



May 2011

## Budget Proposal Reflects Economic Realities But Is Not Final Plan

On March 8, Gov. Tom Corbett addressed a joint session of the House and Senate to present his budget proposal for fiscal year 2011-12. The governor proposed a total spend number of \$27.3 billion, a 3.1 percent reduction from the 2010-11 budget.

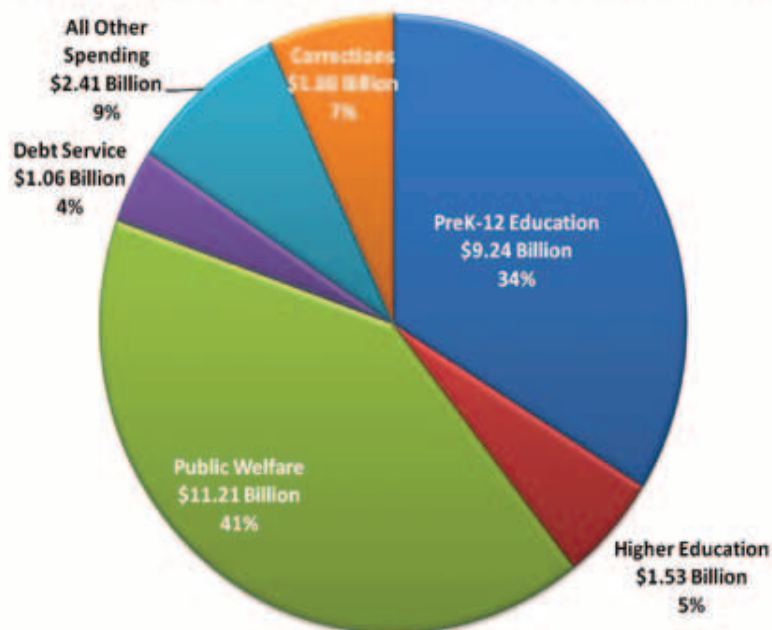
This budget reflects our current economic reality and does not place an undue financial burden on taxpayers. It does not call for any new tax increases or fees, thereby reflecting the needs of our citizens.

Unfortunately, this budget proposal represents a lot of reductions in many of the programs we care about. I am sure you have heard a lot in the news and in our community about the funding levels for education. Corbett's education budget proposal accounts for the loss of federal stimulus dollars and resets basic education funding to 2008-09, pre-stimulus levels. It provides resources for a child's basic education while reshaping the system to put more control into the hands of families and local school districts. Local flexibility and mandate relief have long been one of our goals, and our legislative record attests to this.

Please consider this: the budget proposal provides \$8.6 billion to support pre-kindergarten through 12th grade education, including \$5.23 billion for the Basic Education subsidy. **The decrease in Basic Education funding from last year is due solely to the loss of federal stimulus funds.**

I am especially concerned about the depth of cuts made to education, including a more than 50 percent reduction in state funding for both the state-related institutions (University

### General Fund Proposed Spending: \$27.3 Billion



of Pittsburgh, Penn State, Lincoln and Temple) and the 14 state-owned universities of the State System of Higher Education. I am also painfully aware of the funding levels for basic education for our 500 public school districts.

The governor's higher education funding proposal is one of many being reviewed in great detail as part of budget hearings held by the House Appropriations Committee.

That said, I am committed to reducing spending where feasible, but recognize the need for sufficient funding to maintain core government functions and necessities.

One area we will be looking to reduce spending is the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), one of the fastest-growing and most expensive departments under the administration of former Gov. Ed Rendell. Auditor General Jack Wagner has outlined several cost-saving measures in his audit of

DPW, and House Republicans have been working for a number of years on a package of bills aimed at reforming the welfare system to prevent fraud and ensure only those people who truly need and deserve benefits receive them.

**It's important to note the budget address is a starting point, and during the course of the next few weeks, we are examining every line item of the budget – including the General Assembly – to ensure we'll get the biggest bang out of every taxpayer dollar.** I want to emphasize this proposal is just a proposal and not the final budget document.

More information about the budget is available on my website at [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com) by clicking on "2011-2012 Budget Information."

