road area of Penn Township. The Department of Environmental Protection determined that 65 percent of the existing private wells in the area had coliform bacteria and numerous areas have other unacceptable water quality issues.
- **The Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County** was awarded \$682,000 in state financing (\$318,384 grant and a \$363,652 low-interest loan) in May to cover the costs of expanding its system to provide water service to Nowrytown, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County. The PENNVEST funding will cover the costs to construct nearly 19,000 feet of water lines and fire hydrants in Nowrytown. Earlier this year, the Department of Environmental Protection awarded a \$292,000 grant for the project.
- **The Ansonville Water Authority** was awarded \$354,000 in state financing (a \$159,937 grant and a \$194,063 low-interest loan) in November to cover the costs to expand sewer service to Jordon and Ferguson Townships. The PENNVEST funding covers the costs to install a 6.5 mile interconnection with a pumping station, water storage tank and improvements to the existing water distribution system.
- **The Worthington-West Franklin Joint Municipal Authority** was awarded \$2,925,000 in state financing (\$1,025,344 grant and a \$1,899,656 low-interest loan) in November to expand sewer service to Craigsville and Laird's Crossing. The PENNVEST funding covers the costs to install 45,000 feet of sanitary sewer lines. Overall, the Authority will install 90,000 feet of sewer lines and construct a treatment plant and pumping station at a projected cost of \$12.4 million.

Legislation Would Crack Down on Fake ID Users

It's almost like the punch line to a bad joke: "What could the bartender do when the minor displayed a fake ID card? Nothing!"

However, Senator Don White isn't laughing about it. In fact, he introduced legislation that would crack down on the use of false ID cards by giving new powers to the owners and employees of establishments where alcohol is sold.

"I find it extremely disturbing that

under Pennsylvania's current laws minors can flash a false ID and the people at the front lines in the war against underage drinking can only turn them away," Senator White said.

Senator White introduced Senate Bill 1129, legislation with bipartisan support that would require any person who is authorized to sell alcoholic beverages to confiscate an identification card when they have a reasonable suspicion the card is fake.

SB 1129 would also permit employees to detain individuals who attempt to purchase liquor using a false identification card until authorities arrive.

"Currently, there is no provision that grants this authority," Senator White said. "My bill makes detention an option. It gives shops, bars and restaurants the same alternatives as retailers when dealing with shoplifters."



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Committee Studying Highway Options

State Senator Don White has been selected to serve on a special Select Committee created by Senate Resolution 116 to find new ways to promote highway construction and reconstruction and study innovative funding options for new, existing and expanded highways.

"I am pleased and honored by this appointment," Senator White said. "As we have seen locally, highway improvements are key components to

any successful economic development strategy. Money is the biggest limiting factor to the improvements, making it essential that we find innovative ways to leverage the resources we have available and to find new sources for that funding."

The Select Committee is studying various funding options in use nationwide to support transportation improvements with an eye towards compatibility in Pennsylvania.

Recognizing EMS Responders

Senator Don White, in his capacity as Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, was one of the key speakers at a rally in the Capitol Rotunda in April to recognize Pennsylvania's Emergency Medical Service workers.

