



# Don White

STATE SENATOR



## Reports to the People

41ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT • WINTER 2008

Dear Friend,

**A**s we start a new year, I thought this would be a good time to update you on activities in Harrisburg and around the 41st Senatorial District.

As always, if you have questions about any state issue, 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).

Sincerely, and best wishes for a happy, safe and healthy 2008.

### Senator White Rejected State Gas Tax Hike Proposal

A short-lived proposal for a 1-cent increase in a state gas tax didn't get a lot of coverage by the media, but it definitely caught the attention of Senator Don White. As Chairman of the Senate Banking

and Insurance Committee, Senator White was poised in November to call on his committee to formally reject the tax hike before Governor Ed Rendell revoked the proposal.

"At a time when consumers are

being hit hardest at the gas pump by ever-increasing prices, the last thing the Administration needed to do was to increase this burden by imposing any increase in Pennsylvania's gas tax," Senator White said.

### Senator White Presents \$500k Grant to Fire Academy

State Senator Don White presented a \$500,000 state grant to the Indiana County Commissioners on January 19 for renovations and upgrades to the Indiana County William A. Waugh Public Safety Academy during a ceremony at the facility on Fire Academy Road, Homer City.

"I was extremely pleased to present this grant to support the major renovations planned for this vital county resource," Senator White said. "This training facility has come a long way over the past 30 years and has seen its mission expand exponentially. I am confident that the planned upgrades and enhancements will enable the fire academy to continue to play a major role in ensuring our fire fighters are trained and ready to respond to emergencies for the next 30 years and beyond."

The fire academy is the primary training facility for Indiana County's 35 volunteer fire departments and has also been used by many other organizations and agencies including the Reliant, Keystone/Conemaugh and Homer City power generation plants, as well as the Department of

Environmental Protection's Bureau of Deep Mine Safety, and programs and departments from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

The \$1.2 million project, including matching funding by the fire academy, includes the construction of a five-story training tower; development of a vehicle rescue training area; enhancement of an existing water drafting source; and the installation of a computer lab for use by emergency responders seeking to expand their training backgrounds.

"Once this work is completed, Indiana County's emergency responders and the other organizations that train at the academy will have a state-of-the-art facility where they can practice their skills," Senator White said. "This training may very well make a life or death difference for disaster victims or even the fire fighters themselves. I believe this grant is an excellent investment by the Commonwealth in the health and well being of the people of Indiana County."



State Senator Don White recently presented a \$500,000 grant for improvements to the Indiana County Fire Academy.

## Senator White Inducted Into DMVA Hall Of Fame

Senator Don White was inducted into the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Hall of Fame in 2007 in recognition of his tireless efforts on behalf of veterans and their families and members of the Pennsylvania National Guard.

“Senator White has been a true friend and solid supporter of veterans and members of the Pennsylvania National Guard ever since he arrived in Harrisburg,” said Maj. Gen. Jessica L. Wright, state adjutant general. “Whether it’s improving health and educational benefits for our soldiers, airmen and veterans, or securing funds to repair the swimming pool at our school for veteran’s children, we can always count on Don for his leadership and genuine concern.”

Since taking office in 2000, Senator White has been instrumental in the creation and passage of numerous pieces of legislation for service members and veterans. His legislative efforts have resulted in: extending health insurance benefits for military personnel who are full-time students at the time of deployment; extending educa-



State Adjutant General (Maj. Gen.) Jessica L. Wright congratulates Senator Don White after his induction into the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Hall of Fame.

tional assistance opportunities for National Guard personnel discharged for medical disability incurred in the line of duty; providing for group life insurance for Guard members and tuition costs and fees for children and spouses of deceased Guard members.

The DMVA Hall of Fame, established in 1998, recognizes unique and exemplary contributions to the

department and/or to the Pennsylvania National Guard. This award not only recognizes significant achievements, but also the honor and prestige an individual has brought upon the department, the Pennsylvania National Guard and its members. Election into the Hall of Fame is the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the department.

## \$1 Million State Grant Pays Off With Diamond Medical Opening

The local community received the payoff for a \$1 million state grant secured by Senator Don White with the opening of the recently constructed Diamond Medical Supply building at 639 Kolter Drive in the Indiana County Commerce Park in White Township.

Senator White and State Department of Community and Economic Development Secretary Dennis Yablonsky participated in a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony on December 15 for the new facility.

The Indiana County Commissioners, on behalf of the Indiana County Development Corporation, received a \$1,000,000 Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant secured by Senator White. Diamond and the ICDC provided the balance of matching funds.

Diamond Pharmacy Services is the nation’s largest correctional pharmacy services provider and Pennsylvania’s largest independ-

ently owned nursing facility pharmacy services provider. Diamond has specialized in patient-specific services for correctional facilities for over 23 years.

Mark Zilner, Director of Operations, said that he was proud of the fact that Diamond now operates a 135,000 square foot, state-of-the-art automated closed-door institutional pharmacy, IV infusion facility, two retail pharmacies, and its new medical supply facility all located in Indiana.