## Legislative Efforts Move Forward

In addition to the many bills I oversee as chairwoman of the House Professional Licensure Committee, the following are several measures I have personally authored this legislative session:

**House Bill 758** would require written notice be provided to individuals under an involuntary mental commitment of the obligation to transfer firearms currently in their possession. Specifically, House Bill 758 would stipulate the Courts of Common Pleas have 15 days to notify an individual who is the subject of an adjudication or involuntary mental commitment of the following:

- The prohibition to possess firearms under the Uniform Firearms Act;
- The existence of a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 60 days, to sell or transfer any firearms to another eligible person who is not a member of the prohibited person's household; and
- Information on firearms rights may be restored at a later date under the Uniform Firearms Act.

This legislation has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration.

**House Bill 1353** would prohibit the deduction of credit card transaction fees from the tips of restaurant servers. For a person who earns a base pay of \$2.83 per hour, this type of deduction to his or her tips can have a huge financial impact. I think this practice is unfair and certainly needs to be changed. The legislation has now been introduced and is currently before the House Labor and Industry Committee.

**House Bill 438** would extend designation of the "Battle of the Bulge Veterans Memorial Highway" on State Route 145 in Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, from the intersection of U.S. Route 22 northward to the intersection of Main Street in the Borough of Walnutport, Northampton County. I think it is only fitting this tribute to the brave veterans who fought in that pivotal battle during World War II is extended to include a greater portion of SR 145. This legislation passed the House unanimously and is currently before the Senate Transportation Committee.

## Privatization of State Liquor Stores

Privatization of the state liquor stores is currently making headlines as a very controversial issue expected to come before the General Assembly later this year.

Those in favor of privatizing the state liquor stores:

- Believe the state should not be involved in the sale of alcohol.
- Believe private enterprise can operate the liquor business in a more efficient and profitable manner, which will lead to better service, selection, and prices for Pennsylvania consumers.

Those opposed to privatization of the state liquor stores:

- Believe it is very important for the state to maintain this system and to continue to control the accessibility of alcohol, particularly with regard to minors.
- Think the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB), the largest purchaser of wine and spirits in the country, has a buying power many private businesses can't compete with and which results in lower prices on many products compared to the surrounding states.

Legislation is expected to be introduced in the near future. I promise to carefully consider your concerns prior to determining how to vote on this or any other bill concerning the privatization of the state liquor stores.



## Property Tax/Rent Rebate Applications Available

Applications for the state's 2010 Property Tax/Rent Rebate program are now available at [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com) or at my offices in Northampton and Slatington.

Rebates of up to \$650 on rent or property taxes paid in 2010 are available to eligible Pennsylvanians age 65 years or older, widows and widowers 50 years or older, and those 18 years or older with disabilities.

Eligibility income limits for homeowners are set at the following levels, excluding 50 percent of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits:

- \$0 to \$8,000, maximum \$650 rebate (Homeowners and renters)
- \$8,001 to \$15,000, maximum \$500 rebate (Homeowners and renters)
- \$15,001 to \$18,000, maximum \$300 rebate (Homeowners only)
- \$18,001 to \$35,000, maximum \$250 rebate (Homeowners only)

Applications are due by June 30. Call or stop by one of the offices for additional information.

Visit my Website at: [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com)

# Bills Close Loopholes in PA's Megan's Law

Responding to recent court decisions identifying loopholes in the state's Megan's Law, the state House has adopted several reforms to the child safety law.

The measures outline a process for homeless offenders (transients) to register every 30 days with the Pennsylvania State Police. They must be photographed and provide information about where they may be located, such as parks, public buildings, restaurants or libraries.

The bills also correct a technical error in the original Megan's Law bill by ensuring the criminal penalties for failure to register apply to all registered sex offenders, and specifically address penalties for sex offenders required to register in their home states who subsequently move to Pennsylvania and are required to register for a lifetime.

Having loopholes in a law designed to help keep children safe by notifying parents and community members if a convicted sex offender moves into their neighborhood is absolutely unacceptable. House Bills 68 and 75 are now awaiting action in the Senate.



## Looking for Culture, History, Adventure? Find it All in PA

Winter has turned to spring, and many people's minds have turned to vacation. But vacation doesn't have to mean long lines at the airport or long drives across the country – there are plenty of fun and interesting things to see and do right here in Pennsylvania.