## Be Red Cross Ready For Emergencies

**B**e Red Cross Ready, a new program developed by the American Red Cross in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security can help everyone prepare for emergencies and make their communities safer.

It’s important that you be prepared for possible disasters and other emergencies. Natural or human-caused disasters can strike suddenly, at anytime and anywhere. The following are three actions everyone can take that can help make a difference:

- **Get a Kit**
- **Make a Plan**
- **Be Informed**

For more information about *Be Red Cross Ready* visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or contact your local Red Cross Chapter:

**ARMSTRONG COUNTY**  
(724) 763-2272

**BUTLER COUNTY**  
(724) 283-2810

**CLEARFIELD/JEFFERSON**  
(814) 765-5516

**INDIANA COUNTY**  
(724) 465-5678

**WESTMORELAND COUNTY**  
(724) 834-6510

## SENATOR WHITE HOSTED SENIOR EXPO IN MURRYSVILLE

Hundreds of area residents attended a Senior Expo hosted by Senator Don White on November 16 at the Murrysville Senior Citizens Center. A number of local organizations and businesses, health associations as well as state and federal agencies participated in the free event. Representatives provided information on numerous subjects of interest to older residents including health care insurance, nutrition and exercise, fire safety, financial planning and personal safety.



## Region Offers Views On State Mine Reclamation Funding

Senator Don White hosted a community meeting last fall to give local residents an opportunity to tell state officials how to spend \$1.5 billion over 15 years to clean up abandoned mines.

"Everyone here and everyone in my district has been impacted in some way by the problems left by the coal mining of the past," Senator White told the audience at the meeting at the IUP Northpointe Campus. "This is

going to take a lot of teamwork and effort to come up with solutions to deal with all the problems we've been left with."

The Department of Environmental Protection and the Citizens Advisory Council and the Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board received comments from the public during the meeting, which focused on the recent re-authorization of the Federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation

Act (SMCRA). The new law provides for a significant increase in funds available to the Commonwealth for abandoned mine reclamation. It also offers the Commonwealth the opportunity to set aside up to 30 percent of these funds for abatement and treatment of abandoned mine drainage.

For more information about Pennsylvania's abandoned mine reclamation program, visit [www.depweb.state.pa.us/abandonedminerec](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/abandonedminerec)

## House Action Needed On "Blues Merger Oversight"

In an effort to prove that the third time is a charm, the Senate approved three bills intended to provide state oversight of proposed mergers involving non-profit health insurance companies, according to Senator Don White, Chairman of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee.

Senator White has pushed for all three bills and is the prime sponsor of one of the measures. The need for state oversight is critical since Pennsylvania's two largest health care insurance providers, Highmark Inc. and Independence Blue Cross, have announced plans to merge operations. Such a merger could have significant impact on the availability, costs and quality of health care available to all Pennsylvanians.

A key provision within the three bills is a requirement that any merger involving the "Blues" be subject to approval by the Department of Insurance.



Senator Don White, Chairman of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee, questions executives from Highmark Inc. and Independence Blue Cross during a recent committee hearing. He is joined by his colleagues (l to r) Mary Jo White, Bob Robbins and Bob Regola.

"It is extremely unfortunate that this issue is still unresolved. We have been working for months to put this regulatory oversight in place. This issue is much too important to be allowed to languish," Senator White said. "The

Senate has approved this oversight on three occasions and we are still waiting for the House to take the appropriate and necessary step of forwarding it on to the Governor's desk for enactment."



## HUNDREDS HELP HONOR JIMMY STEWART STAMP DAY

Senator Don White and Indiana County Board of Commissioners Chairman Rodney Ruddock (left) were among the officials and hundreds of local residents participating in a very special ceremony on the first day of issue for a US Postage Stamp honoring Indiana native Jimmy Stewart.

## Clock Strikes Twelve For MCARE Abatement

Midnight on December 31 not only capped off 2007, but marked the end of a program that Pennsylvania instituted to help health care providers in high-risk fields meet their state-mandated medical malpractice insurance requirements, according to Senator Don White, who serves as Chairman of the Senate Insurance Committee.

After five years, the MCARE (Medical Care Availability and Reduction of Error) abatement, which helps physicians in high risk fields, such as neurosurgeons and obstetricians, pay all or a portion of their medical mal-

practice insurance premiums, expired December 31.

"The Senate did its best to preserve this important program. We passed reauthorization bills twice (including one introduced by Senator White) only to see those measures derailed by the Administration and the House Democratic leadership," Senator White said. "As we go into 2008, practitioners in high-risk fields are looking at anything but a happy new year."

While the MCARE abatement is now over, the program itself continues on.

## VFD Partnership Bill Approved

The Senate approved Senate Bill 96, a measure introduced by Senator Don White to encourage regionalization and partnership efforts among volunteer fire departments.

"Senate Bill 96 does not mandate

cooperation, but rather provides financial incentives for departments to be forward thinking – to look for ways to improve their response to emergencies and their capabilities once they get there." Senator White said.



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