The state's tourism website is a comprehensive source of information about vacationing in Pennsylvania. Things to do, places to stay, key destinations and handy travel tools – you'll find all you need to know to plan a weekend getaway or a longer trip.

Looking for a ready-made trip? Check out the "Trip Ideas" tab and browse the many pre-planned road trips available. Visit Pennsylvania's unique small towns on the "Small Town Charmy" trip. Photography buffs and arts fans will enjoy the "Shutterbugs" and "Artisan Ways" itineraries. There are also pre-planned trips for shopping, golfing and hiking fans.

Families looking for more flexibility in their planning can use the site to search for activities based on geography and interests. The site also offers special travel deals and events.

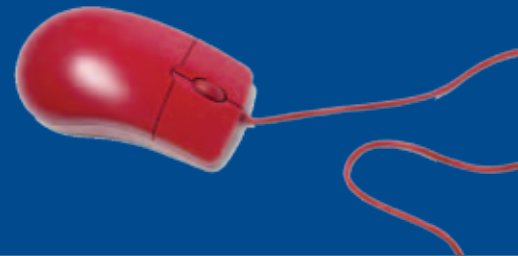
If you have a love of history, check out the "Civil War Trails and Beyond" trip - great way to mark the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

Go to my website at [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com) and click on "Visit PA" for all this information and more.

# JulieHarhart.com

## Sign Up Now for Weekly Legislative and District Updates

Through my website you can sign up to receive periodic emails on the latest legislative and district happenings. Simply go to [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com) and enter your email address and ZIP code in the box in the upper right-hand corner of the page, or you can contact one of my district offices and my staff will be happy to enter the information for you.



## Department of State Changes Passport Application Requirements

In conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and the Pennsylvania Department of Health, I would like to inform residents of important changes to passport application requirements.

The U.S. Department of State has made it mandatory for the full names of an applicant's parent or parents to be listed on ALL certified birth certificates for passport applicants, regardless of age. This is commonly referred to as the long-form birth certificate.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is offering a grace period for free reissuance of long-form birth certificates from April 1 through June 30 for anyone who was issued a certificate after Jan. 14 that does not reflect the new requirements. After June 30, those requesting a reissued certificate must pay a \$10 per copy fee in the form of check, money order, or veteran's information.

For all other reasons why a certified copy of a birth certificate is needed (school, Social Security, housing, employment, etc.), the short-form birth certificate is still acceptable and a legitimate document. The long-form birth certificate is **ONLY needed for passports/travel.**

Visit my Website at: [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com)

# Spotlight on District Residents



Rep. Harhart attends one of her annual Senior Mobile Offices held at St. Peter's United Methodist Church in Emerald.



Reps. Julie Harhart and Joe Brennan present a 60th anniversary citation to Bob and Jean Coombe.



Shoshanna Goldin received a citation from Rep. Harhart in recognition of her being selected as one of two Prudential Spirit of Community Award recipients.



Kathy Brearly, pastor of Long Swamp UCC Church was the guest chaplain for the House on Feb. 4. Pictured is Rep. Harhart, Brearly and Rep. Gary Day.

## Want to Receive This Newsletter Electronically?

In an effort to cut costs, I am offering the opportunity for people to sign up to receive my newsletter electronically instead of by mail. Simply go to [JulieHarhart.com](http://JulieHarhart.com) and click on the "e-newsletter" icon on the upper right corner of the page to sign up.

Even if you already receive regular email updates, you must complete this form and include your full mailing address so you can be removed from the newsletter mailing list. You will be notified via email when a new edition of the e-newsletter is available.

## State Representative **JULIE HARHART** 183rd District

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## District Office Services

My district offices are here to help you. Services my staff and I provide include:

- ◆ Driver's license and vehicle registration applications and renewals
- ◆ PACE and PACENET applications for seniors
- ◆ Property Tax and Rent Rebate applications
- ◆ State tax forms
- ◆ Student aid information
- ◆ Free state maps, state park information, and PA Vacation Guides
- ◆ Copies of legislation
- ◆ Tours of the State Capitol
- ◆ Referrals to agencies to resolve state-related matters

If you need help with any of the above or with any other state-related matter, please do not hesitate to call one of my district offices.